

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Doctrine *** *** Topic: Man * Genesis 1 through 3 * 7/12/26 ***

MAIN POINT

God made man in His image and gave us dominion over all of creation. But sin has resulted in us receiving a corrupted nature.

INTRODUCTION

What physical characteristics of your parents do you possess?

In what other ways are you similar to your mother and father?

According to the Bible, man has been created distinct from the rest of God's creation. Man, Scripture says, is created in the image of God, making him the pinnacle of God's creative efforts. Made in God's image, we possess certain qualities, abilities, and characteristics of our heavenly Father.

What are some of our culture's assumptions about the nature of mankind? Why is it crucial that we examine these cultural assumptions in light of God's description of who we are in Scripture?

Though made in God's image, man is not God. Man is a complex creature who is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). The psalmist expressed the reality that there is a reverential awe surrounding the creation of people, who are a combination of physical and spiritual elements, made in our Creator's image.

Note to study leader: In today's lesson, we will be looking at the nature of mankind before sin, and the effect sin had on this nature.

UNDERSTANDING

THE NATURE OF HUMANITY BEFORE SIN ENTERED THE WORLD

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 1:25—2:1

In what ways were humans set apart from the rest of God's creation?

What does it mean to be made in God's image or likeness?

The creation of humans constituted the climax of God's creative work. The Bible indicates the importance of humanity's creation in several strong ways. First, God built up to humanity's creation by creating all other living things. Second, the description of the creation of humans comprises a longer account than the creation of any other living thing. Finally, the use of the phrase Let Us rather than Let there be indicates God's personal involvement in humanity's creation. The way He created a man hinted that His relationship with human beings would be unique. The term image refers to the aspects of reason, personality, the ability to make value judgments, and other qualities that cause a human being to resemble God. Just as family members take on the qualities and personality traits of one another, God created people in His own image to reflect some of His qualities.

How should knowing that we are made in God's image affect your relationship with God and with other people?

What do the concepts of subduing the earth and ruling over its creatures mean? What are the limits to our ruling and subduing?

God created humans in some sense to represent Him, to have dominion over all of creation. Neither subduing nor ruling provides humans authority or freedom to exploit. Today, we subdue and rule under God's authority, maintaining His creation to glorify Him rather than to merely satisfy our selfish desires. Thus we are to care for God's creation, maintain its beauty, and exercise responsible stewardship of its resources.

What might the blessing and responsibilities that God gave to mankind tell us about His view of us?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 2:15-25

What do the concepts of subduing the earth and ruling over its creatures mean? What are the limits to our ruling and subduing?

God gave humans the responsibility of having dominion over all creation. That responsibility does not provide humans with the authority or freedom to exploit His creation.

What details of mankind's creation does verse 19 offer us? What are the implications for us?

What was Adam and Eve's relationship with God like before the fall?

What was Adam's relationship like with Eve?

God related to Adam like a son—entrusting to him the essential work of stewarding creation and Eve was given the role of being Adam's helper. Adam and Eve were given the enormous privilege of fellowshiping with God personally. Adam and Eve's relationship was also quite beautiful. The two lived in perfect harmony—they lived without shame and loved and trusted each other without reservation. Death, disease, sin, and mourning wasn't part of creation, and shame didn't exist.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do each of these verses add to our understanding of Adam and Eve's relationship with God before sin entered the world?

- **Isaiah 43:7 and Ephesians 1:12:** We were created to glorify God.
- **1 Corinthians 15:47 and Psalm 103:13-14:** We are physical beings.
- **1 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and Jude 10:** We are spiritual beings.
- **Romans 2:14-15 and 1 Corinthians 15:33:** We are moral beings.
- **Isaiah 1:18 and 2 Peter 2:12:** We have the ability to reason.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do these verses add to our understanding of Adam and Eve's relationship with each other?

- **1 Corinthians 11:11-12 and Galatians 3:28:** Men and women are equal in value.
- **1 Peter 3:1 and 7:** Men and women are complementary in role.

THE NATURE OF MANKIND AFTER ADAM AND EVE SINNED

Note to study leader: Next week's lesson will be looking at "What is sin?"

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 3:7-8 AND 15-19

What was the immediate effect of Adam's sin on his relationship with God?

The immediate effect of man's sin was shame, and an urge to hide from God.

What was the effect of Adam's sin on his relationship with Eve?

Because of our selfish sin natures, Adam and Eve no longer had a perfect relationship. He would now try to rule over her, and she would now try to control him. The word "desire" is also used to describe Cain's condition in Genesis 4:8, where sin "desired" to master Cain.

What other effects did sin have?

Man became mortal (Romans 5:12). The creation was cursed (Romans 8:19-23).

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do each of these verses add to our understanding of the effect of sin on people?

- **Romans 5:12 and Revelation 20:14-15:** Sin brought spiritual death as well as physical death.
- **Isaiah 59:2 and Psalm 66:18:** Sin separated us from God.
- **Romans 7:18:** There is nothing good in our sinful natures.

What do these verses show us about why Christ had to die on the cross for us (1 Peter 1:18-19)?

Sin separated us from God and brought physical and spiritual death. The previous doctrine lesson "What is salvation" looked at the Three Circles illustration to show us how Jesus made a way back to God for us.

APPLICATION

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

We were created to have a relationship with God and to bring glory to Him. What do each of these verses add to our understanding of how we are to walk with Him?

- **Psalm 73:25-26:** By delighting in Him.
- **Romans 5:1-2 and 2 Peter 1:4:** By putting our hope in His promises.
- **Hebrews 11:1 and 6:** By putting our faith in Him.
- **Romans 12:1-2:** By our obedience to Him.
- **1 Corinthians 10:31:** By doing everything for the glory of God.

Note to study leader: The following question incorporates the "LIFE" acronym (from our "Starting Point" classes) into the lesson. A summary of this acronym is included in the first portion of the Commentary section of this lesson and probably on a poster in your classroom. Include a brief description of "LIFE" as part of this application. Today's application is based on the "E" in the "LIFE" acronym.

Loving our neighbor: I am motivated to show God's love and compassion to others where I live, work, and play.

Intentional friend: I am purposefully cultivating relationships within my church family.

How am I incorporating these qualities in my life to invest in the lives of others?

How should we treat other people in light of the biblical truths about humanity that we discussed?

PRAYER

Thank God for creating us as unique creatures who are made in His image. Thank Him that He also provided the solution to our sin problem, which had separated us from Him. Ask the Lord to help us put off our old nature and put on our new natures, as we grow in our relationship with Him.

COMMENTARY

The LIFE Acronym

This acronym is part of our “Starting Point” training programs. The letters in LIFE stand for the following:

Loving our neighbor: I am motivated to show God’s love and compassion to others where I live, work, and play.

Intentional friend: I am purposefully cultivating relationships within my church family.

Faithful follower: I am sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit in regular times of prayer, worship, and Bible study.

Engaged disciple-maker: I am regularly looking to invest in others to help them take their next step in following Jesus.

Genesis 1:25—2:1

The crown of God’s was the creation of mankind. The narrative marks the prominence of this creative act in several ways: (1) the creation account shows an ascending order of significance with human life as the final, thus pinnacle, creative act; (2) of the creative acts, this is the only one preceded by divine deliberation (“Let us make” in v. 26); (3) this expression replaces the impersonal words spoken in the previous creation acts (e.g., “Let there be,” “Let the earth”); (4) human life alone is created in the “image” of God and has the special assignment to rule over the created order (vv. 26-28); (5) the verb *bārā* occurs three times in v. 27; (6) the event is given a longer description than previous ones; (7) in v. 27 the chiasmic arrangement highlights the emphasis on “image”; and (8) unlike the animals, who are said to have come from the land in v. 24 (though v. 25 makes clear that God created them), mankind is referred to only as a direct creation of God.

The two Hebrew words translated as “image” and “likeness” are often understood as having the same meaning. But some interpreters suggest that “image” refers to the ability to reason, with “likeness” referring to the spiritual dimension. What exactly is the “image” of God? Since the Bible teaches that God is Spirit (see John 4:24), many commentators believe it refers to the non-material aspects of a person—our moral sensibilities, intellectual abilities, will, and emotions. Based on God’s commands in Genesis 1:28, others have suggested that it consists of the role humans are to play on earth—their rulership over the planet and its resources, and secondarily the physical, mental, and spiritual abilities that enable them to fulfill that role. The New Testament teaches that Christians will someday bear the image of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:49; 1 John 3:2).

The creation of humanity is the crowning event of chapter 1, as shown by the fact that created is repeated three times. The verb “created” is the same one used in 1:1, referring to a kind of creative activity that only God can do. The term “man” is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to humanity in general, not just males; all people, both male and female, are created in the image of God. People are the only beings that are created in the image of God. The Bible never lumps people into the category of animals. Instead, it separates the creation of people from all other beings and attributes the most privileged roles in creation to humans alone.

God’s summary evaluation of creation concludes the six days: “it was very good.” “All” that God had made was worthy of commendation. His highest acclaim is withheld until the completed creation because only after the six creation days has the lifeless earth been fully changed (1:2). Now the earth as a result of God’s “Spirit” and animated word is well-ordered, complete, and abounding in life-forms under the watch care of royal humanity. If God had chosen to be mute, encroaching darkness, unrestricted waters, and the hollow sounds of the empty wastelands would be the earth’s state, but God has transformed and filled the earth by a matchless wisdom (Ps. 104:24; Prov. 8:22-31).

Genesis 2:15-25

The Hebrew word translated as “placed” literally means, “caused to rest”; this pre-sin state of rest anticipates the “rest” (“relief”; 5:29) that would again come to humanity because of righteous Noah, as well as the rest that God would again give Israel following its episode of calf worship. As a being created in God’s image, Adam, like God, was to be a worker. Without the taint of sin, work was an undiluted blessing. The verb translated here as “work” literally means “serve.” Adam’s second task in the garden was to watch over it. God gave Adam both freedom and limits. The God-given freedoms vastly outnumbered the limitations. After all, Adam was free to eat from any tree of the garden except one.

The only limit God placed on Adam was eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which apparently imparted divine wisdom (3:22). Eating the forbidden fruit represented Adam’s rejection of God as the source of divine wisdom and his choice to pursue wisdom apart from God. God’s penalty for disobedience was stated especially forcefully in the original language, with a two-verb construction, “dying you shall die” (you will certainly die). Death would certainly come to Adam and all humanity after him; but the death that God warned about would be more than physical (3:19). Besides severing the cord of life, sin would shatter the harmonious relationship that existed between Adam and his environment (3:17-18), his wife (3:16), and God.

The theme of God providing for Adam’s needs is picked up again in verse 18, as God declared that Adam’s being alone is not good. God created the man with a need to relate to one as his complement, and now God will meet that need. Adam’s understanding of the nature of the animals he named only highlighted the differences that existed between him and the rest of God’s creatures: no helper was found as his complement.

At what must have been a moment of loneliness in Adam’s life, God stepped in to create one who would perfectly meet Adam’s need. Because God took one of his ribs to use as His raw material, the woman would correspond perfectly—though not identically—to Adam. Like Adam, the woman possessed God’s image. Adam’s first recorded words express his delight with God’s handiwork and his recognition of the unique suitability of God’s last recorded creation in the creation accounts.

Genesis 3:7-19

The woman's claim goes beyond anything recorded in God's instructions to Adam. Therefore it seems that Adam had given his wife an additional command beyond what God said, or else Eve herself exaggerated the command as Satan tempted her to view God as selfish and overly restrictive. The serpent, recognizing the woman's confusion, found a point of attack. Knowing that the woman would not die by merely touching the fruit, he boldly contradicted what she had reported to be God's command. He then skillfully lied by distorting God's word, implying that God had prohibited people from eating the fruit only to keep them from becoming as knowledgeable as He. The woman was now fully deceived.

Since the woman did not die when she touched the fruit—in contradiction to what she maybe thought God said (v. 3.)—she ate it. Though Adam was with her at the time, he did nothing to stop her. As the serpent had indicated, the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew, but instead of producing godlike power, the knowledge brought only a sense of human inadequacy, fear, and shame.

God took the initiative in reaching out to sinful humanity. This pattern—humanity sinning, then God seeking out sinners—becomes the primary theme of the rest of the Bible. Its ultimate expression is found in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save people alienated from God because of their sin; in Him God once again walked on the earth in search of sinners.

When Adam heard God, he was afraid. Rather than walking with God as righteous men of later generations would do, Adam hid from Him. Through the use of two direct questions God brought Adam to accountability for his sin (v. 11). God does not overlook sin, but He can be gently firm in confronting it. Adam answered neither of God's questions. Instead he sought to shift the blame for his sin first to the woman, and then to God. The woman passed the blame to the serpent and admitted that prior to eating, she was deceived (v. 13).

Though accountability began with God's confrontation of Adam, judgment began with the serpent. Because of the serpent's key role (being used of Satan) in bringing sin into the human experience, it would be permanently consigned to the position of ultimate shame, under the foot. Hostility between the first woman and the serpent would be passed on to future generations. This verse is the first foretelling of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though the woman had been deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, she was still held accountable for her act. Two penalties were imposed; both struck at the heart of a woman's roles in life. More than would have been the case had sin not entered creation, bearing children would add to the sum of anguish in the universe. Marriage would also be marred; though the woman's desire would be for her husband, sin would mar God's plan for marriage and create tormenting inequality and subjugation. The latter is a description of the ravaging effect of sin on a husband-wife relationship, not a prescription for abusing one's wife. Because Adam listened to and obeyed his wife's voice in preference to what God commanded (2:17), a curse would strike at the heart of a fundamental relationship in his life as well. Adam's relationship with the ground would now be forever damaged by sin. All the days of his life he would experience painful labor as he worked to bring forth the fruit of the earth.

The new name Adam gave his wife emphasizes the woman's life-giving role that counteracts the curse of sin, which is death (v. 20). Yet the divine order calls for a reciprocity exhibited in male servant leadership and female submission, both of which are modeled in Jesus Himself. By making clothing out of skins, the Lord God graciously provided for humanity's need in a way superior to what Adam and Eve had done with fig leaves. Because of sin, people now knew good and evil experientially (v. 22). Since the gift of life was directly tied to obedience, man's sin meant that the penalty of death must be enforced.