

The Making of Man(kind)

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back this evening to Genesis chapter 1 and we're reading at verse 26. Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

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. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.

And if you go forward to chapter 2 and at verse 7, we'll also take these words into consideration briefly. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

We've been following the teaching of Genesis 1 regarding the formation of the heavens and the earth. We've looked at it in terms of God, and how he came to form the earth, the creation, and formation into the order that we presently see.

Then also the way in which separation was caused by God as he brought separation between night and day. And then also separation of the waters above from the waters beneath, revealing dry land.

[1 : 27] And we saw that all of that really is a preparation in a sense for the arrival of God's pinnacle of creation. The very highest part of his creation, because this is going to be man's environment.

This is created for the benefit of mankind. When you come to the final part of the chapter here, you move into the idea of creation and dominion.

And the dominion, of course, is the dominion that God gave to human beings. To the man, the woman that he had made as human beings. But before we come to the dominion, and we're not really going to deal with that tonight, we'll look at the creation of man himself.

The making of mankind. And there are a number of things in this passage and in chapter 2 where we read, that show us quite clearly that this is really the apex, the pinnacle, the summit of God's creation.

And of everything else that he has made, man is placed at the very top. Notice what he says, first of all, at the beginning of verse 26.

[2 : 40] Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness. Now you remember we said the word God in Hebrew, Elohim, takes, although it's a plural form of word, it actually takes a singular verb.

But here you come to a plural as God speaks into himself, as it were, and says, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

Who is he talking to? Who is he talking about? There's been a whole range of ideas as to how to interpret the plural of this verse. Some people say it's God talking to the heavenly hosts, including the angels, that God is saying, let us now make man.

There's no evidence whatever that that really is a proper understanding of the text. And it's better taking it in what you can first of all call a plural of fullness.

Hebrew has such a thing as a plural of fullness. When you think about God and the fullness that's in him, without even going as far as the New Testament, we mentioned recently the fullness of God as that resides in Jesus Christ bodily in terms of his being man as well as God.

[4 : 03] But the fullness of God is in him bodily. And it pleased God that in him should that fullness dwell. But the plural of fullness here in this text really brings us into the mystery of God's being, the richness of God's being that is so, so far above our comprehension of all that it means.

This plural of fullness is unfolded as you go through the Bible as God increased the revelation that he gave to human beings, from here Moses all the way down through history.

Until you come into the New Testament and you then have a fairly clear view of the fact that the fullness that is in God, this plural of fullness, is actually a fullness of triune life.

Life involving three persons in one God. That plural of fullness is seen to be a plurality of persons and a fullness that each of them possesses.

And yet there is but one God comprising these three persons. And the passage we read in John, John chapter 14, is an interesting passage in many respects.

[5 : 26] But it's interesting in relation to this because of the way that it's so repeatedly, Jesus there teaching the disciples of his relationship with the Father, and how the Father was in him and he in the Father, and they the disciples actually in him.

But he also mentions the Holy Spirit, the helper or the comforter, that would come subsequent to his leaving the world and going back to the Father. In that chapter, you have the three persons of the Godhead.

The three persons within this plurality of fullness. The Father, the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. And it's interesting there how he actually put it in terms of verse 17 and also verse 23, where he speaks about that fullness or that plurality, as he speaks there of the Father having been seen through himself.

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. But in verse 17, he speaks there a bit about the spirit of truth as well, because you know him, for he dwells in you and will be with you.

And then verse 23, he again goes back to speak about loving him and keeping my word. And my Father will love him, and we will come.

[6 : 48] You see, there's the plural again. My Father will love him, those who keep my word. Anyone who keeps my word loves me. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Who's living in your heart? Who's living in your soul? Who has set up home for himself in the souls of those who believe, of those who have come to know God as their Savior?

Well, you can say in a general sense, God lives in their soul. God has made a home, a house there, a tabernacle, if you like, for himself. Yes, but the three persons are involved in that residence.

That fullness of plurality, that plurality and fullness is present in your heart. God the Father is there. Through the Holy Spirit, so is Jesus the Son.

And there's a wonderful truth. And it's right there at the beginning, in embryonic form at least, in seed form. It's the very beginning of this great thought.

[7 : 50] It's sown there, and it then sprouts through in the rest of the Bible, so that you see it more and more. This plural of fullness. This fullness of God. This God who is Trinity.

What do you get left of salvation? If you remove the Trinity from the idea of God. The answer to that is nothing.

Your salvation depends upon the triune God as the God who is three persons. The Father sent the Son. The Son came and became incarnate.

The Spirit takes of his redemption and applies it to us. Without the three persons and the roles that each of them play in our own redemption personally, you can't have redemption.

Not the one the Bible speaks of anyway. That's why the Trinity is so precious to us. Even though our minds struggle to cope with the immensity of that doctrine, you're thankful that you know it is true that your salvation is so inseparably connected to that fact.

[9 : 04] So there is firstly, let us make man in our image. It's a plural of fullness that takes us into the very depth of the being of God.

The richness of the triune God. The second thing is this emphasis on image. Let us make man in our image after our likeness.

Sometimes theologians have made a difference or a distinction between the word image and the word likeness. They have tended sometimes to regard the word image as being something more to do with the physical aspect of human life and the word likeness that that is more to do with the spiritual side of man.

But it's really clear from the Bible that the two words really mean exactly the same thing really. Because they're used interchangeably. Sometimes just the word likeness is used. Where it obviously means the same as image.

So we're taking it that that really is just a repetition for emphasis. And that God was saying let us make man in our image. That's to say after our likeness.

[10 : 17] But what is that? What does it mean that human beings were made in the image of God? The very fact that God is speaking this way in a way that's so entirely different to the likes of verse 24 for example.

It says let the earth bring forth living creatures. We'll come to the word living creatures in a minute. It's applied to man as well. Very same word in Hebrew. But it's a different way of God speaking.

He's simply saying let the earth bring forth. But when it comes to man he speaks into himself and says let us create. Let us make. It's the same word for create as was used earlier.

There's obviously a distinction because God is setting about now this being, this mankind that is so above the other forms of life that he's made.

Let us make. There's a conference within God just immediately prior to the creation of man. One of the most wonderful conferences that you can say ever took place.

[11 : 27] Conference here within God himself. And the image of God as you know has really in many ways received a whole lot of treatment down over the years as well.

And different ideas as to what it means for man to have been made in the image of God. But let's see if we can just look at a number of elements that will help us understand what the Bible means by this.

First thing I have to say is that man is a unity. It isn't true to say that the image of God resides in what we call our souls.

And that our physical side, our bodies, are not at all involved in being made in the image of God. Man is in fact a unity.

Man is made in a oneness of physical and spiritual properties. And whatever devastation sin has caused even within the being of man, when God created man in his image, he created him male and female.

[12 : 33] And he created him what we might call body and soul. But the entire man, physical as well as spiritual, is made in the image of God. In other words, you can say that your physical side, the physical side to your existence, is itself involved as reflecting something of God, even though God is spirit and you are not divine.

Second thing we have to say is that being made in the image of God means that man is a rational creature. Now if you contrast the other forms of life, especially the other, what's usually called animate life, that's to say life as you find in animals compared to plants and trees and vegetation.

There's life there, but it's not animate life. It's not life that has breath, that has the ability to move, as animals do. When you come to this emphasis, man is a rational creature.

And although man also possesses animate life, a life in which there is breathing, in which there is movement, just like the animals from that respect, yet man possesses faculties that animals do not have.

Rationality belongs to human beings exclusively. What does it mean, rationality? What do we mean by that? Well, it means you have a thinking mind.

[14 : 04] It means you have such a thing as a will by which you act. It means that you have a conscience. Cows don't have consciences.

Apes don't have consciences. There's plenty of ability among animals in order to come to what you might say an understanding of things. You can train animals up and some animals are obviously supremely intelligent.

Sheep dogs, monkeys, squirrels even. There are so many animals that you can have trained and even without training. They are obviously able to set about things together or individually that sometimes fill us human beings with amazement.

And they are even able, we know from these great programs you find on television, the likes of killer whales, they are able to pass on to their offspring their hunting techniques.

Now that shows you that these animals have abilities, but they don't have rationality. They don't have conscience. They don't have a will. They don't have the kind of emotional life that you and I have as human beings.

[15 : 14] That is the property of mankind. God created man with these. They belong to man made in the image of God. The God who is supremely mind and understanding and will.

And then you follow on from that and say that man is not only a unity and rational in the image of God, it also includes that man is spiritual.

And that's a word that's commonly used nowadays for a whole lot of things other than what the Bible strictly speaking means by being spiritual. Sometimes we use the word ourselves of people who you might say are highly spiritual.

That is to say people who are close to God, people who have an insight into things spiritual others perhaps don't have. And you can say, well, that's a very spiritual person, a very spiritually perceptive person.

But spiritual really means, strictly speaking, somebody who really possesses fellowship with God.

[16 : 23] That's the strict meaning of spiritual because it comes from spirit. It comes from the Holy Spirit. Who is a spiritual? Who is a saint?

Who is a person who has spiritual qualities? It is the person who has the spirit of God. And man was made as a spiritual being because within the image of God, things like love, knowledge, righteousness, holiness of life, they are all there as man was created.

And it's that part of the image that we lost in our sin, in our fall against God. Because the moment we fell in our rebellion against God, we lost love for him.

We lost the knowledge of him in fellowship. We lost righteousness, God's full acceptance of us. And that is what is restored to us in Christ.

It's interesting that from the likes of chapter 9 of Genesis, for example, which is after the flood, man is still spoken of as being made in the image of God.

[17 : 34] Even after the fall, man is still regarded as a creature in God's image. Although that image has come to be affected so deeply in these ways, as we've said, the spiritual side of it, in love and knowledge and righteousness and holiness, all of these things have largely gone in the relationship with God that human beings have.

And that is what's restored to us. If you go through to the New Testament and follow out especially Paul's letters, the likes of Colossians, you can see that he speaks about being renewed after the image of him who created us.

In other words, God is restoring to us, or restoring us to, the possession of those great qualities of love, of righteousness, of holiness.

And all the faculties that were themselves damaged so badly by the fall, our conscience, our will, our affections, our understanding, they are all again being brought so that they will ultimately be as they should be when we are glorified with Christ.

So that's the second thing. In our image, in after our likeness, is what God said. So that involves, that applies to man as a unity, that applies to man being a rational creature, having this, the possession of rationality, mind and will and conscience.

[19 : 04] It also especially takes in the spirituality of man. There's Augustine's great phrase again, isn't it? You remember that phrase that we so often come up with in Augustine's prayer where he said, Thou hast made us for thyself, and our soul can find no rest until we find our rest in thee.

In other words, Augustine was saying man was created for fellowship with God, and man is restless without that fellowship. Man doesn't admit it.

We don't find ourselves readily coming to confess it, but when God brings the truth home to us, then we realize that our life, for all that we've been looking in the wrong places, it's a restlessness of looking for peace, and especially looking for security and fellowship with our Creator.

And it's in Christ that that is wonderfully restored for us. Now that has two implications, the fact that we have been made in the image of God. Two implications, two things follow on from that.

The first is that God is not utterly different to what we are as human beings. Now you have to be careful how we say that and how we define that.

[20 : 23] God is not utterly different. God is different in many respects. God is separate from us in terms of the perfection of His holiness.

God is different to us and separate from us in the fact that He has unbegun, uncreated life. Unchangeable life.

Which we don't. We are finite. We are creaturely life. But He's not utterly different. Because there's a correspondence. And it's the image of God that man is created in that makes that connection which other animals do not have.

Other creatures do not have. That's to say, being in the image of God means that God Himself corresponds to us and we to Him within that image in which we were created.

What a great privilege that is. That being made in the image of God we have something which corresponds to the life of God Himself and are able to hold fellowship and communion with Him.

[21 : 33] To speak to Him. To listen to Him. To pray to Him. To hear His voice. No other creature has been made in that way with which God has such correspondence.

The second thing, the implication of it is that we actually need to treat our fellow human beings recognizing the image of God as such an important thing.

We may have time sometime to go into a follow on to these chapters from the creation to the likes of chapter 9 of Genesis where after the flood God gave certain instructions to Noah and you remember that He emphasized there as well the dignity and the superiority of human life over all other types of life.

It says there you shall not eat flesh with its life that is its blood and for your life blood I will require a reckoning from every beast I will require it and from man from his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man whoever sheds the blood of man by man shall his blood be shed for God made man in His own image.

Of course that's the passage especially that capital punishment or the argument for capital punishment is actually based and the capital punishment I know that is something we don't necessarily all agree is now still valid maybe we do different opinions of that even amongst reliable commentators from the Bible but whatever you say of that particular point it is undoubtedly the case that what God said there with regard to the punishment for murder has connected with it in terms of describing its seriousness as a sin as a crime it has connected with it the fact that man was made in the image of God.

[23 : 43] You see that's one of the terrible tragedies of sin that the more you depart from an understanding of the Bible and acceptance of the Bible and the more you come to live in darkness and by what human beings themselves actually have as human values the more likely you are to treat human life cheaply.

We wouldn't have the kind of thing that you have in our society if there was more recognition given to the image of God with regard to human beings the way that people are treated in old age the way that people are treated with disabilities the way that the life of unborn children is treated the scandal of abortion all of that is connected to a disrespect for human life and it's a disrespect for human life largely because we have lost sight of the fact that God created us in his image that we bear the image of God even in our fallenness that it still exists as part of our being.

We treat human life as indeed all life but human life particularly with the respect that's due to it because of the image of God. Thirdly there's in our image there's the plurality we mentioned that of fullness the image of God the likeness of God thirdly he speaks here about male and female notice how he puts it he created man in his own image in the image of God he created a male and female he created them he didn't create the woman at the same time all at once with Adam he created her from Adam's side we learned later but the fact is humanness involves equally women as well as men female as well as male every female is as fully human as every male is and vice versa the distinction that you have between the genders is something that we have to notice but that distinction does not make any difference when it comes to possessing or being made in the image of God male and female he made them and that's really connected there closely to being made in the image of God whatever you find in some societies women mistreated that's sometimes been due to looking at female life as a kind of lower type of life than male life there's nothing whatsoever in that nor is there indeed in Christ in terms of their spiritual standing male and female are equally on the same level as justified before God the distinctions come in in terms of gender distinctions there is a distinctiveness to being male and a distinctiveness to being female and there's a distinctiveness to having headship in a family setting these are other areas that we can go into perhaps some other time but it's male and female that he emphasizes as what was created in the image of God male and female he created them now then think about the distinction in the genders and we remember at the beginning we said that this is a passage which is going to take us right up to confront some of the thinking of our day that's what the Bible we need to do with the

Bible that's what we need to do with the thinking of our day male and female he created them not a mixture not a transgender not a bisexuality within each gender the only bisexuality of which the Bible knows is the distinction between male and female and that's how God created us we know that the fall again made a great lot of damage to our understanding and even to our outworking of what it is to be male and to be female but it's impossible as you read and as you believe Genesis 1 and also Genesis 2 it's impossible not to believe that God made distinct male and female genders as belonging to mankind and in addition you have to see this that they are complementary of each other that's to say they complement each other they have qualities which fit with one another needs physically mentally spiritually too perhaps but male and femaleness are created by God specifically to be complementary not contradictory not the same in terms of gender but complementary being fitted and suited to each other now then you see that's what's so dreadful about the present situation that you have where you find all kinds of deviations from this biblical teaching it's not surprising when you put the bible aside when you rip it up when you just deal with nothing but human understanding human ideas that's the kind of thing you end up with because you have the idea that you can actually be born as a male but you develop into female psychologically and therefore you have to take action physically as well to comply with that then you carry all that into this idea of same sex relationship same sex marriage whether it's female or male all of these are gross distortions caused by human sin and darkness of human mind away from the bible's teaching from the basis that you have in the bible to understand humanity and human sexuality and human gender and all of these things that belong to being human god has built in the distinctness it's man it's fallen man it's sinful man that has torn that up and made up his own concoction of it you see how far we've come from this bible's teaching and from god's creation of humanity at the first how far from that we've come with the gender confusion that characterizes our age and it's all really due to the fact that we just choose to ignore the bible and dismiss god as a reality so there's male and female and all the implications of that in terms of gender distinctness complementariness all of these things that we need to re-emphasize for the world of our day the final thing is what you find in chapter 2 if we can quickly cut across to that chapter 2 verse 7 where you find that the lord

god formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature let's look at the words there he formed the man from the dust of the ground that's to say the word formed there in hebrew is now the idea of taking something that already exists but adding your skill to it the way a craftsman does setting about an object of art or something that he's going to produce from his skill that's the word applied there to god he formed man from the dust of the earth he didn't just take a handful of dust if you might put it that way and throw it into the air or just randomly throw it together he had an eye for detail and when you look into the composition of man and when you look into especially the psychology of man the spirituality of man then you realize that this being was made by the perfect craftsman he formed man from the dust of the earth and then he breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living creature it's interesting isn't it he breathed into him he's the only creature of whom that's said the life that the other animals possess the other creatures rather possess it's not life that

[33 : 18] God breathed into them specifically he created them that way they arrived that way as the earth brought them forth but for man God didn't just have a conference within himself God stooped down God as it were went on his knees and it's not disrespectful to say that he kissed man into life because the word that's used there is a very intimate one he breathed into him it's the kind of thing you find in mouth to mouth resuscitation except this is the originning of life for human beings God himself breathed into him he stooped down and intimately breathed life into this form that he had made and you can see from that that there's not just an act of creation but there is wonderfully an act of giving

God gave it's mysterious it's something we can't just define but God gave something of himself when he breathed into man and brought him alive he imparted something that originated with himself his breath if you like his own life we can put it with respect he breathed into him from himself he communicated he actually imparted to him this breath of life and so you see again it shows the care to attention the wonderful pinnacle of creation that man is where the very life we have as human beings came from God breathing it into us and you see then it says man became a living creature I know it's in the AB he became a living soul the word in

Hebrew though is exactly the same as you find there in verse 24 let the earth bring forth living creatures same word as you find there in chapter 2 verse 7 for man nefesh high living creature now we speak of us having a soul and having a body and there's nothing wrong with that but that's not the truth that's being taught us here what we're being taught here is that the whole of man body and spirit or soul if you like to put it that way the whole of that became an animated being a living being through God breathing into him and the life that we possessed prior to the fall and in a sense too it still applies in the way that we are so different to other forms of life because we originated in the life that

God gave us at the beginning we originated with the breath of God from the breath of God himself and isn't it interesting and isn't it significant too that when you come to the New Testament and you come to the way that Jesus in John chapter 20 for example when you think about the new creation what we come to be as new creatures what the church comes to be as a living thing in which God dwells John chapter 20 Christ after the resurrection came into the company of the disciples and before he said receive the Holy Spirit he did something he breathed on them isn't that interesting doesn't that make a connection with Genesis 2 God breathed into man the breath of life man became a living creature and then by the fall we lost that communion with God and our righteousness and our love for him and it's restored to us in

Christ we are created anew after the image of him who created us where do we get the new life from where do we get the new spiritual life from because as Paul says to the Ephesians you who were dead in trespasses and sins we don't have that life spiritually that we had in Adam before the fall we get it from the Holy Spirit the two great events apart from what happened in the person of Christ himself the two great events in the temple if you like of God that human beings are they were created as God's temple for God to live in and as we saw Jesus was saying God is coming back to live there in redemption and the two pivotal events in man's experience are the way that the Holy

[39 : 00] Spirit departed when he sinned and fell and the way the Holy Spirit returns in our regeneration the temple is vacant and it's ruined it lies shattered from Genesis 3 onwards but in Christ it's rebuilt and it's rebuilt to be a habitation for God and as God returns by the Holy Spirit God is restoring human beings to what they were designed for to be his own home to be a residence for God to live in God and God in us let's pray O Lord O God we do give thanks for our being for we know that without you we would not have it that we would not exist our very existence is itself an evidence to us of your existence and especially the way that we exist above the rest of your creation we acknowledge

O Lord from that that you have made us for communion with yourself that you have given us dominion and dignity above all the other work of your hands we thank you especially for your restoration for the way in which we are brought in Christ Jesus back into fellowship with you for the way you are pleased again to return to this human temple that you have made and for the prospect that you will bring your people at last to occupy heaven with you so that together with their savior with their saving creating God they will enjoy eternity in the way they were designed for we thank you Lord for all that is entailed in that restoration we pray that you bless us this night and bless to us the teaching of your word we thank you Lord for every encouragement you give us we pray that you bless it to those who are here for the first time we thank you for them we pray that it may be increased we ask oh Lord that together we may go onwards in the love of

Christ and in that service of the Lord by which together we would know more of your blessing and more of that privilege of being your people in this world hear us now we pray for Jesus sake Amen for- Amen