

His Image 8-27-06

Genesis 1:26-2:3 (NIV)

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground--everything that has the breath of life in it--I give every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

In the previous verses, we saw that God created space, matter and light. Then He set about bringing order where there was none and filled the emptiness with life. The first three days brought order to the initial creation and the next three filled the order of heavens, sky, seas, and land with stars, birds, fish, and animals.

Our passage begins with the final and crowning act of creation on the sixth day. *God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."* Who is God talking to? Who is the "us" in the passage. Some have suggested the angels, but the text clearly says that God is the Creator, not God and angels. (verse 31) Others believe this is the honorific plural, as in the Hebrew word for God, Elohim. But unlike most passages in which Elohim acts, the verb in our passage is plural. If we look back to the beginning of the chapter we see the Spirit of God hovering, or brooding, over the face of the waters. Obviously God and the Spirit are working together. The New Testament makes it clear that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all involved in creation. (Hebrews 1:1-2) We saw that in the first three verses of chapter one.

If the "us" is the holy Trinity, then what does it mean that we are made in the image of God. The text does not clearly tell us. There is a lot of speculation, and the popular interpretation has changed over the years. I have personally considered it to mean that we are a trinity as well, body, soul (mind, will and emotions) and spirit. But, if we are to take the context as a clue, perhaps it is in our position of ruling over creation. The image still remains, though it has been marred by sin. The image we see today is not as clear as it was in Adam and Eve.

It may be that we can best see what that was like by looking at the life of Jesus. He was not marred by sin. The image in Him was not marred but as the author of

Commented [notes1]: In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.
Heb 1:1-2 (NIV)

Hebrews tells us, He is the exact representation of God's being. (Hebrews 1:3) Jesus could command the fish of Galilee into the nets of the disciples. (Luke 5:6) The unbroken donkey's foal yielded its back to the Master. (Luke 19:30) Even the wind and waves obeyed His command. (Luke 8:25) He ruled over creation. But more than this authority over physical things, He lived in communion with God, carrying out God's will in the earth. Was this the kind of authority that God initially gave Adam and Eve? It certainly sounds like it to me. They were to rule over the creatures God filled the earth with, vice-regents over creation, the son and daughter of God, as Luke tells us. (Luke 3:38)

The psalmist speaks of this in Psalm 8. He asks why God should be so gracious to man. He goes on to say that God crowned us with glory and honor. (Psalm 8:4-5) Because of this passage, Christian Pastor Chuck Misler believes that Adam and Eve were clothed in glory. The psalm point out their authority over all creatures. The author of Hebrews tells us that we don't experience this kind of glory and honor, but that we saw it expressed in the life of Jesus. (Hebrews 2:8-9) He came that we might be brought to the glory that was originally intended by God.

Though through the fall the image was marred and the glory faded, we still carry the echo of that image. We see it in the best of leaders. We see it when people unselfishly give themselves for others, but even when we don't see it expressed it is there. Adam said that his son Seth was born in his image, in his likeness. (Genesis 5:3) That image of God has been passed down to every person born. The potential to express that inherent image is there in everyone. That is why Judeo-Christian culture values human life. James goes so far as to say that this is the reason we should never curse another person; they are made in the image of God. (James 3:9) We should be treating one another with dignity and respect because we are all made in the image of God. Criminals are incarcerated so that they can't continue to harm others who are made in the image of God. We oppose abortion because every aborted baby was made in the image of God. We are shocked by the murder of any group of people anywhere in the world because they are made in the image of God.

This understanding should lead us away from prejudice. It doesn't matter what your color, nationality, or language is, you are made in the image of God. We should be respectful of others because we know this is true. No matter how marred the image, no matter how little of it is expressed in daily life, the potential is there.

Notice that both man and woman were created in His image. From the very beginning we see that both sexes were honored with the image of God. They are to rule side by side, not one over the other. Though the New Testament will define different roles because of different design, male and female are equal in value and importance because both are made in the image of God. (Ephesians 5:33)

In verse 28, God spoke to them. Man and woman were unique in that they were to hear the voice of God and respond to it. This also shows our special place in God's creation. He also blessed them. This is the second blessing in the chapter. (Genesis 1:22) Both blessings have to do with procreation. They were to complete the work of God in filling the earth and had the blessing of God to carry it out.

Commented [notes2]: 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
Heb 1:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.
Luke 5:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 30 "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here."
Luke 19:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."
Luke 8:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.
Luke 3:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?
5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.
Psalms 8:4-5 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 8 and put everything under his feet." In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him.
9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
Heb 2:8-9 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 3 When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.
Gen 5:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.
James 3:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.
Eph 5:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 22 God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth."
Gen 1:22 (NIV)

In verse 29 and 30 we see that the original people and creatures were meant to be herbivores. God provided all they needed for subsistence in the plants and trees. That changed after the flood. It is hard for us to imagine creation before the fall. The canopy of water in the upper atmosphere would have filtered much of the harmful UV rays that are a major factor in aging. It would have caused the atmospheric pressure to be higher so the oxygen levels would be more concentrated. Plants were larger and more abundant. In some types of injuries today the injured person is placed in a hyperbaric chamber that reproduces what life would have been like in the conditions before the flood. Wounds heal in a fraction of the time. Plants grow many times their normal size. In the garden there is no mention of death. Death enters when sin enters. It would be as hard for us to imagine that world as it would have been for Adam to imagine ours.

³¹ *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day.* The final declaration in regards to creation is that it was all very good. That is because God is good. (Psalm 119:68) We look out at our world today and realize that something terrible happened to all that goodness, but we'll get to that part of the story in a few weeks. Right then, at the end of the sixth day, everything God made was not just good, it was very good. We see the remnant of all that goodness when we admire creation, marvel at a sunset, or bird soaring on the wind. But the best of this beautiful earth today is only a faint shadow of the goodness that filled the earth at the end of the sixth day. The very best of this world is only a hint of the goodness that God has in store for those who love Him. (1Corinthians 2:9)

Commented [notes13]: 68 You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees. Psalms 119:68 (NIV)

The chapter divisions in our Bible are often in the middle of an idea or story. A sixteenth century printer named Stephanus added the chapter and verse numbers to the Bible. As the story goes, he was riding a horse from one place to another when he began this difficult task. Considering his work environment, we can excuse some of these awkward divisions. The first chapter concludes its thought in chapter 2, verse 3. If you are in the habit of reading to the chapter divisions, watch for the thought or topic carrying on into the next chapter. You might read a verse or two ahead to see that the division is in the appropriate place. If your Bible has subheadings, read one complete subheading at a time to get the full idea presented, even if it ends after the chapter break.

Commented [notes14]: However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" -- 1 Cor 2:9 (NIV)

If the six days were good, the seventh makes it clear that the Creator has your best interests at heart. ¹ *Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.* That is how it happened. We know more of the extent of the vastness of that array than they did when they first received this text. From countless galaxies to life on the bottom of the sea floor to the microcosms of the subatomic world, the vastness is almost incomprehensible. How much more is yet to be discovered by man? In that vast array are the genes of Adam that you and I inherited. God was planning for us too. (Jeremiah 1:5)

Commented [notes15]: 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Jer 1:5 (NIV)

² *By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.* ³ *And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy,*

because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. God's final blessing on the first week was a blessing on the seventh day. We saw in the case of the first two blessings that blessing meant fruitfulness. God blessed the seventh day for spiritual fruitfulness. I won't go into the reasons that the early church moved their worship day to the first day of the week. The Apostle Paul warns that we should not argue over such things. (Romans 14:5-6) The important thing is to take time to cease from your works as God did from His. God made it a holy day. That is where we derived our word holiday. It was a day set apart from the normal workdays to be a special day to the Lord.

God set us an example to follow. We all need to take time off of our regular routines to worship. It has been verified that a day a week to take your mind away from your regular routine is not only a great way to reduce stress but makes a big difference in our health. God is concerned about our physical body as well as our spirit. When we order our lives according to God's design it is best for us spiritually and physically. (Isaiah 58:13-14)

God was in no way exhausted from His creative work. The word "rested" can also be translated "ceased". In other words, on the seventh day He ceased from His work of forming and filling the world, but that doesn't mean He is idle or taking a nap. That is what many of us do, but God neither slumbers nor sleeps. (Psalm 121:4) Jesus said that God is always at work. (John 5:17) He has taken up a different kind of work, not one of creation, but of re-creation. That sounds like recreation, and I'm sure God enjoys it, but it is serious work. That work involves us.

Before I describe to you this work, it is important for us to understand a Biblical concept that the seventh day has not ended. Unlike every other day, God did not pronounce that there was evening and morning on the seventh day. Instead He merely says that He ceased from this work of forming and filling and made it holy. God isn't making any new creatures, or new laws by which our world is governed. Instead, what He created is operating as He designed it from the beginning. Things are changing shape and form, but there is nothing new under the sun. (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

After showing that the generation of the Children of Israel that left Egypt never made it to the promised land, the author of Hebrews tells us that entering the Promised Land is an analogy of entering into the rest of the seventh day. He says that hundreds of years later the Psalmist wrote that there is still a rest for the children of God today. (Hebrews 4:7-8) (He follows up with this conclusion, ⁹ *There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;* ¹⁰ *for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.* ¹¹ *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.* Hebrews 4:9-11 (NIV) Their disobedience caused them to not make it into the Promised Land, the place of rest. The Promised Land was not a place where no one had to work, but it was a place of abundance. They were going to inherit homes they didn't build. Fields they hadn't cleared. Wells they hadn't dug. So much had already been done for them. But the author of Hebrews says they never entered in because they disobeyed. Then he tells us that this is a spiritual analogy, a picture that God

Commented [notes16]: 5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.
Romans 14:5-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 13 "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath
and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight
and the LORD's holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,
14 then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob."

The mouth of the LORD has spoken.
Isaiah 58:13-14 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
Psalms 121:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 17 Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."
John 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.
Ecc 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.
Heb 4:7-8 (NIV)

painted in history to warn us. Entering into Christ is entering into the seventh day of God. Jesus has earned for us what we could never earn for ourselves. His perfect keeping of the law, His sinless life, is credited to us. We don't have to fear that our works won't measure up. They never could. (Titus 3:5)

By receiving the work Christ did in our place, we have peace with God. We can rest from our own work of trying to be righteous. The life of Jesus in us enables us to express the fruits of the Spirit without fleshly effort. (Hebrews 4:10) The Spirit of God is recreating our lives in to be like the Son of God, Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:29) This is the work God has been up to since His work of forming and filling the earth was completed. He has been forming and filling lives of individual after individual.

People asked Jesus what work they could do to do the work God required. (John 6:28) In other words, how can we be good enough, what work on our part is God looking for? Jesus told them the work of God was to believe on the One God sent. (John 6:29) That is all. He does all the rest. Entering into the spiritual Promised Land is accepting the spiritual house God made for you. You receive the bread from heaven on a daily basis. The water of life springs up daily in your spirit. You receive an inheritance that never fades and promises that are sure. (1Peter 1:4) Like the Children of Israel, you have work to do, but so much has already been done for you. What you couldn't do, He did for you. That is the rest of God.

Have you entered into the Sabbath Rest? Do you live there, or are you running around trying to please God, thinking that your own efforts will be good enough? Do you know that God will meet all your physical needs and has already met all your spiritual needs or are you trying to find security in something else?

You can enter into a life in the Sabbath rest. I know many Christians who have trusted Jesus for their salvation and yet live as if every detail of life depended on them. They have one foot in the Promised Land and one in the wilderness. They trust God for their salvation, but not for the details of each day. The author of Hebrews said it was disobedience that kept them from entering in. What kind of disobedience could it be for us? Consider these commands: Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5 Casting all your care on Him because He cares for you. 1Peter 5:7 Jesus said, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 We hear it, but then we take it all upon ourselves and ignore the fact that God is sovereign over all the details of life. We disobey these gracious commands, and in doing so we hide the image of God from the world we come in contact with. Living in the Sabbath rest lets the image of God be seen by others. (Psalm 37:7)

True faith is not only believing God is, but trusting Him as well. (Psalm 62:8) The more you trust, the more you will find you are experiencing God's rest. The more you enter into His rest, the more people see God's image in you. Will you lay down your striving and enter into the rest of God this morning? People need to have their faith in God restored by seeing His image in others. For their sake, for your sake, for God's sake, won't you enter into His rest today?

Commented [notes22]: 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Heb 4:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" John 6:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." John 6:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, 1 Peter 1:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 7 Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Psalms 37:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah Psalms 62:8 (NIV)