

AM Genesis 1:1-5, 24-31

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- [0 : 01] I'd like us to turn in the Holy Bible to the first book of the Bible, to Genesis chapter 1. So it's right at the beginning, page 1 of your Bible.
- And we're going to read just the first five verses and then jump to verse 24 and then read to verse 31.
- So Genesis 1, verse 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.
- And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, let there be light. And there was light.
- And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day.
- [1 : 21] And the darkness he called night. And there was evening. And there was morning the first day. And then the following verses proceed to recount the creation of, well, different parts of the creation of the universe.
- It's laid out in a scheme of seven days. We're going to take up the sixth day in verse 24. And God said, let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds.
- Livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds.
- And the livestock according to their kinds. And everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, let us make mankind in our image after our likeness.
- And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea. And over the birds of the heavens. And over the livestock. And over all the earth. And over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.
- [2 : 47] So God created mankind in his own image. In the image of God. He created him. Male and female.
- He created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them. Be fruitful. And multiply. And fill the earth. And subdue it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea. And over the birds of the heavens. And over every living thing. That moves on the earth.
- And God said. Behold I have given you every plant. Yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth. And every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.
- And to every beast of the earth. And to every bird of the heavens. And to everything that creeps on the earth. Everything that has the breath. Of life.
- [3 : 47] I have given every green plant. For food. And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made. And behold.
- It was very good. And there was evening. And there was morning. The sixth day. May God bless to us. That reading.

The reading. Of his word. We're going to sing again. To. This morning. To turn back. To the passage that we read. And we're looking.

Particularly at verses 26. To 28. Who am I? This is one of the most basic.

And important questions. That a person can ask. It's the question of our identity. As humans. If I don't understand myself.

[4 : 47] How can I understand anything? And many people. In our world. Are lost. Because they do not know. Who they are.

Now. In our world today. Identity is important. There are many factors. That make up. Our identity. I belong to.

A family. A clan. A tribe. A nation. A religious community. A culture. I speak. I speak. A particular language. And. Within.

Any society. There are subgroups. And subcultures. I might have a political. Affiliation. I have certain abilities. And interests. And the list.

Goes on. And of course. Identity can be complex. A mixture of many different. Elements. But at root. I am a human being.

[5 : 43] That is the most. Basic thing. About me. And about. Us all. But what does it mean. To be. Human. There are many.

Answers to that. On offer. In our society. Sometimes those answers. Conflict. With each other. Many people think that. We are nothing more.

Than something that has evolved. From. Lower life forms. Just a collection of atoms. That have emerged. From. A primeval soup. And.

That has evolved. Randomly. By chance. With no. Guiding. Purpose. Or direction. And yet. There is also. A widespread.

Feeling. In our own society. That human beings. Have. Value. And have. Dignity. And that human beings. Have rights. What we call. Human rights.

[6 : 36] Rights. But where does that. Dignity. That value. Where do human rights. Come from. Why do humans. Have. Rights. Well.

The Holy Bible. Provides. A satisfying answer. To these. Questions. These questions. Of our identity. As. Humans. The question of.

Who we are. And we find this. Especially. In the account. Of creation. In Genesis. Chapter 1. So the Bible.

Tells us. That we are. We are creatures. Created. By. God. In Genesis. Chapter 1. Humans. Are created. On the sixth day. And I'm leaving aside.

At the moment. What is meant. By the seven days. Of Genesis 1 and 2. But humans. Are created. On the same day. As. Other. Land. Animals. And.

[7 : 33] We have much. In common. With other. Other creatures. Other animals. We have a similar. Genetic. Makeup. I'm told. And. Of course.

Most importantly. We are all. Creatures. Made. By God. But human beings. Are also. Distinct. From. Other creatures.

And this is. What is emphasized. In. In Genesis. In what we read. In this account. Of. Creation. There are. Characteristics.

That make. Humans. Unique. Now. The word. Translated. Mankind. I think. In the. I read.

The. The footnote. Version. Of the. ESV. The word. Is. This is. In verse 26. Let us make. Mankind. In our image.

- [8 : 28] The word. Can. Refer. To an individual. Human being. Either male. Or female. It can. Also. Refer. To. Humanity. As. A race.
- As was. Mankind. And also. It. Can be the. Name. Of the first man. Adam. Now. In English. We have to make. A choice. Between those.
- Three. Translations. But in Hebrew. Two. Or even. All three. Of those. Can be. Meant. In any one. Use. Of.
- The word. So. Just to. To. To. To. Keep that in mind. As. As we read this. And look at it. So. God. Uses. A.
- Unique. Form of words. When he's creating. Humans. He doesn't use. These words. When he's creating. Anything else. But when he's making. Humans. He says. Let us make. Mankind. In our image.
- [9 : 22] And in our likeness. And then. In verse 27. It says. God created mankind. In his own image. In the image of God. He created them. What does it mean.
- To be made. To be created. In the image. And likeness. Of God. In the ancient world. And some parts.
- Of the modern world. People. Worship. Various gods. And they make. Images. Of their gods. To represent. Those gods. Now the bible.
- Says that is something. We should not do. And it's. Because it's completely. The wrong way around. There is one creator. God. And we can't make.
- Images of him. And when we try to. It ends up being. A horrible distortion. Of what. Of God. Of what God is like. But rather.
- [10 : 18] God has made us. As human beings. In his. Own image. And likeness. So humans are not God. We're not the same as God.
- But in some ways. We. Reflect God. Just as what you see. In the mirror. When you look in the mirror. You see an image. It's not you. It's an image.
- Of you. Or we might say things like. She's the image. Of her mum. Now of course. The daughter's. A different. Person.
- A different being. From her mum. But. Maybe like her. In many ways. Many respects. And. Probably what's meant. By being in the image.
- And likeness of God. It probably includes. Everything in humans. That. Is distinct. From other creatures. And that corresponds. In some way. To what God is like.
- [11 : 15] But I think the. Passage. Gives us a few more things. A few more specifics. Than that. And I want to look at. Four things. Four aspects. Of our being made. In the image and likeness of God.
- And these are kind of. Interconnected. And interwoven. So. How I've divided this up. May not. You know. You could have divided it up. In a different way. Because these things. Are kind of bound up together. So.
- Four things. The first thing. The first thing. Is that humans. Are ruling. Beings. In verse 26. And 28. God gives humans. The task.
- Of ruling. Over the rest. Of creation. Now. God. Is still the. Supreme ruler. Over his creation. But he. Delegates.
- Rule. To humans. He gives. Rule. He entrusts us. With rule. Under his supreme. Rule. In the. Ancient world.
- [12 : 11] The world. In which Genesis. Was originally written. Egyptian. And. Assyrian. Texts. Describe. The king. The king.

Of those. Nations. Of those peoples. As the image. Of God. But. Genesis. Doesn't do that. Genesis. It kind of.

It's far more democratic. Than that. Because. It extends. That honor. And dignity. To every. Human being. Male. And female. Not just the king.

But every human being. Is made in God's. Image and likeness. Now. Our task. Of ruling. Over. And subduing.

The earth. Is expressed. In many. Different. Activities. So. For example. Farming. Or building. Arts. Crafts. Science.

[13 : 04] Music. Technology. Education. Study. Just. The whole. Sort of realm. Of human activity. Comes under that. We are.

Creatures. Who create. Order. And beauty. That is. What humans do. Of course. We don't always do that. We sometimes create disorder. And ugliness. But we are made.

To create. Order. And beauty. I wonder. If your children. Do you like. Any of you like. Drawing. Or painting. Or making things. Because that's.

That's an amazing thing. Calfs. Don't. Draw. Paint. Puppies. Or kittens. Don't. Draw. Paint. It's something only. Only children.

Do. Or only. Only humans do. And it's expressing the fact. That we are made. In God's image. God is the creative God. The God who creates. And he has made humans.

[14 : 00] Creative. So all these are. Also he has created us. To be fruitful. And increase in number. That refers to. Having children.

To multiplying. And all of these are good. And legitimate activities. Because they are part. Of the purpose. For which God. Has made us. Now the command.

To subdue. The earth. Should not be taken. As a green light. To exploit. And pollute. And destroy. The earth. In the next chapter. In Genesis 2.

Verse 15. We're told. That the Lord God. Took the man. And put him. In the garden of Eden. To work it. And to take care of it. Or to serve it.

And to guard it. So our rule. Is that of guardians. Of stewards. Taking care. Of the creation.

[14 : 55] That God has placed us in. And placed us over. As rulers. So that's the first thing. Humans are ruling beings. The second is that humans are spiritual beings.

In verse 28. We read. God blessed them. And God said. To them. Now. Already in Genesis 1.

We have seen that God is a speaking being. Because he speaks things. Into existence. God says. Let there be light. And light. Appears. But here for the first time.

God speaks directly. To some part. Of his creation. He doesn't speak to. The birds. The fish. He speaks them into existence.

But he doesn't speak to them. Here for the first time. He speaks to. Something. Within his creation. He speaks to. These humans. And this tells us much.

[15 : 56] About. Ourselves. As humans. That humans. Have rational minds. And humans were made. To hear. God. Speak. And to understand.

And to understand. What he says. And also as humans. We are given the ability. To respond. By speaking back. To God. God.

Speaking to. These first humans. Tells us that. We alone. As humans. Are made for relationship. With God. God. He has made us. With the potential.

To hear his voice. And to receive. His revelation. And God has made us. With the ability. To respond back. To God. In prayer. And in worship.

So in other words. Humans. Are spiritual. Beings. The. Westminster. Shorter. Catechism. The first question. And answer. Tells us. That our chief. Purpose.

[16 : 52] As human beings. Is to glorify God. And to enjoy him. Forever. That is. The purpose. For which we have been. Made.

To glorify God. And to enjoy him. So that's the second thing. Humans are spiritual beings. The third is that humans. Are moral. Beings.

Now. This is sort of jumping. A bit. A bit. Into chapter two. Because in chapter two. Of Genesis. You have a kind of. It's a sort of parallel. And complementary account. Of creation. That is more sort of.

Focused on. Human beings. But in. Genesis two. Verse fifteen. We read that the Lord. God commanded the man.

You may eat. From every tree. In the garden. But you must not eat. From the tree. Of the knowledge. Of good and evil. Which was in the middle. Of the garden. For God says.

[17 : 49] When you eat from it. You will certainly. You may die. So God gives. The man. Adam. A command.

A prohibition. He's not. To eat from the fruit. Of this particular tree. And the fruit of this tree. Was. A sign. Or a symbol.

For Adam. It reminded him. That. God. Is the one who. Decides. What is good. And evil. This tree.

Represented God's. Moral. Authority. And. If Adam. Were to eat. From this tree. As indeed. He does go on to do. He would be. Disobeying God's.

Command. That would mean. That Adam. Was rejecting. God's authority. And appointing himself. As the one. Who decided. What was good. And what was evil. For him.

[18 : 45] It would be. Declaring his. Autonomy. From God. Adam. And then Eve. Were created. Perfect. They were part of God's. Original.

Creation. Which God. Pronounced. Very good. But God. Also created humans. With. A will. To choose. Obedience to God.

Or. Disobedience. God. Is the. Supreme. Moral being. He is good. And he is righteous. And he has made humans.

As moral beings. He made humans. Upright. Uniquely like God. In that they have an awareness. Of right. And wrong. And he also made humans.

With. A will. With a real choice. To choose good. Or to choose evil. The fourth.

[19 : 41] Sort of distinctive feature. Is that humans. Are relational beings. So we have already seen. That we were made. To relate. To God. Our maker. But also.

To. To speak. And relate. To other humans. In verse 27. We read. That he made them. Sorry. Male and female. He created. Them.

Now this is the most. Basic. And fundamental. Distinction. Within the human race. Now of course. Other species. Are. Male. And female.

But that's not. It's not mentioned. It's not specifically mentioned. In the. Genesis account. It's only mentioned. Of human beings. And I think what.

The text of Genesis. Is doing. It's emphasizing. That both. Males. And females. Male and female. Are made. In God's image.

- [20 : 39] And likeness. Likeness. And that means. That although men and women. Are different. In so many ways. They are equal. In value. And in significance.
- Because they are equally made. In God's image. And likeness. That means that. Sexism. Or belittling. The opposite sex.
- Has no place. In life. As God. Intended it. Now this. It kind of hints. At the importance of. Of family. And community. And society. Which. Again is developed. More in chapter 2. But God uses. In the kind of formula.
- The words that God uses. To create humans. He uses a. We've already seen. A unique. Form of words. But. Part of that. We didn't sort of touch on this earlier.
- [21 : 36] Is that God uses. Plural. Pronouns. In creating humans. He says. Let us. Make. Mankind. In our.
- Image. In our likeness. Now. English. And. Some other languages. Have. What's called. A majestic plural. Where.
- A single individual. A single person. Can be speaking. But use the plural. Famous example. In. Is Queen Victoria. She's once.
- Supposed to have said. We are not amused. And. Of course. She was speaking about herself. And. The Queen. And often. Other people. Editors of.
- Papers. Often use. We. When they mean. I. So they use the plural. In that way. But Hebrew. Which is the original language. Of Genesis. Doesn't have.
- [22 : 31] That kind of. Majestic plural. So it's really noteworthy. That. The one creator. God. Speaks. Using the plural. When.
- He creates human beings. Now. Some have suggested. That God is speaking to. Angels. But angels. Don't appear anywhere. In this creation account.
- And also. Angels are nowhere in the Bible. Said to be. Co-creators. With God. God. The best. Explanation.
- Of this plural usage. Is that. Here is. A suggestion. Just a hint. Of something that is. Developed. Later on in the Bible. And especially in the New Testament.
- That there is. Plurality. Within. The one God. So in the. When we come to the New Testament. We find that. In the.
- [23 : 27] The one God. There is only one God. But in this one God. There is an eternal. Community. Consisting of the Father. The Son. Or Word. And.
- The Holy Spirit. It's what later. Scholars. Termed. The Trinity. But these three. The Father. The Son. The Holy Spirit. They are one God. They are in. In community. With. Each other. God.
- God himself. Is a community. And. The fact that this is expressed. In the creation. Of human beings. Suggests that.
- Humans. Are also created to be. Social. Relational beings. Who reflect. That community. That is there. Within the one God. It also reminds us.
- [24 : 21] That God did not. Create humans. Or indeed. Any other creature. Because he was lonely. God was never lonely. Even in eternity. Before there was any creation. God was not lonely. Because.
- There was this eternal. Community. Within God. The. The community of Father. Son. And Holy Spirit. Who delighted. In.
- Each other. I want to deal with a. A question. And it's this. Have humans not lost. The image and likeness of God.

Through. Sin. Through the fall into. Sinfulness. And the answer that the Bible gives. Is no. The Bible. After the.

After the fall. After Adam and Eve's rebellion. Against God. It still speaks of humans. Being made in God's image. And likeness. You can look at these. And they go home.

[25 : 15] But Genesis chapter 9. Verse 6. And also James. Chapter 3. Verse 9. Speak of humans. Still being made in God's image. And likeness. And this teaching about.

Who we are. As human beings. Should profoundly affect. The way. We think about. About. And relate. To both ourselves. And to other people. First of all.

We need to have a right. Self-esteem. We are not God. God. And. We should approach. Our maker. With. Humility. And. Submission.

And worship. But neither. Are we. Nothing. Some Christians. So stress. So much stress. Human sinfulness. That they can give the impression.

That. We're worthless. That is not. The Bible's teaching. In fact. It is our great dignity. And worth. That makes sin. So serious.

[26 : 16] I remember. Once seeing. In our local park. Some crows. Attack and kill. A young magpie. And. It was unpleasant. But.

It doesn't compare. With. With human. Violence. And destruction. Of another human being. We commit. Evil. As divine. Image bearers. And that is what makes.

Evil. Sin. So utterly. Serious. And horrific. C.S. Lewis. Puts this sort of dual nature. Of human beings.

Beautifully. At the end of the book. Prince Caspian. In the Narnia series. Now if you've only watched the film. It's not in the film. You have to read the book for this. But. At the end of the book.

The lion. Aslan. Is telling Prince Caspian. About his ancestry. About how he is descended. From shipwrecked pirates. Who stumbled. Into the world of Narnia.

[27 : 12] And Caspian responds. I was wishing that I came. Of a more honourable lineage. Aslan replies. You come.

Of the Lord Adam. And the Lady Eve. And that is both honour. Enough to erect the head. Of the poorest beggar. And shame enough.

To bow the shoulders. Of the greatest emperor. On earth. Be content. And so as humans. We have. Both. Honour.

And shame. Both. Dignity. And depravity. But we have. Great value. Your life is.

Sacred. Because. You are made. In God's. Image. And likeness. And that means. There is. There is a proper. And right. Self love. And self respect.

[28 : 06] And self care. So. When someone. Harms themselves. That is. Kind of a denial of that. And shows that something is wrong.

But also that. Self love. Self respect. Self care. Extends to others. The second. Most important. Command in the. In the whole of God's law.

According to Jesus. Is this. It's to love your neighbour. As. Yourself. So just as we love ourselves. We care for ourselves. We should extend that.

To our neighbour. And Jesus also taught. That our neighbour. Includes everyone. Including. Our enemy. And so we should. Show great respect. And honour.

For every. Human being. Because everyone is made. In God's. Image. And likeness. We should show. Respect. And honour.

- [29 : 01] Even to those who are poor. And weak. And sick. And those who have low status. In the eyes of the world. We should show. Respect.
- And honour. To the refugee. To the old person. Suffering from dementia. To the child. In the womb. To the person who has made. An utter mess of their life.
- Through addiction. Or some other destructive behaviour. They are still in the image of God. And. We should respect them. And honour them for that. We should also.
- Show. Such respect. And honour for. All people. Whatever their race. Or culture. Or religion. Or background. Dr. Martin Luther King. Based his fight against.
- Racism. And. For civil rights. On this biblical teaching. That all people are created equal. In the image. And likeness. Of God. God. Now many.
- [30 : 01] Secular people. Are very active. And passionate. In campaigning. For human rights. Sometimes. More than. Religious people. And it's commendable. To campaign.
- For. Human rights. But the problem. With secular. Based human rights. Is with the why. Question. With. Establishing.
- A right. And an adequate. Foundation. For human rights. You see. If this universe. Has happened. By chance. By an unguided set.
- Of random events. What meaning. Is there to life. And to. To good. And to evil. If human beings. Are the product.
- Of just. Random. Undirected. Evolutionary processes. Why does it. Then matter. If the strong. Devour. The weak. Why is a human life.
- [30 : 57] Worth. More than a monkey. Or a mosquito. Why should I treat. Another human being. With respect. Why shouldn't I torture.
- Or kill. Or abuse. Another person. If I have the power. And if I perceive. It would advance. My own. Interest. To do so. Adolf Hitler.
- Is reputed. To have said. I do not see. Why mankind. Should not be. Just as cruel. As nature. And Hitler. Applied. His.
- Brand of. Social Darwinism. To the extermination. Of Jews. And gypsies. And disabled people. And homosexuals. And others. Because his view was.
- That the fittest survive. And those who are deemed. Unworthy of survival. They just. That they can perish. And they perish violently. Now. I may feel that.
- [31 : 52] Hitler. And the Nazis. Were wrong. Horrendously wrong. And evil. And I hope you. Think that too. But if there is. No God. And if there is. No ultimate standard.
- Of right. And wrong. And of good. And evil. Then there is no basis. For refuting. The Nazi position. Secular notions.
- Of human rights. Provide no reason. Why humans. Should have. Rights. They do not answer. The why question. Why all humans.
- Have certain. Inalienable rights. But if on the other hand. There is a God. As the Bible teaches. One God. Who is. Eternal. Infinite.
- The maker. And owner. Of the whole of. Creation. Including every human being. A God. Whose own character. And actions. Are consistently. And perfectly. Just. And righteous.
- [32 : 44] And good. And who made us. Human beings. In his own image. And likeness. And made us with great. Dignity. And worth. And who requires.
- That we be just. And righteous. And good. If there is such a God. Then there is. A universal. Reference point. A foundation. For concepts.

Of right. And wrong. And good. And evil. And there is an ultimate. Authority. For morality. And ethics. An ultimate. Bar of appeal. For justice. And a sure foundation. For human dignity.

And human rights. And if you are a believer. Who believes. What the Bible says. About humans. Then we of all people. Should act on this.

We should care. Passionately. About human dignity. And human rights. We should truly love. Our neighbor. As we love. Ourselves. Before we close.

[33 : 41] I just want to make. One final point. God. As we have seen. Made humans. In his own image. And likeness. And that sets.

The scene. The context. For one day. When God himself. Will become. A human. Which is done. In and as.

The person. Of Jesus Christ. John chapter 1. Which. In many ways. Echoes. Genesis chapter 1. Introduces us.

To the eternal. Word. Who. Was with God. And who was himself. God. Developing that idea. Of plurality.

Which we. We saw. Hinted at. In Genesis chapter 1. Within. That plurality. Within the one God. God. And. And. This word.

[34 : 36] The word. Who. Was with God. And was God. Became. Flesh. And made. His dwelling. Among us. That means. That he became. Human. And lived. Among us.

And it wasn't. Inappropriate. For God. To do that. For God. To become. Human. Because. In the beginning. God. Made humans. In his own image.

And likeness. And so. In Jesus Christ. God. Became. Human. Fully. And forever. Human. A true.

And perfect. Human. A human being. As God. Intended. Humans. To be. As we read on. In Genesis. We read. That the.

The first. Adam. Failed. And fell. He disobeyed. By eating the fruit. He and Eve. Rebelled. They revolted.

[35 : 32] Against God. Their maker. And the whole of creation. Was affected. By that. All the relationships. In creation. Were affected. By that. But Jesus Christ.

Comes. As the new. Adam. Who lived. As the pinnacle. Of humanity. And where Adam. Failed. Jesus Christ.

Fulfilled. Perfectly. The human destiny. That God. Had intended. And when we see. Jesus Christ. We see. The eternal God.

Revealed to us. In human nature. And we also see. Humanity. As God. Intended it. To be. Jesus Christ.

Christ. Lived. The life. That we. Should have lived. And he also died. For our sins. And rose again. To new. And everlasting life.

[36 : 30] And it's through faith. In him. Through being united to him. In faith. By faith. That we begin. To be restored. And to be renewed.

To become the human beings. That God. Intended us to be. May God bless his word to us. Let's pray. Okay.