

Made in God's Image, for God's Glory ~ Genesis 1:26-27

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold County Baptist Church on July 22, 2007

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If there's one thing I hope is clear to you by now in our study of Genesis 1, it would be this: all of creation is about the glory of God. "In the beginning God" is not merely the starting point of this book, it should be the starting point in all of our thinking and life, that God would be at the forefront, the fulcrum, the focus, so that we should be God-centered and God-driven people, having a right view of God and a high view of God. Mankind is created in the image of God for the purpose of glorifying God and enjoying God forever.

But ever since Genesis 3 and the sin of Adam and Eve, mankind continues to fall into doubting God's greatness and character and denying the truth about God, and when we sin we downplay God or diminish or distort God in our thoughts. God made man in His own image, but we must never try and make a God in our own image, in the way we would like Him to be.

Steve Lawson has a book with that title, *Made in Our Image*, which begins this way:

'Whenever we lose a right view of God, everything else gets out of perspective. Sad to say, we are suffering from a low view of God – an impoverished version of Him as a god with manlike characteristics. A "user-friendly" god has become the trend of the day – a god made in *our* image, an inversion of the truth of man made in His image ... The result is a god who makes us feel comfortable – one we can control and manage, even use. This downsized version of God is a diminutive deity dependent upon us; we are not dependent upon Him. Forged upon the anvil of a sloppy handling of Scripture and shallow thoughts about God, this user-friendly [god] is a strange kind of codependent god, and we see the effects of his influence all around us. Many churches have become nothing more than entertainment centers, giving slick performances to growing numbers of mesmerized but unproductive churchgoers. Such devices may bring people into the church, but they do not transform them once they arrive ... Only when our vision of God is restored will our lives and ministries be put right. A high view of God will lead us ...

There can be only one subject on which are most intently focused, and that is the person of God Himself. He is the one who made us in His image and redeemed our fallen souls; He is the one who indwells and fills our lives with good things. God – and God *alone* – must be the focus of our hearts. Ultimately, a right vision of God must be the driving force behind the church. Only that can bring His glorious presence and all-sufficient power to bear on the lives of His people so that we can be what He desires us to be. We must unveil the truth about the sovereign God to unmask the fallacy of the user-friendly god ... how we view [God] will affect how we see every other truth. May God bring a revival – a new reformation, if you will – in the knowledge of Him.' (pages 15-18)

God reveals Himself as the sovereign God in Genesis who speaks the universe into existence, and He is revealed as the central and Supreme beginning and end of all things. The word “God” occurs over 30x in this opening narrative - God is doing all of the speaking, and acting, God is the subject and object of all, and it is only at the end of the chapter that man comes on the scene.

But the creation of man *is greatly significant*, and the significance comes not because of man himself, but because of Whose image man is created in. The focal point of God’s glorifying Himself and revealing Himself and His plan and His creation finally reaches its climax in these verses, and the language draws attention to this, as Bruce Ware has noted:

Clearly, in Genesis chapter one, the progression of creation builds throughout the six days, culminating in the final creative act, in the second part of the sixth day, to create man as male and female in the image of God. Some key internal indicators signal the special significance of man’s creation:

- 1) As just noted, man is the pinnacle of God’s creative work, only after which God *then* says of all he has made that it is “very good” (1:31).
- 2) The creation of man is introduced differently than all others, with the personal and deliberative expression, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.”
- 3) The one God who creates man as male and female deliberately uses plural references of himself (e.g., “Let *Us*,” “*Our* image,” “*Our* likeness”) as the creator of singular “man” who is plural “male and female.”
- 4) The “image of God” is stated three times in 1:26–27 in relation to man as male and female but never in relation to any other part of creation.
- 5) The special term for God’s unique creative action, *bara*, is used three times in 1:27 for the creation of man in his image as male and female.
- 6) Man is given a place of rulership over all other created beings on the earth, thus indicating the higher authority and priority of man in God’s created design.
- 7) Only the creation of man as male and female is expanded and portrayed in detail as recorded in Gen. 2.¹

Also up until now, the narrative has used the expression 10x “according to its kind.” Suddenly, v. 26 catches our attention.

What a difference! Now a creature was going to be made which was not merely “according to its kind,” but according to the image and likeness of God. It immediately becomes clear that the reader has been primed by the repetition of the earlier phrase to be shocked by the contrast presented here. As we read, our minds supply the words we expect, “according to its kind,” but we are stopped short; they are not there. God inspired this to be written in such a way, perhaps, to force us to reread this paragraph to see if we missed the words we expected. But why? God was here introducing humanity as fundamentally different from the rest of creation, and he wanted the differences to stand out in the text. We read that we also were created according to a plan and pattern. We were not simply designed by God, but we were designed to mirror and imitate God.²

The language of Genesis changes to show something very special – the reason is not that man should be glorified, but the attention is now directed *to man* because it is *through man* that God will be glorified most fully in redemptive history (ex: Ephesians 1). It is true that the Bible says the heavens declare God’s glory and all His creatures can bring Him glory, but in a unique way human beings are created to glorify God *and* to enjoy Him forever. None of the animals have eternal souls, or God’s image; none have the full range of emotions, relationships, and capacities to worship God, which is part of what it means to be in God’s image.

Isaac Watts wrote a hymn which I think summarizes Genesis 1 well and is a good introduction to the creation of mankind:

Hymn #14 - The creation of the world, *The Psalm and Hymns of Isaac Watts*

“Now let a spacious world arise,” Said the Creator Lord:
 At once th’ obedient earth and skies Rose at his sovereign word. ...
 Then he adorned the upper skies; Behold the sun appears;
 The moon and stars in order rise To make our months and years.
 Out of the deep th’ almighty King. Did vital beings frame,
 The painted fowls of every wing, And fish of every name.
 He gave the lion and the worm At once their wondrous birth;
 And grazing beasts of various form Rose from the teeming earth.
 Adam was framed of equal clay, Though sovereign of the rest
 Designed for nobler ends than they, With God’s own image blest.
 Thus glorious in the Maker’s eye The young creation stood;
 He saw the building from on high, His word pronounced it good.

Today we are going to see the Divine Persons in verse 26, primarily focusing on the phrase “Let us make man”

The personal pronouns “us” and “our” get our attention.

Some have suggested that God is talking to the angels here, but “let us make” could not refer to others outside God because v. 27 says “He ... God” created man and the Bible says many places that God alone created everything. And the phrase “in our image” cannot mean in the image of God and angels, because verse 27 clearly says man is created in God’s image. We need to let v. 27 interpret v. 26.

Others have suggested that “let us” in verse 26 is the plural of majesty or deliberation. This might be the way some monarch spoke in medieval or modern times, but it was not the usual way ancient kings spoke.

Biblical grammars tell us there is no royal “we” in Biblical Hebrew like this,³ and the plural of majesty never occurs with verbs or pronouns.⁴ Also, the scriptures say that God did not consult with anyone else during creation.

All of creation as well as all of God's revelation in the Bible is about God's glory and God revealing Himself and magnifying His name. This week I was struck as I just read through Isaiah 40-48 and took note of how many times it spoke of creation and tied in something that glorified God. I also noted many occasions where it has some bearing on Genesis 1:26-27.

Isaiah 40:12-14 (NASB95)

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

13 Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has informed Him?

*14 **With whom did He consult** and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge And informed Him of the way of understanding?*

These are rhetorical questions – God consulted or counseled with no one. The questioning is very similar to the end of Job as we saw last week, as the force is “God and God alone.”

Isaiah 40:18-19 (NASB95)

*18 To whom then will you liken God? Or what **likeness** will you compare with Him? 19 As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.*

It is interesting that Genesis 1 said man is made in the likeness of God, but we need to be very careful not to think in terms of physical likeness of God. This passage (along with Ten Commandments and many passages) warns us about any sort of visual image or likeness of God that we make, which would include mental idols as well as metal or stone idols.

Isaiah 41:4 (NASB95)

4 “Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? ‘I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.’ ”

From the beginning, God has been calling forth things. In fact, He is revealed as the beginning and the end, the first and the last. It is interesting that Jesus uses the same title for Himself, which hints that more than one *person* is involved in “calling forth ... from the beginning”

Isaiah 42:5

*5 Thus says God the Lord, Who **created** the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who **gives breath** to the people on it And **spirit** to those who walk in it,*

Part of how God created man as we'll see later is that He gave breath to him, or as Genesis 2 says God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and also man has a spirit as this verse says. The Scriptures reveal that this is the work of the Holy Spirit, another hint of additional person(s) involved in creation (ex: Gen. 1:2)

Isaiah 42:8 *“I am the Lord, that is **My name**; I will not give **My glory** to another, Nor **My praise** to graven images.*

The God who created the heavens as well as man here ties in the idea of glory and that He will not give His glory to anyone else. The language of God's image is used of man in Genesis 1, but *graven images* are forbidden, not just because idols are bad for us, but most importantly, because it steals the glory of a jealous God. Notice the connection between "My Name" and "My glory" and "My praise." This is made even clearer in verse 12:

Isaiah 42:12 (NASB95) *12 Let them give **glory** to the Lord And declare **His praise** in the coastlands.*

If the glory of the Lord is as important as I keep saying it is, how do we glorify the Lord? The text says: "*declare His praise*"

Isaiah 43:1 (NASB95)

*1 But now, thus says the Lord, your **Creator**, O Jacob, And He who **formed** you, O Israel, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! ...
7 Everyone who is called by **My name**, And whom **I have created for My glory**, Whom **I have formed**, even whom **I have made**."*

You better believe it makes a big difference whether you believe we are merely higher animals which gradually evolved from slime to protoplasm and that it was by random accidents and chance with no purpose and when we die we just return to decaying minerals.

The loving God of the universe says in verse 1 "you are Mine" – our Creator is also our owner who we are accountable to and for whom we are created with a grand and glorious purpose which is to glorify and enjoy forever a Supreme and Supremely satisfying Savior who has redeemed and called and loved us. God created us and everything to glorify Him.

Isaiah 43:20-21 (NASB95)

*20 "The beasts of the field **will glorify Me**, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people.
21 "The people whom **I formed for Myself Will declare My praise**."*

That language "I ... Myself ... My" sounds a little self-centered to us, like God is doing this for Himself rather than us. If you think it sounds, that way, you'd be right! We are not the ultimate reason why God does anything, as we've seen in so many passages in past messages. God says He formed people for Himself, it is for God's sake, not ours that we were created. It's not about us! It's about God and His glory and again the idea of glorifying God is tied in at the end of v. 21 "declare my praise"

Isaiah 43:25 "*I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions **for My own sake**, And I will not remember your sins.*

When God forgives us it is for His own sake, not primarily ours! What is the reason God doesn't exercise His wrath on us?

Isaiah 48:9-11 (NASB95)

9 ***“For the sake of My name I delay My wrath, And for My praise I restrain it for you, In order not to cut you off ...***

11 ***“For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another.***

God’s glory is the reason He does all these things, creating us, restraining His wrath, forgiving our sins, indeed all things.

What type of response should a God-centered view produce in us?

Isaiah 44:21-24 (NASB95)

21 *“Remember these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; **I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.***

22 *“I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”*

23 ***Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it! Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the Lord has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth His glory.***

24 *Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, “I, the Lord, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone,*

Verse 23 says one of the ways we “show forth His glory” is by rejoicing and shouting for joy, breaking forth into a shout of praise and delight in our Creator and Savior.

Notice verse 24 says that God made all things “all alone”

So if God created the heavens and the earth all alone, what does it mean when He says “let us make man”? If God did not counsel with anyone at creation, and if there is only one God, then who is He talking to “let us ... in our image”

The answer of course is that there is one God with multiple divine persons hinted at in Genesis 1

Isaiah 48:12-16 (NASB95)

12 *“Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.*

13 *“Surely My hand founded the earth, And My right hand spread out the heavens; ...*

16 *“Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, **From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit.**”*

Clearly this is the Lord speaking, the same One who in v. 11 won’t share His glory, the One who calls Himself the first and the last. After talking about His hand directly creating the heavens and the earth in v. 13, He says in v. 16 “the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

I don't know what the Jewish rabbis do with this passage, but this is one of those clear passages in the Old Testament that gives basis for the Trinity of 3 divine persons, one God – the Father sends both the Spirit and the Messiah-Lord who Isaiah earlier said would be called “wonderful counselor Mighty God” and “God with us” (9:6, 7:14)

Psalm 110:1 (NASB95)

*1 A Psalm of David. **The LORD says to my Lord:** “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”*

Proverbs 30:4 (NASB95)

*4 Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? **What is His name or His son's name?** Surely you know!*

The Old Testament is clear that there is only one God but it also supports the idea of multiple persons, although it doesn't give us the name of the son or precise teaching on the Trinity's nature.

Even back in Genesis 1, there were already hints of this, such as the plural noun *elohim* with singular verbs, as was shared in Sunday school. And Genesis 1:2 refers to the Spirit of God involved in creation, and the “let us ... our” followed by singular “He” and “His”

It's only later in Scripture, though, that we learn more clearly that in the beginning the Word (Jesus) was with God and was God and that all things were created through Him (John 1:1-3).

Colossians 1:16 says that by Christ “*all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*”

Hebrews 1:2 says God “has spoken to us in His Son ... through whom also He made the world.”

So in Genesis 1 we have the Divine Persons:

1. God (the Father?) speaking
2. All creation by or through the Son
3. Spirit also involved (other passages say Spirit gives life)

So in Genesis 1:26 when God says “Let us” this is an executive divine council, this is an inter-Trinity conversation.

This of course was not the first of these councils.

What was going on before Genesis 1?

It's good to stretch our minds on subjects like the Trinity, eternity, and God's sovereign plan.

Ephesians 1:4-6 (NASB95)

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace

Revelation 17:8 says God's elect people have their names written in the book of life from the foundation of the world

2 Timothy 1:9 (NASB95)

9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity [NKJV "before time began"]

Titus 1:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, ³ but has in due time manifested

Verse 1 speaks of God's elect, and verse 2 talks about a promise God made "before time began." Who was there to promise to before time began? Not to people who didn't exist yet.

God and God alone was in the beginning, so this is a council within the Trinity, some have called this a covenant where redemption was planned and promised; the fall into sin and need for redemption was no surprise to the God who Isaiah says "declares the end from the beginning"

Wrapped up in that promise was the entire redemptive plan of God. In short, the Father had promised the Son a redeemed people for His bride. And the Son had promised to die in order to redeem them. All of this occurred in eternity past, before creation.⁵

We witnessed a wedding this weekend, and it's a beautiful picture of redemption as we learn that God the Father had always purposed to give a bride as a gift to His Son, for the marriage supper of the lamb that we see at the end of Revelation.

Jesus in turn redeemed a particular group of people – some theologians call this particular redemption - Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, in the same way that husbands are to love their own wives. Christ atoned for, purchased, saved, sanctified, and washed the bride so that they would be pure and blameless on that day.

This is where the note of being created for God's glory reaches its culmination, in Christ's work of redemption for God's glorification

John 17:1-5 (NASB95)

*1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; **glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,***

*2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to **all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.***

3 "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

*4 "**I glorified You** on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.*

*5 "Now, Father, **glorify Me** together with Yourself, **with the glory which I had with You before the world was.***

Notice that before the world existed, Father and Son shared glory. What else was true before the foundation of the world?

24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

In eternity past the Trinity shared glory and shared an eternal love and relationship. Notice the phrase "whom You have given Me" - The Father gives a group of people to the Son for a bride.

*6 "I have manifested Your name **to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.***

*9 "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of **those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours**;*

Notice that they were God's (the Father) and He gave them to Christ.

12 "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition [cf. 1 John 2:19]

BEFORE THERE WAS TIME – by Caedmon's Call

Before there was time There were visions in Your mind
There was death in the fall of mankind
But there was life in salvation's design ...

So I cry holy only begotten Son of God Ancient of Days
I cry holy only begotten Son of God And sing the praises
Of the One who saved me And the promises He made

Before there was time You counted the hairs on my head
You knew all the words I've said
And You purchased me back from the dead

Before I was made You searched me and knew my ways
 You numbered all my days And You set forth the steps I would take

You saved me, You raised me
 You saved me, You pulled me from the grave

If you cannot sing or say those words that you know God has saved you and raised you from spiritual death and pulled you away from your grave and sinful life before Christ – today is the day to glorify God by bowing your knee to Christ. Salvation is about God’s glory – every knee will bow and every tongue confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of God.

Is God Sovereign? Yes! But that should not prevent you from action, that should motivate you to bow before the Sovereign King. If God alone is the one who saves, all the more reason to plead before Him to save you. He rejects none who come truly

John 6:37-40 (NASB95)

37 *“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”*

38 *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

39 *“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.*

40 *“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”*

Revelation 14:6-7 (NASB95)

6 *And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;*

7 *and he said with a loud voice, “**Fear God, and give Him glory**, because the hour of His judgment has come; **worship Him** who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”*

Revelation 15:3-4 (NASB95)

3 *And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!*

4 *“**Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?** For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and **worship** before You, For Your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

¹ Bruce Ware, “Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* 7:1 (2002, p. 14).

² *Reformation and Revival Journal*, Volume 12/2, p.98.

³ Jouon-Muraoka, 114e; Barrick, “Cutting it Straight,” 4 (Shepherd’s Conference Notes).

⁴ Jouon-Muraoka, 135 d-e observes the existence of the plural of majesty with nouns [ex: elohim ?], but never with verbs or pronouns – Victor Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT series, p. 133)

⁵ MacArthur, J. (2001). *The battle for the beginning : The Bible on creation and the fall of Adam* (162). Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group.