

Image is Everything

Genesis 1:24-31

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In our culture today, there is a significant amount of discussion and debate over the question of origins. Where did we come from? In 1996 in Denmark, at the Copenhagen Zoo, they opened a new exhibit in the primate building. Along with the various primates, they opened an exhibit of homosapiens, in other words, people. They had a cage right along side of the apes with a glass front and they created a “living room” look to it. There they exhibited people “doing their thing” in that living room. When the director of the zoo was asked why, he said because he wanted people to come to grips with their origins.

Is that really true where we came from? As a matter of fact, the exhibit only lasted a couple of weeks, because people simply didn’t buy it. There was such a quantum leap from the primates to the homosapiens, that there was no real logical connection from one to the other. If you were to open many of our textbooks today, you would find a series of pictures that show the ape. Then it shows a creature that looks part ape and part human, through a series of pictures, up until the sophisticated creatures that we are today. And if you aren’t careful, there is a tendency to believe that to be fact, when in reality, that is mere speculation. As a matter of fact, there isn’t a shred of scientific evidence that supports that transition from the apes to mankind.

That whole transition idea raises certain interesting questions. For example, if it is true that the apes transition into higher forms of life, with each step, until you reach mankind, why is it that there are plenty of apes today and there are plenty of people today? But there is not one of those transitional characters remaining alive on the earth. If each transition was superior to the one before, why have the apes managed to survive and nobody in between did? As a matter of fact, there isn’t a shred of evidence that one of those transitional people ever existed on the earth. If you apply a little common sense, what I call observable fact, it becomes obvious that there is not a transition between the animal kingdom and mankind, but rather there is a quantum leap from the animal kingdom to us, as people.

There is this huge chasm that separates us from the animal kingdom. Whether you talk about culture, society, language, technology, computers, Internet, flying airplanes, homes, buildings, structures, recreation, arts and music.....whatever you want to discuss, it is obvious that there is a quantum leap between what we have established as people and where the animal kingdom is. The evolutionist has no real answer for why there is this massive gap, this chasm. The question then arises, “Do we have an answer as to why people seem to be so radically distinct from the rest of creation?” And the answer is yes; that is clearly established in the first chapter of Genesis. Let’s look at Genesis 1 to discover more about our origins, and why it is that we are so radically different and distinct from any other of God’s creatures.

Starting in Genesis 1, we studied those well-known words, “In the beginning, God created.....” and we went through the first five days of creation. But in the end, no matter how spectacular creation is, no matter how majestic the universe is, we understand that it is nothing more than the mere breath of God. So, as impressive as the universe is, it is really nothing compared to the awesomeness of the God who breathed the universe into place. That is really the main point of Genesis 1; that is the foundation of the whole Bible. That is the kind of God we have.

We enter into the sixth day of creation, beginning in v. 24. It says,

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

In those two verses, it talks about the creation of cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the field, but there is a repetition that is worth noting and that is the phrase "after its kind." That phrase is repeated five times in two short verses. The point that is being established is that the cattle would reproduce after their kind. The beasts of the field would reproduce after their kind, and everything that God made reproduces after its kind, which flies directly in the face of the theory of evolution. Evolution says that one kind became a different kind.....became a different kind.....what we might call in science a species.

Charles Darwin believed that one day we would find much fossil evidence that would demonstrate transitional forms from one kind or one species to another. Yet, here we are over a hundred years later, and not one fossil has ever been found that moves from one kind of a creature to another kind. Now we, as creationists, don't deny the fact that, within a kind, there is what is sometimes called a microevolution. That just means that there is a constant change going on, and creatures can adapt to their surroundings in some minor way. But what Darwin talked about is what is called macroevolution, which meant there were these massive changes where fish became a dog, became a cow, became an ape, became a person. It involved moving from one species to another species, and there is no evidence of that. As a matter of fact, the more sophisticated science gets, the more the conclusion is that isn't even possible to happen. So, the emphasis is made that each creature would reproduce after its kind.

Also, look in vs. 29, 30, and 31. We'll look at the end of the chapter, and then focus most of our attention on what is in between, which is the focal point of this text.

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

After the discussion of what God has made in the six days of creation, at the end of Genesis 1 God says there was enough for everyone to sustain life. This, again, flies in the face of the theory of evolution that teaches that it was a "dog eat dog"....."survival of the fittest".....a competition to stay alive.

God called the Garden of Eden "paradise" and paradise could not be characterized as a survival of the fittest. Paradise could be described as a place where there's ample supply for every creature that God had created to remain alive and to nourish themselves. That's really how Genesis 1 closes. Before sin entered into the picture, all the creatures were able to live in harmony with one another. Look at Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

If you read from Genesis 1:1 through to this verse, what you see is a certain rhythm, a certain pattern as God describes creation: the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day, and even a part of the sixth day. But what you find is that when we enter into the discussion of the creation of man, the pattern is broken. It is dissimilar to anything we've heard before. And that is making a point that man was created differently, distinctly, and is described as being "made in the image of God." There is no other discussion like this in Genesis 1 or in any other place in the Bible that talks about being "made in the image of God", other than relating it to the creation of man. We understand that **that** is the one thing that makes us radically different from all other creatures that God has created. That explains why there is this quantum leap, this tremendous chasm between where the animals are and where we, as men and women, are. It is because we are "made in the image of God", very distinct.

That raises the question: "What does that mean? What does it mean to be made in the image of God?" Theologians argue about some of the finer points of that, meaning everyone pretty much agrees on the general aspects of what it means to be made in God's image. One of the aspects of being made in the image of God is our ability to be relational. It is our to give and receive love and to enter into relationships, which is unique. We don't see the same capacity in the animals that we see within human beings. Humans have the ability to communicate, to use language, and to have sophisticated relationships. That is made very clear, for example, in v. 26 when God talks about the creation of man, which he defines as male and female (v. 27).

He uses the plural pronoun and says, "Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, in **Our** likeness." Now, who is the **Our**? Who is the **Us**? Who is the plural there? Some people have said it is God and the angels. But that cannot possibly be, because throughout the Old and the New Testaments, we are told that we are made in the image of God, not in the image of the angels. So, it is clearly a reference to God and God is identifying himself as a plural God. As a matter of fact, this isn't new here; it shows up in the very first verse of the Bible. Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created." The word for God there is the Hebrew Elohim, which is a plural name. In the Hebrew there is singular, then there is what is called dual (which is two), and then plural (which is three or more). So we know immediately that He is one God but He is made up of a plurality. When we get to the New Testament, we find that further defined as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; three persons making up one God. But, what we know from that is that from eternity past, God has dwelt in community with Himself. God is a relational being and, even before anything else was created, God was relational with Himself. Therefore, when He said, "Let Us make man in Our image," He was reflecting, as God is relational, so He would make people relational. He would make people relational, with the ability to give and receive love, to enter into a relationship with Him and with one another. And that certainly set man apart from the animal kingdom.

Now there are a number of very significant applications to that, but one that is specifically identified in v. 27 is very important. It introduces the concept of human sexuality within the context of the image of God. This is where a lot of the confusion lies in our culture today. In v. 27 notice that the writer uses three phrases and in each phrase, he puts what he wants to emphasize at the front of that phrase, which is typical of how they communicated. It says, "And God created man in His own image." The emphasis there is, "*God created.*" The second phrase is: "In the image of God, He created him." There the emphasis is: "In the

image of God.” The third phrase, “male and female, He created them,” emphasizes sexuality – the male and femaleness of creation.

This isn’t the first time that we have been introduced to a concept of sexuality or the command to “be fruitful and multiply,” which is the next thing that He tells them in v. 28. God tells Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, “Be fruitful and multiply.” But look at v. 22. It showed up there in relationship to the animals. They, too, were to be fruitful and multiply. But what distinguishes animal sexuality from that of human beings is that animals are just told to reproduce. When the discussion comes to introducing the sexuality of people, it is within the context of the image of God, specifically the ability to be relational. So while animals reproduce, men and women are supposed to experience their sexuality in the context of relationship. In other words, in that context, we celebrate what it means to be people made in God’s image.

In Genesis 2 we will find out that God defines that relationship as a lifelong, one-flesh relationship known as marriage. Therefore, because we are relational beings, we are to express our sexuality in a one-flesh, lifelong commitment that reflects what it means to be made in the image of God, radically different than how the animal kingdom experiences its sexuality. What is promoted so heavily in our culture today is for people to act like the animals. Somehow that is supposed to be sophisticated and set us free. What is being advocated today is, rather than being people made in God’s image, we are being told to act like the animal kingdom. God must shake his head in disgust, thinking, “What is wrong with you people? I have made you much higher than that and to experience your sexuality in a much more meaningful relationship within the context of the image of God.” So, there are some very serious applications as to what it means to be made in the image of God, as it relates to relationship and our sexuality.

There is another aspect of what it means to be made in the image of God that rolls right out of this discussion of relationships. That defines us as volitional people, meaning we have a will; we have an intellect. This talks about our ability to choose and to act upon our will. That makes us volitional beings. The only way that a relationship can be a legitimate relationship is if we have a choice in the matter. We have a choice to love God. We have a choice to enter into a relationship with someone else. If there is no choice, then that is not a legitimate relationship. So, for there to be legitimate relationships, we must be volitional beings – people with a will who can choose or act out of that will.

Now, imagine that I went and programmed my computer on the screen saver, so that whenever the screen saver comes up it would say, “BRYAN, I LOVE YOU!” And imagine one afternoon, I am in a meeting. The meeting doesn’t go very well, and I feel kind of “beat up”. I am thinking that nobody loves me and I go to my office to sulk. Up comes the screen saver and it says, “BRYAN, I LOVE YOU!” Does that make me feel all warm and fuzzy? Does that make me feel like at least there is somebody in this world who loves me? Now I will grant you there are a few people in this world who would get warm and fuzzy from that, but most of us would not, because that is not a legitimate relationship. I typed a message in the computer and the computer simply shot it up on the screen. There is no real relationship there. But if you were to go into my office today and look at my screen saver, it does say, “BRYAN, I LOVE YOU!” And, underneath that it says, “PATTI”. Because, at some point, under the cloak of darkness, Patti snuck into my office and she typed that into my screen saver. And I left it there because it is a meaningful message. It is not the computer just

spitting back something that I have programmed into it. I know that it is a reflection of Patti's heart and she has a choice. Every day she has a choice to love me or not love me. Every day I have a choice to love her or not love her. And because I have that choice, that is a legitimate relationship.

When we got married, I didn't chase Patti down, tackle her, sit her on the ground, pin her to the ground, and say, "You have to stay there until you love me." (Not really, but it was kind of like that!) But, after all of these years of living with me and finding out what a wonderful guy I am, she would at least say today, by a choice of her will, that she does love me. And I love her. That is what makes a relationship a legitimate relationship. Therefore, for God to make us as relational beings, we also have to be people with a volition; people with a will. We can choose.

Now, if it's true that we can choose, then we introduce another aspect of made in the image, and that is the concept of morality. Because if I can choose, then we introduce the concept of right choices and wrong choices. I can choose to love God or I can choose to reject God. I can choose to obey or I can choose to disobey. I can choose to do good or I can choose to do evil. That introduces the whole concept of morality. We see this in Genesis 2, when God places a tree in the middle of the garden and says to Adam and Eve, "There is one tree you shall not eat from it; but if you do, in the day that you do, you shall die." That implies there is choice there. They can choose to disobey. And in chapter three, that is the choice that is made, and we live with the consequences of that choice every day.

By the way, that also explains what is often a troubling discussion about the origin or the mystery of evil. There are many people who say if God is a good, loving God, then why is there evil in the world? And the answer comes out of Genesis 1. It is because God made us in His image and because we are not programmed like a computer, but we legitimately have the opportunity to choose a relationship with God. We have a volition or a will. That means that if we have the option to choose God, we also have the option to choose evil. You can't have one without the other. So, when God created man in his image, He created the potential for evil. And Adam and Eve made their choice; evil entered into the picture. You cannot have people made in God's image with a legitimate volitional will, without also having the possibility, then, of wrong choices and bad choices. So that explains evil entering into the picture.

This whole idea of morality, as it separates us from the animal kingdom, is fairly obvious. At home, I have a dog and I have three daughters. I seek to train them both, but with radically different means. I seek to get my dog to obey and I use basically a punishment/reward methodology. I really don't spend a lot of time entering into discussions of morality. I don't talk to him about that collie up the street, the dangers of that collie, and all of the diseases and the moral implications. I don't enter into those discussions with my dog. I simply tell him to stay in the yard, and if he disobeys, I swat him and put him back in the yard. That is about as extensive as it gets.

But my training with my daughters is radically different from that, because they have a will. They can choose and they are morally accountable to God. I talk with my daughters about the moral implications of their decisions and what it means to walk with God; why this is right and this is wrong. Those kinds of discussions we have at great length, because my girls are radically different than my dog. If you were to go into the home of an evolutionist

you would still find the same thing, because when push comes to shove, there is an understanding that children are at a radically different level than pets. So, how we train our pets and how we train our children are radically different. There is this quantum leap between the two, and that is a part of what it means to be made in the image of God.

There are a couple of other things to discuss from this passage. One is very prominent in v. 26 and v. 28. That is the idea of **rule**, that being made in the image of God means we have a responsibility to rule over creation. In Psalm 8 David was talking about being amazed that he was made in the image of God when he said:

When I consider the heavens and all of creation, what is man that Thou dost take
thought of Him, the Son of Man that Thou does care for him but Thou has made him
a little lower than God and crowned him with glory and majesty.

That is talking about the image. But, then in the end of the Psalm, he talks about the ability to rule over all that God has created. I think sometimes we are not sure what to do with this one. What does that mean – that I can tell my dog what to do or somehow I have power over the birds or the fish? Actually, it is a very practical expression of the image of God, because every day of our lives, we in some way celebrate the image of God in our ability to rule over creation in hundreds of ways. It has to do with our ability to build a community, to build a house, to have air conditioning, to have heating, to have the ability to plant a garden, to grow a lawn, to landscape our yard, to have agriculture, and grow crops. It has to do with going into a grocery store and having all of that food available and packaged. It has to do with the ability to have clothing. It has to do with the ability to have technology, to have music and the arts, all of the recreation that we experience. All of that falls into a category of expressing what it means to rule over creation. It reminds us that we're not one with the environment. We're set apart from the environment. There's a difference between 'save the whales' and 'save the children'. They are in different categories. But we also understand that we are to be stewards of our environment. We have no right to abuse our environment, but we are to take care of it. This brings a balance to discussions of animal rights and environmental issues; those types of things. We have a responsibility to rule over creation. We exercise that in a hundred different ways every day of our lives.

Another aspect of being made in the image of God is our ability to be creative. The very first thing that we learn about God in Genesis 1 is that He is a creative God. "In the beginning, God created." God created out of nothing and, in a sense, we recreate. That's a part of being made in the image of God. When you look around at creation, you realize this is a God who loves beauty. This is a God who loves aesthetics. As a matter of fact, Romans 1 says that my ability to see creation and realize that there is a God in heaven, because of the wonder of creation, is a part of being made in God's image. I see the beauty and the majesty. My dog never sits on the back deck and just admires the sunset. He misses every single one of them. As a matter of fact, I'm concluding that my dog is an atheist. I think that's kind of the background he comes from. But my dog has no God-consciousness and he doesn't look at the sunset. And he doesn't say, "Boy, there has to be a God out there." He just doesn't think that way, because he wasn't made in God's image. But when we see a sunset we admire the beauty of that, and the reason we do is because we were made in God's image. Our ability to put together and appreciate music and all of the visual arts is part of what it means to be made in the image of God. From Genesis to Revelation, you find that God is a God who loves drama. God is a God who loves special effects. God is a God who loves beauty. Look at God's blueprint for building the tabernacle and you'll realize that this is a God who loves beauty, who loves architecture. At the end of Revelation you see that this is a God, even in

the new heaven and the new earth, who loves beauty and aesthetics. That's a part of who He is. And our ability to appreciate that and enter into it is celebrating who we are in the image of God.

That is the reason we started the School of the Arts here at Lincoln Berean, because we have a deep conviction that no one should understand the arts more than the people of God. If we understand God because we have a relationship with Him, and we understand what it means to be made in His image, then we should understand the arts more than anybody. And the church should always be on the forefront of the arts, so that whether you paint or sing or make music or you just learn to appreciate those things, it is a wonderful expression of what it means to be made in God's image. They are very legitimate forms of worship.

Whether you talk about relational ability, whether you are talking about volition or will, or the ability to rule, or creativity, all of these express themselves through our physical person. That is the last part of the image of God that I want to mention. It rarely comes up in this discussion, because we automatically realize God is a spirit, so we don't look like God. We don't physically look like God, but we also have to understand that every single aspect that we have talked about does flow through this physical being, whether it is through my mind, my heart, or literally through my body. Everything that I do, say, and think somehow is a part of this physical body on earth. Therefore, the physical does in some way play out in this discussion of the image, because I do not act apart from this body on earth. So, in some way, it is a part of expressing the image of God on earth.

When I think of this whole topic of the image of God and our ability to choose (our volitional choice), I realize the irony in it all. I realize that the only way an evolutionist or an atheist can even think and communicate a theory that dismisses God, is because he or she is made in the image of God. You don't see the cattle in the field gathering together talking about whether or not God exists. They don't even have that capability. No animal on the face of the planet even has the ability to think about whether or not there is a God. They certainly don't formulate their thoughts and communicate it. The only people that have the ability to dismiss God are people 'made in the image of God' and, therein, lies the irony of that.

Of all of these things that we have talked about in this passage, there is one expression of the image of God that goes far beyond any other expression. That is the very purpose for which we were created. God created us in His image so that we could ultimately know Him. That is the ultimate expression of the image of God in us. It is so we would know God. That we would enter into a relationship with God. That we would be personal with God. That we would be intimate with Him. That we would know Him and walk in His ways. That is the most significant reason that we were made in God's image – that we might worship and glorify and know God.

Maybe there is a restlessness in your soul; something in there that isn't quite right. Maybe you are on a journey; you are on a spiritual pilgrimage and you are trying to figure out what will satisfy your soul. I can tell you what that restlessness is. It is a longing to be in relationship with God, because all of us were created in God's image to walk in intimacy with Him and to know God personally. Until our soul finds rest in God, it will not rest at all. That restlessness is a longing to know God.

The Bible tells us because of sin we are all separated from God. Jesus Christ came to this earth, died for sin on the cross of Calvary, was buried, and rose again. If we are willing to place our trust in the risen Christ for forgiveness of sin, it is on the basis of His salvation that we enter into a relationship with God. Our sins are forgiven and we can know God personally and intimately and find rest for our restless soul. If you have never placed your trust in Jesus, and you have never known God personally, I would invite you to place your trust in Jesus. For the first time in your life, find the very purpose for which you were created, the ultimate expression of what it means to be made in the image of God.

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