

THE GOSPEL PROJECT
THE STORY BEGINS
GOD THE CREATOR
In God's Image

As we dig deeper into the topic of God the Creator, we come to the passages where God reveals that we are made in His image. We have always heard this expression. Today, we will make sure that we understand what being made in the image of God genuinely means and also to understand the responsibility that comes along with being made in God's image.

John Piper comments "that we have marred the image so badly it is scarcely recognizable." But we do not need to despair. After the redemptive work of Jesus, we read in **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

We reflect God when we rule wisely over the world.

Read Genesis 1:26-28 (ESV) ²⁶ *Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* ²⁷ *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* ²⁸ *And God blessed them. 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."*

Many wonder to whom the "let us" means in **Genesis 1:26**. As I mentioned in last week's lesson, El is the Hebrew name for God. The plural for God (*Elohim*) is used in **Genesis 1:1**. This is the first indication in scripture of God in three persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Now, in verse 26 we find another a plural. Some would say that the *let us* is an indication to denote majesty because kings traditionally use the plural when speaking of themselves. As far as I am concerned that is a very weak explanation. Others suggest that God was referring to the angels. However, the Bible nowhere states that angels are made in the image of God.

To me, the best explanation of the *let us* phrase is that it is a reference to the three persons of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). There are several other similar *let us* references in scripture. For example, the conversation that Isaiah overheard when he got a glimpse into heaven. **Isaiah 6:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."* Some will give glory to God but refuse to acknowledge Jesus, the Son. It just does not work that way. **Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)** ¹⁰ *so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,* ¹¹ *and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Being made in the image of God means that we are made to resemble God. The image of God refers to the spiritual part of our being. His image sets us apart from the animal world and, yes, even the angels. When we die and go to heaven, we do not become angels.

Because we are made in the image of God, we can communicate with Him and He can communicate with us. God mirrored His own personality in Adam. When you see a photo of yourself, you can say, “That’s me!” However, the photograph is not literally YOU. We should never think that being made in God’s image makes us a little god as the Word of Faith ministries led by such high-profile pastors as Kenneth Hagin, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Paul and Jan Crouch, and Fred Price teach.

God the Father did not make us “little gods;” however, God did mirror His personality in Adam when He filled Adam’s nostrils with His own breath – something that God did not do for all the other creatures that He formed from the dust of the ground. For example, with God, Adam shared the capacity to appreciate. So when God set man in the Garden of Eden, the surroundings were pleasing to Adam’s eyes. In fact, the word Eden means “delight.”

Mentally, man was created in God’s image having the ability to reason and make choices. ***Philippians 3:10 (ESV)***¹⁰ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.* We have the ability to make the choice to know God Himself!

Morally, man was created to reflect God’s holiness. ***1 Peter 1:16 (ESV)***¹⁶ *since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

Socially, man was created for fellowship with God and one another. ***1 John 1:3 (ESV)***³ *that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

Genesis 1 tells of the six days of creation including the creation of man. It is often said that ***Genesis 2*** is a second account of creation differing from that of ***Genesis 1***.

We will discuss one supposed contradiction regarding the plant life.

Read Genesis 1:11-13 (ESV)¹¹ *And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so.*¹² *The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.*¹³ *And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.*

Read Genesis 2:5-7 (ESV)⁵ *When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground,*⁶ *and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—*⁷ *then 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.*

Personally, Genesis 1 reads as a basic outline of creation and then **Genesis 2** simply gives more details. But some quibble over whether God created plant life on the third day before He created man (Genesis 1), or after He created man (Genesis 2). The Hebrew words for “vegetation” are different in the two passages. **Genesis 1:11** uses a term that refers to general vegetation. **Genesis 2:5** uses a more specific term (no small plant) indicating the kind of vegetation that requires a gardener. Probably God did not bring “farmable” vegetation into creation until after He created man.

In verse 7, we find a “new” name for God. The two Hebrew words (אלוהים יהוה) are translated in English as Jehovah Elohim. Most English versions of the Bible translate Jehovah as LORD written in small capital letters. God (Elohim) is our Creator but the LORD of Heaven and Earth also stoops to enter into a personal relationship with His people.

In the beginning, God created the universe out of nothing but when God formed man, God molded the man from elements of the earth itself. The word for ground is *adamah*. The name Adam appears to originate from a wordplay on *adamah*.

Read Genesis 2:8-9 (ESV) ⁸ *And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.* ⁹ *And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

Since the Bible says that God “put” the man He had formed in the Garden, this may indicate that man was formed at another location. Of course, we don’t know. I normally think of God molding us out of dirt that is damp like wet clay. **Isaiah 64:8 (ESV)** ⁸ *But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.* However, someone else has pictured our formation more out of dust. They said “When we think about how fine and lightweight dust is, it is easy to visualize God’s formation of man as He swirled the dust together from the ends of the earth. **Psalms 103:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.*

There is controversy over the question of the geographic location of Eden. Two of the rivers mentioned in **Genesis 2:13-14** remain today. – the Tigris and Euphrates. The Pishon and Gihon Rivers are currently unidentified, possibly due to changes caused by the flood. Generally, the region of the Fertile Crescent of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers is accepted as the original home of all races of men. It was from this region that the ox, goat, sheep, horse, pig, dog, apple, peach, pear, plum, cherry, mulberry, gooseberry, olive, fig, date, almond, wheat, barley, oats, pea, bean, spinach, radish, onion and most fruits and vegetables originated. For the believer, this is really no surprise.

Read Genesis 2:16-17 (ESV) ¹⁶ *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*

I believe that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was a literal tree just as I believe that the cross of Calvary where Jesus died was a literal wooden cross. I also believe that just as the cross of Calvary is symbolic of the promise of eternal life we receive when we accept Christ as Savior the Tree

of Knowledge of Good and Evil is symbolic of the promise of death God made to mankind as the penalty for sin. These verses do not tell us why God made human beings free to choose to obey or disobey. The most likely explanation is that only people with free wills can really choose to love God. Genuine love cannot be programmed. God would take no pleasure in robots programmed to love Him. But God, like us, wants the love shown to Him to be from the heart not from the computer hard drive. Is there any other way, God could have made us? I don't think so.

We reflect God in our rhythm of work and rest.

Read Genesis 2:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.* ² *And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.* ³ *So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

Read Genesis 2:15 (ESV) ¹⁵ *The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

For some reason (maybe it's just another way for Satan to buffet us), most of us, tend to feel guilty about resting especially in those times when we know we have so much to do. Those are the very moments, we should heed the call of Jesus found in **Matthew 11:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Also remember the advice of Peter in **1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

It is comforting to know that our God never grows tired or weary. **Isaiah 40:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ *... the Creator of the ends of the earth... He does not faint or grow weary...* Since God never grows faint, why would God rest on the seventh day after creation? Matthew Henry explains that God did not rest, as one who is fatigued, but as one well-pleased with the instances of His own goodness and the manifestations of His own glory. This reminds us that the work God has given us to do is designed to bring personal satisfaction. **Colossians 3:23 (ESV)** ²³ *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.* We are living in the image of God when we work and then rest in Him.

When we feel ourselves hesitating to rest either physically or mentally, we need to remember that God ordained resting as well as working. Jesus understood the importance of rest. **Mark 6:30-32 (ESV)** ³⁰ *The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught.* ³¹ *And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.* ³² *And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.* I must add that when your rest time is interrupted, don't despair. Interruption of rest time even happened to Jesus. **Mark 6:33 (ESV)** ³³ *Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.* I think that all of us must admit that our rest periods often get interrupted. Those too are moments to reflect the image of Jesus. **Mark 6:34 (ESV)** ³⁴ *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.* Yes, the image of God has been marred in our appearance but because of the work of Christ we can reflect the image of God's Son.