



Sunday School Lesson Summary for September 9, 2007
Released on September 5, 2007

"God Created Humankind"

Printed Text: Genesis 1:26–31.

Background Scripture: Genesis 1:26–2:3.

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 40:25–31.

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. Recite Genesis 1:27 from memory.
2. Explain the significance the "image of God" has in terms of his or her relationship to other created things and to other people.
3. See that God loves mankind in a very special way.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God formed light on the first day of creation. God then waited until the fourth day to fill the cosmos with sources of that light. On the second day of creation, God formed the sky and established terrestrial waters. God waited until the fifth day to fill that sky with birds and those waters with living creatures. On the third day of

creation, God formed the dry land. He waited until the sixth day to fill that land with animals and people.

In six creative days, then, God formed and filled this world to be the theater of His glory. Psalmist and prophet alike proclaim that God's glory is revealed and praised from the east to the west (Psalms 50:1; 113:2, 3; Isaiah 45:6; 59:19; Malachi 1:11). If everything that exists by the command of God, then the whole creation must give glory to God.

Taking center stage in this theater is humanity, the pinnacle of God's creative activity. The verb *created* occurs three times in Genesis 1:27. This makes clear that here the goal has been reached toward which all of God's creativity from verse 1 onward was directed. Only after the creation of mankind does God judge His work to be "very good" (1:31). Up to that point, He had found all that He had made merely "good" (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). The most striking feature of the creation of mankind is that both male and female are created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26, 27).

God Creates (Genesis 1:26, 27)

1. What makes man different from the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26)?

As part of God's creative activity on the sixth day, man was formed, the very crown of God's creation. As Psalm 8:5 says, "For thou hast made [man] a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."

The plural pronouns in "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26) have been considered by some to be a plural of majesty which emphasizes the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God was clearly active in creation (v. 2).

One of the purposes for man from the beginning was to rule over that which God had created: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas" (Ps. 8:6-8).

How this was actually carried out was likely quite different before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden than it was after. Prior to man's disobedience, man and beast were in harmony with each other. When man sinned, though, the whole creation was thrown into disarray. The creation actually longs for the day when it will be rescued from the effects of the Fall (Romans 8:19-22).

Since God created man to have dominion over the creation, we must take great care in how we treat the world in which we live.

2. What does it mean that man was created in the image of God (v. 27)?

Both male and female were made in God's image, indicating that we are not dealing with the kinds of physical characteristics that distinguish men from women. Nor is God merely an exalted man.

Since "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24) and "a spirit hath not flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39), we should dismiss any view that the image of God inherent in human beings is some kind of physical resemblance. Materially, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7), to which he eventually returns. Because man is also a spiritual being, though, his "spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Eccles. 12:7).

When Moses wanted to see God, the Lord replied, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (Exod. 33:20). This shows the wisdom of the incarnation. For humans to receive a clear understanding of God, He came and lived with us as a man. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

The image of God in us consists of our ability to think, feel, and will. In other words, humans have intellectual, emotional, and volitional capacities. "The image of God distinguishes humans from all other creatures; it is what makes us human" (Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, Baker).

At this point, we should pause to consider how sin has affected the image of God in us. Has humanity's decision to sin defaced God's image in us or caused the loss of that image altogether? The answer to this question is supplied by three biblical references: Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; and James 3:9. All three speak of humanity after the fall into sin in terms of humanity before that fall. This suggests that the image of God in us is not lost through sin.

A claim that fallen humanity no longer bears the image of God would compromise our uniqueness. On this view, sinful humans would no longer have unique moral, rational, or religious capacities. Our Bible and our experiences tell us otherwise!

Sin clearly does, however, hinder our relationship with God. Sin hinders God's desire that we represent His interests. Accordingly, the New Testament points us to one who can restore our relationship to God. As the sinner turns to God through faith in Jesus Christ, he or she begins to live for the glory of God, not for self and sin. Upon following the biblical plan of salvation, he or she becomes a member of a different kingdom—the kingdom of God. As such, this person begins to represent the concerns of his or her new king. What a privilege!

God Blesses (Genesis 1:28)

3. What was God's first command to man (v. 28)?

"Man was also blessed by God and commanded to "be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth." These three commands involve procreation, the union of man and woman to populate the earth (cf. 9:1; 11:8, 9; Isaiah 45:18). Replenish would be better rendered as fill the earth, indicating the first time. It cannot be used in support of the re-fashioning of an already judged earth, for the lexicon indicates it always means to fill something the first time, not a refilling, as the Ruin-constructionists or Gap theorists may assert" (The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, Nelson)

God Provides (Genesis 1:29, 30)

4. What kinds of foods were available to man and beast at the beginning? When did this change (vs. 29, 30)?

Here in verse 29 we see how God made provision for humanity. People are to have as food the *seed* and *fruit* of plants. God's original intent is for humans to exist on a vegetarian diet.

God also provided food for the animals. At this point in the history of the earth, all creatures apparently were vegetarians. The word translated "meat" (vs. 29-30) simply means "food."

The diets of both man and beast would change later on. After the Flood, Noah was told, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen. 9:3). Later, the nation of Israel was given very specific instructions concerning clean and unclean foods (Lev. 11). In the New Testament, however, such dietary regulations were abolished (Mark 7:18-20; Acts 10:9-16; 1 Tim. 4:1-5).

Since many animals became carnivores, God obviously had created the creatures to be able to survive in the new environment in which they would find themselves. Even so, Scripture indicates that a time is coming when the animals will once again be docile (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25).

5. How has God been the provider for your life?

God has the wisdom and power to provide what is needed in just the right way at just the right time. He did this for Abraham in Genesis 22. Abraham had been told to sacrifice his son Isaac, but at just the right time God stopped Abraham and provided a ram instead. Abraham named that place (translated) "God provides."

Christians often face financial crises, health issues, family or work problems, etc. But at just the right time God provides what is needed. At a time when He didn't *seem* to provide, it may be because a longer-term part of His plan was at work.

God Appraises (Genesis 1:31)

6. Why was the creation declared by God to be "very good" (v. 31)?

As the sixth day of Creation came to a close, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). We discussed in the Lesson Background what it means for God to appraise His creation as *very good*.

"It was good. Good, for it is all agreeable to the mind of the Creator, just as he would have it to be.... Good, for it [fulfills the purpose] of its creation, and is fit for the purpose for which it was designed. Good, for it is serviceable to man, whom God had appointed lord of the visible creation. Good, for it is all for God's glory" (Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, Zondervan).

CONCLUSION

God was not satisfied until He created human beings. This is a sober reminder that He not only loves us but also longs to relate to us in a manner that was not possible with the animals and the rest of His creation. But relationships always have two sides. As God stretches out His arms, inviting us to be part of that relationship, we are encouraged to respond to the love that He offers us.

Our God, unlike the gods of other religions around us, is a very personal God. He will not rest until He has restored everyone who will come to Him for salvation. We are special in His sight.

PRAYER

Loving Father, we praise You that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We thank You for the right to represent You and Your kingdom. We ask that the Holy Spirit will empower us to reflect You before a watching world.

We thank You for the relationship we have with You through Jesus Christ our Lord. May we be true sons and daughters of You, the creator. In the name of Jesus, the one into whose image we are being transformed, we pray, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Live up to God's image in you.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In our lesson next week we will explore the idea that nothing is too hard for God and that we should learn to trust Him for the impossible. Study Background Scripture: **Genesis 15:1-6; 18:1-15; 21:1-8.**

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