

The Making of Mankind

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 July 2016

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] Now in the Old Testament, in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, and in the first chapter of Genesis, we're going to begin reading today at verse 26.

Book of Genesis, chapter 1, and at verse 26, and we'll read down into chapter 2 as far as verse 9. Then God said, 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.

There is no language used, or any spoken word, no sound is made by them, and yet their voice is heard. Throughout the world their voice resounds, their words to earth's remotest bounds.

And so on through to verse 8, Psalm 19, on page 22. The heavens above declare the glory of our God. The heavens above declare the glory of our God.

[4 : 1 1] And what is the name of God. And what is the name of God. The heavens above declare the glory of God.

Day after day, they are the Lord's peace. And night by night, their knowledge speaks.

There is no language used, or any spoken word.

No sound is made by them, and yet their voice is heard.

Throughout the world their voice resounds, their words to earth's remotest bounds.

[5 : 1 4] In heaven goldfish shalt end, a dwelling for the sun, Which like a bridegroom comes, hearts strong and keen to run.

His course from east to west complete, there's nothing hidden from his peace.

The perfect law of God revives the soul of man.

His status which are sure make wise the sinful one.

The precepts of the Lord arise, and fill the heart with great delight.

[6 : 3 1] Let's turn now to the way we read in the scriptures in the book of Genesis, Genesis 1, 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. Now as you recall, we've looked through the early part of the chapter, that's how the description of the creation is coming to reach its pinnacle in the description of man's creation, or mankind's creation by God.

We've seen how God built up, as we've seen the chapter developing, God built up the environment into which he was going to place man at his creation, so that now that we've come to see in verse 26 the creation of man as the pinnacle of God's creation, we find that everything is actually ready for him to be placed in that environment that's to his best advantage.

And as you come here to look at the creation of man, or of human beings, it's very evident as you read the verse that it reads differently to those verses previously that describe the creation of other animate beings such as livestock and fish and other beings like that, and even in terms of the inanimate life, the plants, and also the planets, that God spoke in a different way when he came to create human beings.

[8 : 24] And that itself should be a pointer to us that when God came to create us as human beings, he was creating us in a way that was setting us above every other aspect or every other part of his creation.

And that's such an important thing to remember when you come to ask, well, what is human life and what's its purpose? Where did it come from and how does it relate to every other kind of life that exists in the universe?

Three things we want to just look at. First one is very brief. Second one we'll look at a bit more closely. And the third one also just to finish off with. The first thing we notice is that God deliberated in our creation as human beings.

God deliberated. He had a conversation where he says here, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

That's the first thing that God deliberated in our creation. The second thing is that God decided our human identity. God decided our human identity.

[9 : 33] And that's going to take in what this says about the image of God as an important aspect of human identity. And also the fact that he made human beings male and female.

That's part of our identity as human beings. And it is an aspect of our creation as God created us like that.

Third thing is that God downloaded our human life. Now I'll explain that when we come to it, but we need to go to chapter 2 for that. And at verse 7, 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. Human life as it is originated from the breath of God. He didn't just create us from the dust physically.

He breathed into us that particular life that we now are as human beings in contrast to all other animate life of which this is not said.

[10 : 42] First then, God deliberated in our creation, let us make man in our image after our likeness. Who is God talking to? Where did this conversation take place?

With whom was he deliberating? Well, you remember way back at the beginning of our studies there that at the very start, the word for God in the beginning, God created. It is the Hebrew word, Elohim, which is actually a plural word.

And we notice that it takes a plural noun and it takes a singular verb, which itself is immediately a hint or just a small glimpse into something that the rest of the Bible then expands on as God revealed more and more of himself.

That, in other words, that God is himself a plurality in his own being. He is three persons, as we come to see more clearly from the New Testament. And while it would be important not to push this reference here, let us make, and after our likeness, it is undoubtedly something that points to the plurality of God's being.

And that too is an important aspect of our own life in relation to God because we know that our salvation involved these three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the working out of our redemption and in its application to us by the Holy Spirit, so that we come to possess that salvation that the Son of God procured by his death, having been sent by the Father into the world to do this.

[12 : 15] In other words, our religion today, our Christian religion, is unashamedly a Trinitarian religion. That's how it's been referred to down through the generations. And it's important that we retain that emphasis against every other kind of religion or every other kind of Christian theology, as it might be called, that would actually deny the triunity of God, that would not accept the three persons as they are laid out for us in the Scriptures.

And you'll see, as the Bible brings more and more of God to light as you go through it into the New Testament, especially when you come to the likes of the Gospel of John, if you read for yourselves John 14, verses 17 and 23, you'll find there a very clear distinction made by Jesus between himself and God the Father and God the Spirit.

When he spoke about him leaving the world, that was to say physically leaving them, not being with the disciples the way he had been up to then, and he was going to send them another helper, even the Holy Spirit.

And that means that this other person would come and he would be present through, as the Father would through that person mysteriously, but wonderfully in the life of his people. So there is God deliberating in our creation, if you like.

He's talking within himself, within his own being. But the very fact that he's deliberating is itself enough to show us that what he's about to do exceeds anything else that he has done up to that point.

[13 : 54] Let us make man in our image. There's no deliberation. There's no internal conversation in God.

He doesn't have this deliberation or conversation when he created the planets, when he created the sun and the moon and the stars, when he ordered that the earth bring forth living creatures, that the earth would be populated with them, and that the seas would swarm with fish.

There is no deliberation. He simply spoke and said, let it be so, and it was so. But when he came to create us as human beings, he said, let us make man. Let's have this creature, this mankind in our image.

It shows you how we are as human beings, the pinnacle of God's creation. That should give us a sense of thankfulness. And it should also fill us with a sense of dependence upon this God that he made us capable of fellowship with himself.

We'll see that in a moment. That's the first thing that God deliberated in our creation. And that itself shows that man's creation is of a different order, if you like, to the rest of the creation.

[15 : 09] Secondly, God decided our human identity. Let us make man in our image after our likeness. Of course, as you very well know, that opens up a large subject of study, the image of God.

What does the image of God mean in terms of this description that mankind was created in the image of God, after the likeness of God?

Leaving aside any nuances of difference between the word likeness and the word image, let's just focus on what essentially, in principle, it means. What does it tell us about mankind?

What does it tell us about ourselves and our nature as human beings that makes us different to every other creature in God's creation? Well, two things especially.

First of all, that we are rational beings. What I mean by that is that we have the capacity and the capability through our mind to think, to plan, to devise, to reach conclusions, to study, to do things like maths and science, to study ourselves, to study God as He's been revealed to us.

[16 : 27] We have in our rationality such things as our will and our conscience. We take decisions based on what we know. We feel guilty when we've done something wrong.

We feel pleased when we know we've done something right. Our conscience is active as part of our human being, part of what God created when He created us in His image.

Now realize that's very brief. But rationality is something that is true really in the strictest sense only of human beings. You can certainly find amongst the animal world, you can find animals doing remarkable things.

You can find animals seemingly remembering certain processes. You can see that in the way that animals can be trained to do things. Animals can actually do things in order to get food or work out where actually they're going to get their next bite or next treat from.

All of that, of course, is within the animal part of God's creation. But you never find an ape or a chimpanzee able to explain to you why he's not human.

[17 : 46] You never actually find any other creature that's animate able to explain to themselves or to human beings why the world is the way it is, how they're going to plan the next three weeks of their lives.

Rationality, in the strictest sense, is true of man alone. Human beings were made with minds capable of thinking and of planning and of ordering and of working out.

And that's part of what the image of God means as we read that He made man in His image. Because God is a God who is Himself perfect thought and perfect purpose and perfect plan and perfect in every way that you associate with a human mind.

Not that you just take a human mind and then say, well, God is the perfection of that. He's more than that. But remember that being made in the image of God means that we're made as rational beings because God Himself, so to speak, is a rational being.

He has mind that has planned and purposed all that exists and for Himself and for His glory. First thing then in our image is our rationality.

[19 : 07] The second thing is our spirituality. Because, again, different to any other animate life that God created, man is a spiritual creature.

You could say that that's something within this rationality, but it's actually more than just being a rational being because it includes when God created us.

You remember the catechism description in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. In other words, not only are we rational and capable of thinking and of planning and of purposing things, we are made specifically for communion with God.

We are made to have a relationship with our Creator. We are made to be able to hold that relationship, to follow through in that relationship, to use our minds and our conscience and our will in that relationship so that we express it through worship what we're doing today.

Through communion and prayer, through looking to Him to guide our lives, through all of these things that belong to our relationship with God, that's, if you like, in essence, the spiritual side of man.

[20 : 18] And whatever definitions you get of spirituality as a word, and there are all kinds of ideas as to what spirituality is, but in the biblical sense of it, spirituality means human beings made for communion with God and with each other.

But essentially in the relationship with God. Knowledge, righteousness, holiness, all of the things that you associate with being a Christian, but they're all part to begin with of what God created when He created us as human beings.

Adam and Eve prior to the fall, before they disobeyed God, before sin entered into their experience, they were themselves perfect in that relationship with God, having knowledge of God, holding fellowship with God, speaking to God, listening to God, worshiping God, giving God honor, placing Him first in their lives, all of these things.

They were made like that. We were made for that communion. That's why these great words are often quoted from Augustine's writings.

As part of a prayer that he himself wrote down and uttered, or put it in the form of a prayer, Lord, thou hast made us for thyself, and our soul can find no rest until we find our rest in thee.

[21 : 50] You couldn't say that, and you couldn't pray that, if you weren't a rational, spiritual human being, if you hadn't been made in the beginning for communion with God, for having a relationship with God, where in friendship with God, you lived side by side with Him as your Creator, and your God, and your friend.

And of course, all of that has to be seen nowadays, now in the light of Genesis 3, the account of our fall.

So man is a rational being, with all the capability and capacity that that includes, and man is a spiritual being, made for communion with God.

And there are two things that follow on from that. Firstly, that God is not utterly different to human beings. Now we have to be very careful how we frame that, and how we say that, because God, in a sense, is utterly different.

He is God. He is eternal. He is uncreated. But we are created beings. He created us. But we are not utterly different.

[23 : 02] There's a correspondence between human life and God. There's a correspondence in the sense that we have that capacity, as we said, because we are made in His image, for communion with Him, for a relationship with Him.

That doesn't mean that man is divine in any sense. Not even man saved, not even man prior to the fall, they were not divine. That's the kind of thing they come across in the teaching of the likes of Mormons.

And you mustn't think that Mormon teaching, even though you have people who follow that teaching in this very town, you mustn't think that that's really just a gentle neutrality, that's something benign and something nice to look at.

It's harmful. It's sinful. There are teachings within Mormonism which are blasphemous, which are dishonoring to Christ and to God in regard to Christ's origins. And it's the same when you come to sin and when you come to salvation and when you come to think of what man himself is, because Mormon salvation means that ultimately you're working towards becoming divine, becoming gods.

Where does that fit with the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? No, He's saying to us, He made us in His image.

[24 : 17] He did not make us, though we correspond to Him, He did not make us equal to Him. Like Him, but not on the same level as Him.

Not even in our perfection. And the second thing you remember from that is that this is absolutely crucial in relation to how we treat our fellow human beings.

How we treat our fellow human beings is not just a matter of looking to the teaching, of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, or the New Testament Scriptures, or other aspects of the Old Testament.

It goes back to your creation and the image of God. And you can prove that very easily from Scripture, if you think even of Genesis chapter 9, and the way that after the flood, God reordered, if you like, or gave certain things to know about the requirements that God then had of Himself and of His descendants.

And He says this, For your life blood, I will require a reckoning. From every beast, I will require it. From every man, from his fellow man, I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

[25 : 31] Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. For God made man in His own image. Now, I know they can interpret that in different ways, in regard to whether or not capital punishment is acceptable.

And some people use that as a basis for its acceptability. Other people will say that's not what it's about. But the point really that it's making is this, in relation to murder, the fact of man being made in God's image is crucial.

It either means that because human life is so valuable, murder is such an important thing, or else if you believe in capital punishment from this, it means that there's a legitimacy given to mankind to carry that out in a careful way, because he's been made in the image of God, and therefore has been given that authority.

But whichever way people take that, the fact is that the image of God, as part of what man was created with or in, is crucial to how we relate to our fellow human beings.

And if you go to the likes of James, chapter 3, verse 9, you'll find there, in chapter 3, as you know of James, how we use our tongue. In other words, what sort of language we use.

[26 : 50] How we use our speech. How we actually treat other people, in terms of our conversation. And it says that it's so difficult, virtually impossible for human beings, to tame the tongue, to keep the language under complete control at all times.

Or he says, by this same tongue, with this same speech, we both bless God and curse man, who was made in the image of God.

See, the same thing is brought up. Our relationship to other human beings, and our treatment of them, is something that goes right back to our creation. We are made in the image of God.

Therefore, we treat other human beings, the way we ought with respect. Looking at them as made in the image of God. You know, sometimes you'll find descriptions, mostly in tabloid press, or something similar to that, of people who have committed serious crimes.

You'll find them described as animals, or less than human, or descriptions that you might say, indicate some sort of sub-human form of life.

[28 : 00] And you'll find associated with that, ideas as to how to treat these people. Now, we're not in any way trying to belittle the crimes that people engage in, and are found guilty of.

Murder is murder. Rape is rape. All these and other serious crimes are serious matters, and require people to be dealt with seriously.

But no human life is sub-human. No human life is less than life, in the image of God.

Although the fall has defaced it, and spoiled it, and vandalized it, it is still human life.

And the treatment of people in prison, the treatment of people who have fallen on hard times, the treatment of people who have done serious wrongs, is something that itself must be seen against the fact of being made in the image of God.

[29 : 06] Let's never think and speak of other human beings as less than humans, as less than people who were made in the image of God like ourselves. And the treatment we give to them, whether in conversation or in practice, has to take account of that fact, because that's what the Bible is telling us.

And you have to rectify in society the kind of thoughts and ideas and practices that simply pay no attention to this whatsoever, and just decide that, well, human beings are human beings, so we'll decide how to treat our fellow human beings.

No, that's decided for us. God has decided it for us when He created us in His image. So, He decided our human identity in being made in the image of God.

It means man is rational, man is spiritual, and the two things that follow is that we are not utterly different to God, and that we treat our fellow human beings in the way that this image of God dictates to us.

You could follow that out further in saying that this is where you come to when you think of the wrongs of racism, or the ideas of racial supremacy, as if the color of your face somehow or other if you're white, it puts you above those with different colored faces, whether Asian or black or whatever.

[30 : 37] Every human being, whatever they look like, whatever the color of their skin, has the image of God as part of how they were created.

And therefore we treat our fellow human beings as we would treat ourselves. And that's why Jesus said, you are to love your neighbor as yourself.

As you look at yourself, so you look at others. As you would want to be treated, so you treat others. It all goes back to this being made in the image of God.

So, He decided our human identity in terms of this image and likeness, but there's another aspect of that as well. He decided our human identity in creating as male and female.

You notice how that comes into verse 27. God created man in His own image. In the image of God, He created him male and female. He created them. And God deliberately mentions that so that we will understand that our maleness and femaleness, whichever it is we're of, that that is part of how we have been created.

[31 : 42] That means that each of these genders belongs to what it means to be human. Not only that, but the image of God belongs equally and fully to each of those genders.

You don't say that a woman has less of the image of God in her creation or in her life now than males have, than men have.

In the image of God, He made them. Male and female, He created them. And that means that the image of God belongs fully to each gender.

But there are two other things I want to mention, especially in relation to how things today are thought about and promoted in our own society. And first of all, you notice that God created human beings with a distinction of gender.

Male and female, He created them. And that distinction of gender is a distinction that actually only allows for two particular genders of humanity.

[32 : 53] I know that sin at times, the result of sin means that there are distortions, that there are, if you like, unusual occurrences in human development.

But in terms of our creation, our definition as human beings, God has decided our human identity and He has distinguished male and female in that identity of humans.

Not something in between. Not something flitting from one to the other. Not something that goes from being a woman to being a man. That may be so psychologically, but it is not so definitively in the teaching of Scripture.

Whatever problems people face, whatever problems people have psychologically or otherwise, that may be very difficult for us to deal with. And we have to deal with them lovingly and tactfully and not as if they were other than human.

But we must never depart from the definitions the Bible gives us, the definitions in God's own creation of us in His image. Male and female He created them.

[34 : 12] And not only were we created with distinction of gender, but we were also created with corresponding genders. That's too a very important aspect of thinking of male and femaleness.

When you come to chapter 2 for example and verse 18 especially, then the Lord said it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper fit for Him or suitable for Him or really the meaning is corresponding to Him.

Not less than Him. Not different in every sense to Him. Not other than human for Him. But human that corresponds to Him.

That doesn't belittle a woman. It doesn't make her less in importance than a man. In fact, it elevates her as you can see and as we'll see we'll come to some of the relationship issues and ethical issues in future studies God willing that follow on from these teachings as to marriage and as to ethical matters relating to that and other things as well.

The Sabbath day for example. But for the moment just think of this. God has made human beings in His own image and He made them male and female with that distinction but also with corresponding genders including physical attributes.

[35 : 29] attributes. Whatever gender confusion you find in our society and there is a lot of it it hasn't arisen from Genesis 1 and 2 it's arisen from Genesis 3 from the fall of man from the distortion of his mind and of his thinking from the way that we have come so far away from what we were created as and with and especially as you see it it's not a new thing it's been in human society previously you'll find it in some of the cities that Paul went to in the likes of Corinth you'll find it in his epistle to the Romans where the gender identity is confused in that society where Paul is writing in that context but everything there comes back to Genesis and our creation and the distinctions that God actually created us with defining what is male and defining what is female so in other words we have this definition of what it is to be male and female built into the fact of our creation the matter of our creation right there at the beginning it's there with God he's decided it it's not made up by human beings it's not that

God created human beings male and female and left them to decide then which they wanted to be and what their offspring would be and how they would think of themselves and it's a shame upon us as a society that we are facing calls upon the teaching of our children in schools to actually question their identity and their gender that's all come from Genesis 3 from sin from man's fallenness from man's depravity from man's departure from the order that God himself created when he created human life and the only thing that can rectify that but the wonderful thing is that it can be rectified is the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of Jesus Christ and the transformation in human life that salvation brings about that the grace of God brings about that doesn't in any way mean that dealing with such thoughts and such psychology in our society is easy I'm not saying that and it's not it doesn't mean that we just as Christians come to be a group of people who simply denounce everything that's different to ourselves we treat other human beings with sympathy we try to understand where they're coming from why they think the way they think but we bring them to Jesus and we bring them to God's definition of human life that he created us male and female in his own image not only does it define male and female but also as we'll see later define marriage it all really hangs together in the Bible's teaching doesn't it because the definition of marriage precludes same sex marriage same gender marriage it's not marriage it's not marriage in God's way of defining it it doesn't matter what governments say it doesn't matter what individuals say it doesn't matter what pressure groups say what we're concerned with is what has God said and what has God done in creating human life and human relationships and as we'll come to see it's God who gave away the first woman to the first man and made them one flesh because they were made to complement each other to correspond to each other even physically and everything different to that everything that militates against that is contrary to God's order and God's will and God's purpose for human life and to God's idea of beauty and of harmony and of satisfaction and of joy in relationships

God decided our human identity in his likeness and image and also in creating as male and female and thirdly and finally God downloaded our human life I'm using that word carefully you go to chapter 2 and verse 7 for this and when God had created us he breathed into man the breath of life he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life you have there forming the idea of the craftsman we saw that from the early part of chapter 1 but notice what it's saying here he breathed into him if you like there is a real intimacy if you like from God to man there's a special giving of life to man that has not been given to any other creature God breathed into him the breath of life and man became a living creature a living soul is how it's translated in the AV it does mean more than that we have a soul as well as a body what this is saying is that the whole person body and spirit became a living person the life that we have is life that includes the physical and the spiritual the soul and the body and it came about through the breathing into us of life by God himself we've noticed a couple of times or more a correspondence with the spiritual salvation that we have the salvation we have in Christ from this passage and there's a correspondence here as well because when God breathed into us in the beginning the breath of life and we became a living person a living soul that's also what happens when we come to be saved when we come to know God for ourselves think of Jesus when he rose from the dead and after he came into the room where the disciples were gathered what's the first thing you read about in the gospel of John that he did before he said anything else to them he breathed on them and said well he said peace be unto you and then he said he breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit you see the correspondence between this life in the first instance in our creation and the spiritual life that God endows us with in our salvation he breathes into us if you like by the Holy Spirit the very breathing of God of life into our deadness and we become living having died in our fall that's a whole other field of study

I know but all of that tells us that as human beings in the creation of God we are unique we are not unique so that we can take pride in the fact but we are unique so that we can live in fellowship with God that we can live in a relationship with him through Jesus Christ that no other life or form of life is capable of and when that's true of you and me why should it be that we live out with that relationship with God you have the mind the conscience the understanding the will as created in the image of God why then should we not be saved today why should we be less than in friendship with God who made us for himself let's pray

Lord God we give thanks that you created us in your image that you created us with that capacity to know you to love you to live in fellowship with you to serve you and we thank you Lord for the restoration of all of these things to us that in Jesus Christ all that we have lost in our fall has been restored in him we bless you Lord today that you teach us in your word of the importance of looking at ourselves as we are created by you and we give thanks that today you direct us to live in dependence upon you and in love for you receive our thanks now we pray and cleanse us from all our sin for Jesus sake Amen well let's sing in our concluding psalm today from Psalm 139 139 also from sing psalms you find that on page 181 singing verses 13 to 16 page 181 for you

[45 : 04] O Lord created me you wove me on your loom my inn was to being you have formed within my mother's womb down to verse 16 and all the days that I should live which you ordained for me were written in your book O Lord before they came to be for you O Lord created me let's stand to sing Amongst in songs in songs for you his full name alone will learn in his joyful word in his nas complexities in his lifenyarollees in HismI huge air movements in his life in his words even his sleep but in his words given those words This is my Father's womb Because I wonderfully gave

With all your praise I tell Your worth and ship is marvelous And this I know more well When in the secret place my grave Was made before my birth You saw my body yet unformed Within the depths of earth And all the days of thy truth

Which you are in for me Where it is your truth, O Lord Before they came to me I'll go to this side door today And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you now and always Amen Amen