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# The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XII : GENESIS 1:24-31 – PARAGRAPH SIX: THE SIXTH DAY

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*“There is, of course, a purpose in the mention of the six days. It is to emphasize the great contrast between the unformed universe of verse two and the completed world of verse thirty-one. Step by step in majestic grandeur God worked to transform the unformed earth into a world upon which man might dwell and which man might rule for God’s glory.” [Young, 99f]*

*“The highest, most complex of all creatures was to be made by God and then was to be given dominion over all the rest – all the animals of the sea, air, and land. Man’s body would be formed in the same way as the bodies of the animals had been formed (Genesis 1:24; 2:7). Similarly, man would have the ‘breath of life’ like animals (Genesis 2:7; 7:22), and even have the ‘living soul’ like animals (Genesis 1:24; 2:7). Thus, though man’s structure, both physical and mental, would be far more complex than that of the animals, it would be of the same basic essence; therefore God proposed to ‘make [Hebrew asah] man in our image.’ And yet man was to be more than simply a very complex and highly organized animal. There was to be something in man which was not only quantitatively greater, but qualitatively distinctive, something not possessed in any degree by the animals. Man was to be in the image and likeness of God Himself! Therefore, he was also ‘created’ (bara) in God’s image. He was both made and created in the image of God.” [Morris, 73]*

*‘And [our Lord Jesus Christ] answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female”’ (Matt 19:4)*

## **The Sixth Day:**

*“<sup>24</sup> Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so. <sup>25</sup> And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” <sup>29</sup> And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. <sup>30</sup> Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”; and it was so. <sup>31</sup> Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.’ (Gen 1:24-31 NKJV)*

Rabbi Cassuto's translation:

**v. 24 – *And God said,***

***“Let the earth bring forth / living creatures according to their kinds;  
cattle and creeping things / and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.”***

***And it was so.***

**v. 25 – *And God made / the beasts of the earth according to their kinds***

***and the cattle according to their kinds, / and everything that creeps upon the ground according  
to their kind.***

***And God saw that it was good.***

**v. 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 flying creatures of the air,  
and over the cattle, / and over all the earth,  
and over every creeping thing / that creeps upon the earth.”***

**v. 27 – *So God created / man in His own image,***

***in the image of God / He created him;  
male and female / He created them.***

**v. 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 flying creatures of the air  
and over every living thing / that moves upon the earth.”***

**v. 29 – *And God said,***

***“Behold, I have given you / every plant yielding seed  
which is upon the face of all the earth,  
and every tree / with seed in its fruit;  
You shall have them for food.***

**v. 30 – *And to every beast of the earth, / and to every flying creature of the air,***

***and to everything that moves on the earth, / wherein there is the breath of life,  
[I have given] every green plant for food.”***

***And it was so.***

**v. 31 – *And God saw everything that He had made, / and behold, it was very good.***

***And there was evening and there was morning, / the sixth day.***

**v. 24 – ‘*And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds;”***

**—** A general statement followed by detailed specification, enumerating the three kinds of living creatures. The commentators and Hebrew word study books differ as to the exact meaning of these distinctions. “The Hebrew terminology is more fluid than the translation suggests.” [Wenham, 25]

So while it would be erroneous to be dogmatic about what these terms mean, here is a general consensus of the kinds of living creatures listed here:

**living creatures – chayyāh nephesh** — a very general term. Note the word *nephesh* was used in vv. 20, 21 for the sea creatures and is the OT word for ‘soul, life, living being.’

**cattle – b<sup>o</sup>hēmāh** — ‘beast, animal, cattle.’ It could refer to wild beasts (rarely) but is more often used of creatures that man can domesticate, tame, own and use such as cattle and sheep.

**and creeping things – remes** — ‘creeping things, moving things;’ i.e., small creatures that creep about on the ground, or even larger animals that have no legs or have very short legs, so that they appear to be walking on their bellies. It could refer to mice, moles, reptiles, snakes, lizards, insects, and any other little creatures that keep close to the ground.

**and beasts of the earth – chay<sup>o</sup>thō - ’erets** — ‘living things, animals of the earth.’ Note the word ‘beasts’ is a form of the earlier word translated ‘living.’ Some consider these to be four-legged creatures, animals distinguished from birds, fishes and reptiles. Included would have probably been large, extinct dinosaurs.

One would assume that before the Fall all animals were essentially tame, but even then not necessarily intended for domestication.

**‘Let the earth bring forth’** — As with the creation of vegetation, the land mediates the command of God to produce land creatures. Their bodies were composed of the same elements as the earth, and when they died, they would go back to the earth.

**‘according to their kinds.’** — referring to all the aforementioned living creatures. “Like the plants, all living creatures – terrestrial, celestial, and aquatic – are created according to kind. *They are created to be self-propagating. The Creator makes creators.*” [Hamilton, 1:132] “*And that’s what we observe today. Dogs only produce dogs, cats only produce cats, elephants only produce elephants, and so on. One kind did not, and cannot, evolve into a totally different kind. Now, there can be great variation within a kind because of all the information God placed in the DNA of the original animals of each kind God created.*” [Ham, 81]

**‘And it was so.’** — A general statement to be followed in the next verse by a detailed account. It was so and continues to this day as such.

**v. 25 – ‘And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.’** — This verse enumerates again the three categories of the living creatures of the earth, changing to some extent the phrasing and word-order, as is usual in recapitulations.

**THE ABSENCE OF THE BLESSING** — “The absence of a blessing on the land animals has often been commented on. Whereas birds and fish (v. 22) and man (v. 28) are blessed and told to be fruitful, no such command is given to the animals.... [P]robably because the blessing on man (v. 28) covered all the works of the sixth day, including the land animals.” [Wenham, 1:26]

**‘that creeps upon the ground’** — The Hebrew word for ‘ground’ is a word that could be translated ‘earth’ but is not the same word Moses has been using in the rest of the creation story for ‘earth’ (vv. 1, 2, 10, 11 (2x), 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29):

*‘And God made the beasts of the earth [’ārets] according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground [’adāmāh] according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.’*

‘Ground’ is the Hebrew word *’adāmāh* and can be translated *‘land, soil, ground, territory, the whole inhabited earth.’* As we will see later, Adam’s very name is related to this word meaning *‘ground, land, soil’* because man was made from the earth. *“Certainly ... there is a play on the two terms *’ādām* and *’adāmāh*, to emphasize man’s relationship to the land. He was created from it; his job is to cultivate it (2:5, 15); and on death he returns to it (3:19). ‘It is his cradle, his home, his grave.’”* [Wenham, 1:59]

**v. 26 – ‘Then God said, “Let us make man”’** — *“Only in the case of man, because of his special importance, does Scripture allude to the Divine thought preceding the act of creation.”* [Cassuto, 55]

**MANKIND IS THE CROWN OF GOD’S HANDIWORK IN CREATION** — The prominence of this creative act is highlighted in several ways:

- the creation account shows an ascending order of significance with human life as the final, thus pinnacle, creative act
- of the creative acts, this is the only one preceded by divine deliberation (*‘let us make’*, v. 26)
- this expression replaces the impersonal words spoken in the previous creation acts (e.g., *‘let there be ... let the earth’*)
- human life alone is created in the *‘image’* of God and has the special assignment to rule over the created order (vv. 26-28)
- the verb *bārā’* (*‘create’*) occurs three times in v. 27
- the event is given a longer description than previous ones
- in v. 27 the chiasmic arrangement highlights the emphasis on *‘image’*
- unlike the animals, who are said to have come from the land in v. 24 (although v. 25 makes clear that God created them), only mankind is referred to as a direct creation of God. [Mathews, 1:160]

**WHY THE PLURAL?** – *‘let us ... in our ...’* — *“For the first time in the work of creation, the one God uses the plural form – ‘Let us’. Earlier when He was making the creatures, both inanimate and animate (which are less than man), He spoke in the singular form of the verb. That form of language is called ‘fiat’ (from the Latin, meaning ‘Let there be’). It is an impersonal form of the verb. However, when God comes to the creation of the human race, He does not employ the impersonal, ‘fiat’ phraseology, but rather uses a term which indicates that God is speaking within Himself; as though He were in consultation within Himself. Some theologians have termed this remarkable use of language ‘an executive divine counsel’.”*

[Kelly, 277] What is meant by the use of the plural pronouns? The major theories:

- **a vestige of ancient polytheism** – This is certainly incorrect; the entire creation account is strongly monotheistic and anti-mythological, it is unthinkable that such a vestige, if it even did exist, would not have carefully been removed. The fact it was allowed to stand clearly indicates that some other meaning was intended.
- **God was addressing His heavenly court, i.e., the angels** – But this conflicts with the central thought that God alone created the entire world. *‘Who has directed the Spirit of the*

*Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?’ (Isa 40:13, 14) ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’ (Rom 11:34)*

- **the plural form indicates royalty or majesty** – This cannot be because Hebrew *pronouns* never occur as a ‘plural of majesty.’ “***A plural of majesty or intensification does occur in Hebrew with nouns (the word for God, ’elōhîm, is plural for this reason), not however with pronouns. Pronouns are always countable plurals. For this reason, grammatically the ‘us’ cannot be a plural of majesty or intensification.***” [Waltke, 64] G. Ch. Aalders [*Genesis* vol 1; Zondervan, Grand Rapids MI, 1981] agrees, stating this would be impossible “because the Hebrew does not have such a use of the plural. There are a few references in Ezra which may have a use of this kind of plural (Ezra 4:18; 7:24), but these are written in Aramaic and not in Hebrew.”

- **the plurality of self-deliberation** – God would here be speaking to Himself, comparable to a person who might say to himself, “*Let’s see, should I walk to work tomorrow or take the bus?*” As a Jewish writer, this is Rabbi Cassuto’s understanding of the verse:

“Many interpretations have been offered regarding the use of the plural in this verse.... The best explanation, although rejected by the majority of contemporary commentators, is that we have here the plural of exhortation. When a person exhorts himself to do a given task he uses the plural: ‘Let us go!’ ‘Let us rise up!’ ‘Let us sit!’ and the like. Thus we find in 2 Sam 24:14, ‘*LET US FALL in the hand of the Lord ... but into the hand of man LET ME NOT FALL*’; at the end of the verse, since a negation is expressed, the self-exhortation no longer obtains, and consequently the singular form appears again.... In the same way we must explain 11:7: ‘*Come, LET US GO DOWN, and there LET US CONFUSE their language.*’” [Cassuto, 55f]

- **a divine dialogue within the Godhead, an early reality about the Godhead that must await the NT for its clear revelation** – “[T]hat there is a richness of interpersonal life within the Godhead, which Christians came to call ‘the Trinity.’ ***It is important not to overstate the case here, as though Moses and the original readers of Genesis could have grasped, from this verse alone, the doctrine of the Trinity.*** That of course is not the case, for as B. B. Warfield once wrote:

‘... the times were not ripe for the revelation of the Trinity in the unity of the Godhead until the fullness of the time had come for God to send forth His Son unto redemption, and His Spirit unto sanctification. The revelation in word must needs wait upon the revelation in fact.’ [Warfield, *Biblical Foundations*, 91]

***So then, this verse alone cannot, in simplistic fashion, be used as a ‘proof’ of the Trinity, but looking back from the vantage point of the incarnation of Christ and outpouring of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son at Pentecost, this pivotal verse literally shines with fullness of meaning.*** [Kelly, 278] “***Christian readers of the OT may indeed see a Trinitarian context in Gen 1. The question remains whether that was the author’s intention and understanding.*** The theological battle of Moses’ day was not Trinitarianism versus Unitarianism. The battle centered around the belief in one God who is himself uncreated, merciful, and sovereign versus the belief in multiple gods and demons who are

capricious, unpredictable, and often immoral.” [Hamilton, 1:132f] **Note the use of the plural in other passages in the OT:**

*‘Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us”’ (Gen 3:22)*

*‘Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language’ (Gen 7:11)*

*‘Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”’ (Isa 6:8)*

**OTHER OT PASSAGES WHERE THE UNI-PLURAL GODHEAD WAS ADDRESSING ANOTHER MEMBER OR MEMBERS OF THE GODHEAD** — This fascinating type of exchange within the Godhead appears in a number of other places in the Old Testament:

*‘I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”’ (Psalm 2:7-9)*

*‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.’ (Ps 45:6, 7)*

*‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’ (Ps 110:1) Note our Lord Jesus referred to this passage when confronted by the Pharisees: ‘While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” They said to Him, “The Son of David.” He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’ If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.’ (Matt 22:41-46)*

**man – ‘ādām** — This word means ‘mankind, humanity’ as opposed to God or to the animals, birds and fish. Adam, the first man created and named, is representative of all humanity, all human beings that will ever be born.

**‘MANKIND’ OR ‘ADAM’?** — Since the Hebrew word for ‘man, mankind’ is also the name of the first man *Adam*, it is sometimes difficult to know what the writer intends when he uses the word; e.g., Hosea 6:7: *‘But like men they transgressed the covenant...’* (KJV, NKJV, Geneva); *‘But like Adam they transgressed the covenant...’* (ESV, ASV, NASV, NET, RSV, YLT, NIV, NLT, Amplified, Darby). Even in our creation story as found in Gen 1, 2 translations differ as to when the personal name of ‘Adam’ is first mentioned: LXX 2:16; KJV 2:19; RV, RSV 3:17; TEV 3:20; NEB 3:21.

**THE IMAGO DEI – ‘in our image, after our likeness;’** — The sense here is ‘according to, after the pattern of our image, our likeness.’ This is what theologians call the *‘Imago Dei’* (Latin, the ‘image of God’), a term applied uniquely to humans. This ‘image of God’ is found only four times in the Scriptures: 1:26, 27 (2x); 9:6. Related to this however is 5:3 where Adam is said to father a son *‘in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.’*

**‘image’ DEFINED** — The root of the Hebrew word appears to have meant ‘to carve, to cut off.’ In other words, ***man was shaped or formed to fit into the image of God. He was created in such an exalted fashion that he and she would fit into fellowship with God, in a way totally***

*surpassing that of any other earthly being. “The rarity of [image] in the Bible and the uncertainty of its etymology makes the interpretation of this phrase highly problematic. Of its 17 occurrences, 10 refer to various types of physical image, e.g., models of tumors (1 Sam 6:5); pictures of men (Ezek 16:17); or idols (Num 33:52); and two passages in the Psalms liken man’s existence to an image or shadow (Ps 39:7; 73:20). The other five occurrences are in Gen 1:26,27; 5:3; 9:6.” [Wenham, 1:29] An ‘image’ was used in the OT many times of physical idols to be destroyed, although it is used twice in the Psalms to describe something immaterial, spiritual.*

**‘likeness’ DEFINED** — This word is related to the verb ‘to be like, resemble.’ The noun can denote a model or plan (1 Kings 16:10). Most of its 25 occurrences are to be found in Ezekiel’s visions, e.g., 1:5 where it can be rendered ‘something like, the likeness of.’ **‘Likeness’ was possibly given to dismiss the idea that man was created in the physical likeness of God. For example, Ezek 1-10 the prophet never says he saw God but only the ‘likeness’ of God or the likeness of something associated with God.**

**‘image’ AND ‘likeness’ ARE PARALLEL ONLY IN THIS VERSE** — The words ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ occur in parallelism only in this verse. In the Hebrew there may be no real distinction between ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ for it was customary with the Hebrews to repeat the same thing in different words, and the two terms are also used interchangeably in the OT. These two words therefore are probably best understood to be synonyms, although ‘likeness’ could be thought of as secondary to ‘image’ (note it is missing in the next verse). **“The words image and likeness reinforce one another: there is no ‘and’ between the phrases, and Scripture does not use them as technically distinct expressions, as some theologians have done.... After the fall, man is still said to be in God’s image (Gn 9:6) and likeness (Jas. 3:9); nonetheless he requires to be ‘renewed ... after the image of him that created him’ (Col 3:10; cf. Eph 4:24).”** [Kidner, 50f] For an indepth look at ‘image’ and ‘likeness,’ see Mathews, pp 1:164-172.

**IMPORTANT: NO WHERE IS ‘IMAGO DEI’ DEFINED, JUST STATED!** — This is very important to note as we consider the ‘*imago Dei*’: ***there is no place in Scripture where the ‘imago Dei’ is defined; therefore any defining of the ‘imago Dei’ should be prefaced with ‘in my opinion.’*** As Gordon Wenham says, ***in every case when the ‘imago Dei’ is described, there is the suspicion that the commentator may be reading his own values into the text as to what is most significant about man.*** [Wenham, 1:31f] (*Having said this, note we do give the various theories and opinions below*)

***“It is clear that v. 26 is not interested in defining what is the image of God in man. The verse simply states the fact, which is repeated in the following verse. Nevertheless, innumerable definitions have been suggested: conscience, the soul, original righteousness, reason, the capacity for fellowship with God through prayer, posture, etc. Most of these definitions are based on subjective inferences rather than objective exegesis. Any approach that focuses on one aspect of man – be that physical, spiritual, or intellectual – to the neglect of the rest of man’s constituent features seems doomed to failure. Gen. 1:26 is simply saying that to be human is to bear the image of God. This understanding emphasizes man as a unity. No part of man, no function of man is subordinated to some other, higher part or activity.”*** [Hamilton, 1:137]

***“Although Genesis tells who is created in the ‘image of God,’ both man and woman (1:27; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9), it does not describe the contents of the ‘image.’*** The passage focuses on the consequence of that creative act, which is humanity’s rule over the terrestrial

world of life (1:28; Ps 8:6). That lofty position merited the divine bestowal of ‘glory and honor’ (Ps 8:5) that one and at the same time acknowledged human creatureliness and yet honored mankind above all creatures as ‘human.’ ... When sin marked the human family as disobedient children, however, they did not lose the ‘image’ (9:6; 1 Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9); image, glory, and sonship are found closely related (e.g., 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 3:18; 4:4, 6; Heb 2:5-10). By the grace of the Creator the new humanity is created in the ‘image of Christ’ (cp. 1 Cor 15:49) and through his perfect obedience achieves life and glory for believers as his adopted children (e.g., Rom 8:17, 30; 9:23; 1 Cor 4:4, 6; Col 3:9-10).” [Mathews, 1:164]

### **ALL AGREE THE ‘IMAGO DEI’ WOULD NOT REFER TO A PHYSICAL LIKENESS —**

To the pagans surrounding Moses when he wrote, undoubtedly this had a corporeal significance in accordance with their conception of their gods among the peoples of the Ancient East. But the stress of the OT is upon the incorporeality and invisibility of God, not anything physical (although at times He did appear in a physical form).

### **THE ‘IMAGO DEI’ APPLIES TO ALL MANKIND EQUALLY —**

One of the observations made by several commentators was that it was a common pagan belief that the king was in the ‘image of (their) god’ but never the average individual. “A correspondent to a seventh-century Assyrian king, Esarhaddon, writes, ‘A (free) man is as the shadow of god, the slave is as the shadow of a (free) man; but the king, he is like unto the (very) image of God.’” [Waltke, 66] *But the Scriptures applies the ‘image of God’ to all mankind without exception.*

### **POSSIBLE: MANKIND BEING THE ‘IMAGE OF GOD’ REFERS TO MANKIND AS GOD’S REPRESENTATIVE —**

This is probably at least an aspect of the ‘image of God’ since v. 26 continues by mankind having dominion over the rest of creation. Wenham approves of this explanation, saying a class of objects frequently represent an individual; e.g., sacrificial animals represent Israel. Man is also in a mediatorial position between God and the rest of His creation. In a similar way, the high priest represents Israel to God and God to Israel.

### **SOME EXPLANATIONS AS TO WHAT THE ‘IMAGO DEI’ MAY PERTAIN —**

Derek Kidner: “*When we try to define the image of God it is not enough to react against a crude literalism by isolating man’s mind and spirit from his body. The Bible makes man a unity: acting, thinking and feeling with his whole being... As long as we are human we are, by definition, in the image of God.*” [Kidner, 51]

Henry Morris: “*This is a profound and mysterious truth, impossible to fully comprehend; therefore it is not surprising there has been much difference of opinion about its meaning. It is not sufficient merely to say that man was given a spirit, as well as a soul... In any case, there can be little doubt that the ‘image of God’ in which man was created must entail those aspects of human nature which are not shared by animals – attributes such as a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and, above all, the capacity for worshiping and loving God. This eternal and divine dimension of man’s being must be the essence of what is involved in the likeness of God.*” [Morris, 73f]

Douglas Kelly: “*The astonishing teaching of this verse is that for man to be in the image of God is to be like Him in certain definite respects. That is, mankind is made on a heavenly, indeed, divine pattern, which is not true of any of the other creatures. In the*

*biological sense mankind is also like the animals in many respects. The physical structure of humanity is similar to that of the animals because they were designed by the same Creator to share a common natural environment. On the basis of this similarity to the animal kingdom, Darwinism has explained man solely as a higher sort of animal, a more highly evolved ‘primate’, with no further spiritual or transcendent significance. But Genesis teaches otherwise. Mankind has the highest possible spiritual, transcendent reference: likeness to God Himself. That is the clear meaning of the word ‘image’ (Gen 1:26).” [Kelly, 279f]*

Gordon Wenham: *“The strongest case has been made for the view that the divine image makes man God’s vice-regent on earth. **Because man is God’s representative, his life is sacred: every assault on man is an affront to the creator and merits the ultimate penalty (Gen 9:5-6).** But this merely describes the function or the consequence of the divine image; it does not pinpoint what the image is in itself.” [Wenham, 1:31f]*

Ken Ham: *“An atheist once asked me on a radio program, ‘So what do you mean when you say God created humans in His image?’ For a quick answer I said, ‘Well visit the local zoo and have a conversation with the apes and you will quickly learn what it means that the humans – and not animals – are made in God’s image.’ The image of God is not simply the human body. The body is frail, and does share some similarities with animals and other forms of life. But only humans can use their minds to use logic and reason. Only humans can use language, both to communicate needs and abstract (difficult concepts) ideas. Animals can use objects as tools, but humans create tools and use tools to make tools. Humans can design and build numerous types of structures, invent machines, write music and play musical instruments, and do beautiful paintings. Humans have a conscience, knowing right and wrong, and God tells us this in Romans 2:15, ‘The work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness.’ Humans can also express love. But because we now live in a world affected by sin, we also see humans who hate and do terrible things.” [Ham, 87f]*

**‘and let them have dominion’** — The plural is used because man is a collective noun. The verb form of the Hebrew word for ‘dominion’ occurs 22x in the Qal stem, the majority of these dealing either with a human relationship (e.g., of a master over hired servants; an administrator over his employees; a king over his subjects), the rule of one nation over another, or a shepherd’s supervision of his flock (Ezek 34:4). The last passage could have some connection with force and harshness, but this is not the normal nuance of the word.

Qal stem (Hebrew grammar): the simplest stem formation of the verb; used to express either simple action or stative action (‘a state of being’)

**THE DOMINION MANDATE** — What is involved in what we call *the Dominion Mandate*?

Douglas Kelly: *“Only because mankind was created in the image of God was it appropriate to grant him the awesome responsibility of dominion over the entire created order....The call to tend the garden and classify the animals provides a fine and fruitful balance in the relationship of mankind to the environment which God has placed under his derived authority. This healthy balance is not to be found outside the biblical faith. Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, for instance, tend to neglect developing ‘the garden’ (viewing it as a sort of god, not to be tampered with), as do some*

*forms of Christian mysticism; materialist, technological industrialism tends to destroy 'the garden' for short-sighted economic purposes, whether in the strip minds of West Virginia, the slag heaps of the English Midlands, or the dead rivers of Romania; and the ultra-environmentalists or 'Greens' tend to elevate it above the legitimate needs and purposes of human society, thus losing their own significance and failing to bring to fruition what man could accomplish with the remarkable capacities of the created order. But the dominion mandate of Genesis teaches man both to respect and to subdue nature, so as to shape it in a direction that will reflect the beauty, order and glory of its Creator. Mankind was, as Gregory of Nazianzus eloquently expressed it, 'King of all upon the earth, but subject to the King above...'. "* [Kelly, 285f]

Gordon Wenham: *"Because man is created in God's image, he is king over nature. He rules the world on God's behalf. This is of course no license for the unbridled exploitation and subjugation of nature. Ancient oriental kings were expected to be devoted to the welfare of their subjects, especially the poorest and weakest members of society (Ps 72:12-14). By upholding divine principles of law and justice, rulers promoted peace and prosperity for all their subjects. Similarly, mankind is here commissioned to rule nature as a benevolent king, acting as God's representative over them and therefore treating them in the same way as God who created them. Thus animals, though subject to man, are viewed as his companions in 2:18-20."* [Wenham, 1:33]

Derek Kidner: *"In sad contrast, our human record of exploiting what is at our mercy proves the unfitness of fallen beings to govern, as ourselves ungoverned."* [Kidner, 52]

Victor Hamilton: *"What is expected of the king is responsible care over that which he rules. Thus, like 'image,' exercise dominion reflects royal language. Man is created to rule. But this rule is to be compassionate and not exploitative. Even in the garden of Eden he who would be lord of all must be servant of all."* [Hamilton, 1:138]

*Note the delegation to mankind to have dominion over the natural world does not include similar dominion over other humans. Lev 25 specifically say the master is not to rule over his servants with harshness. Solomon's dominion was a peaceful dominion (1 Kings). The reigning king of Ps 72 is also a champion of the poor and the disadvantaged.*

**ENVIRONMENTAL BALANCE** — *"As stewards of God's creation, we absolutely should be taking care of the earth. However, we should not panic over doomsday claims. The Lord has told us how the world will end, and it will not be due to overpopulation, or an abundance of greenhouse gases, or supposed man-made climate change. God will end it with a judgment by fire. And remember, in Genesis 8:22 after the Flood, God said, 'While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.' We can be 100 percent confident in God's promise. Man can never and will never destroy the earth. But, at the same time, it is important to balance the needs of mankind with the stewardship of God's creation. We should use as we have need, but not waste what we have been given.... We should not be destructive just because we can. We should only impact the environment when necessary to benefit humanity. And note that God gave man dominion over the animals and the environment. Much of the modern evolutionary environmental movement places animals and the environment over man!"* [Ham, 91]

**THE FALSE DICHOTOMY OF SECULAR VS. SACRED DUTIES** — *“The dominion mandate means that ‘secular tasks’, such as keeping the Garden, are of the same high ‘spiritual’ importance as ecclesiastical ones, such as preaching. Indeed, the traditional Western ecclesiastical dichotomy between ‘sacred’ or ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ is foreign to Genesis with its dominion mandate over the whole created order.* The seventeenth-century English poet, George Herbert, expressed this attitude which flows from the call to dominion beautifully, in a line from his hymn, ‘Teach me, my God and King, in all things Thee to see’:

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine:  
Who sweeps a room, as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.

*“Herbert’s lines show that dominion (or ‘the cultural mandate’) is not centered either on self-interest or even the created order itself as the final goal. Rather, God, ‘His laws’ and His glory are the only true end of all human activity, whether in daily work or worship.... In other words, even at his highest dignity, man is only God’s steward.”* [Kelly, 286f]

Martin Luther’s famous comments on the secular versus the sacred duties:

*“To serve God simply means to do what God has commanded and not to do what God has forbidden. And if only we would accustom ourselves properly to this view, the entire world would be full of service to God, not only the churches but also the home, the kitchen, the cellar, the workshop, and the field of townfolk and farmers. For it is certain that God would have not only the church and world order but also the house order established and upheld. All, therefore, who serve the latter purpose — father and mother first, then the children, and finally the servants and neighbors — are jointly serving God; for so He wills and commands. In the light of this view of the matter a poor maid should have the joy in her heart of being able to say: Now I am cooking, making the bed, sweeping the house. Who has commanded me to do these things? My master and mistress have. What has given them authority over me? God has. Very well, then it must be true that I am serving not them alone but also God in heaven and that God must be pleased with my service. How could I not possibly be more blessed? Why, my service is equal to cooking for God in heaven! In this way a man could be happy and of good cheer in all his trouble and labor; and if he accustomed himself to look at his service and calling in this way, nothing would be distasteful to him.”* (Martin Luther)

**‘over the fish of the sea,’** — The fish of the sea are mentioned first either because the different categories of animal life are enumerated here in the order of their creation, or in order to emphasize that man would hold sway even over those creatures that were blessed with special fertility, or for both these reasons together.

**‘and over the flying creatures of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’** — Scripture in these verses puts forth a generic expression that includes also that which is not specifically named. In our verse we have the phrase, ‘and over all the earth,’ which implies both the creeping things and the beasts. In v. 28 the words, ‘and over every living thing that moves upon the earth,’ clearly does not refer to the ‘living creatures’ in the restricted sense of the term (‘beasts’) but to all living beings that move on the earth. The same applies to v. 30 which mentions ‘every beast of the earth’ first, then ‘everything that moves on the earth, wherein there is a breath of life’ later.

**v. 27 – ‘So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.’** — The Hebrew word *’ādām* here clearly refers to mankind in general, ‘male and female,’ and not an individual. According to Cassuto, the text at this point assumes a more exalted tone and becomes poetic, making this ***the first poem in the Bible***. The verse consists of three lines, each of which has four stresses and contains the verb *bārā’* (‘create’), the repetition being for emphasis.

The first line speaks, in general terms, of man’s creation: ‘*So God created man in His own image,*’

The second line draws attention to the fact that he was created in the *Divine image*: ‘*in the image of God He created him;*’

The third line notes the creation of *two sexes*: ‘*male and female He created them.*’

These three brief sentences specify the most significant aspects of human existence. ***“The poetic structure of the sentence, its stately diction and its particular emotional quality attest the special importance that the Torah attributes to the making of man – the noblest of the creatures.”***

[Cassuto, 57]

**THE USE OF THE SINGULAR REFLECTS ON THE PLURAL OF v. 26** — Note the use of the third person singular, ‘*He.*’ “May this be the writer’s way of saying that when man was created in the image of Elohim, he meant ‘God’ and not ‘divine counsel’? If the narrator had meant the latter, then we would expect, ‘so God created man in *their* image.’” [Hamilton, 1:138]

***‘male and female He created them.’*** —

“According to the rabbinic interpretation man was created with two faces, that is, a hermaphrodite. This, too, is how many commentators of our own day, basing their view on similar legends that were current in the ancient world understand the passage.

hermaphrodite: noun; an organism having both male and female sex organs or other sexual characteristics, either abnormally or as the natural condition

But this is not the true sense of the verse, for it distinctly states: ‘*He created THEM*’ – in the plural.” [Cassuto, 57f] ***“Unlike God, man is characterized by sexual differentiation. Unlike animals, man is not broken down into species (i.e., ‘according to their kinds’ or ‘all kinds of’), but rather is designated by sexuality: male and female he created them.... The idea is not unknown in ancient literature that man was first created bisexual and only subsequently were the sexes differentiated. Such is clearly not the meaning here. Rather, the verse affirms that God created in his image a male adam and a female adam. Both share the image of God. Sexuality is not an accident of nature, nor is it simply a biological phenomenon. Instead it is a gift of God.”***

[Hamilton, 1:138] ***“God only made two genders. A human being is either a male or female. A female can’t change into a man and a male can’t change into a female. God put the information into the DNA of the first two people so that one was male and the other female. In our cells we have chromosomes that contain DNA which contains all the information to build a human. In males, two of the 46 chromosomes (the 23<sup>rd</sup> pair) are labeled XY. In the females, the 23<sup>rd</sup> pair are labeled XX. So males have an XY and the females have an XX. Now in today’s world, because of sin, a very small number of people can have problems with these chromosomes. But that doesn’t change the fact there are only two genders that God made for humans.”*** [Ham, 90]

**v. 28 – ‘And God blessed them,’** — As mentioned in our comments on v. 22, the blessing here is connected to their fertility. Here the blessing also contains another concept, namely, that of dominion over the living creatures and over the earth as a whole (including the plants), since man alone was created in the Divine image and likeness.

**‘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 flying creatures of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”’** — Although they are at present only two, but through the blessing of fertility and their increase, their descendants would fill the land and subdue it. *Note that God’s blessing on mankind is like that pronounced on the animals in v. 22, but whereas v. 22 is a simple command, this verse adds ‘and God said to them,’ thus drawing attention to the personal relationship between God and man. “This command, like others in Scripture, carries with it an implicit promise that God will enable man to fulfill it. It is repeated to Noah after the flood (9:1), and the patriarchs too are reminded of this divine promise (17:2, 20; 28:3; 35:11). The genealogies of Gen 5, 9, 11, 25, 36, 46 bear silent testimony to its fulfillment, and on his deathbed Jacob publicly notes the fulfillment of the divine word (48:4; cf. 47:27).”* [Wenham, 1:33] “Thus the male / female relationship would accomplish two tremendous purposes in terms of the divine image in humanity. First, by their own inter-personal relationship, they would experience some reflection of the interior relational life of the personal God Himself. This ever-deepening knowledge of Who God is would enrich their life together, all the better equipping them to be God’s image, as well as to do His will on earth in their own generation. And second, marriage would be the sacred channel for reproduction of those who would extend God’s dominion to the ends of the earth in days to come.” [Kelly, 289]

**MAN HAS TWO ‘ASSIGNMENTS’: PROCREATION AND DOMINION** — In v. 28 man is given two assignments: procreation and dominion. *“In view of the fact that, at least in Mesopotamia and maybe in Canaan, creation motifs were often employed in fertility rites, Gen. 1 may be saying that reproduction is a blessing and gift from God, and is in no way dependent upon subsequent rites or activities.”* [Hamilton, 1:139]

**TO ‘HAVE DOMINION’ IN v. 26 IS ADDED ‘AND SUBDUCE IT’** — The word ‘*subdue*’ is added to man’s dominion. ‘*Subdue*’ includes the connotation of force but this is tempered in later verses that such dominion does not allow him to kill these creatures or use their flesh for food. Only much later (after the flood) is dominion extended to include animal consumption (but see below). *“These are military terms – first conquer, and then rule. In context, however, there is no actual conflict suggested, since everything God had made was pronounced ‘good.’ The ‘cultural mandate,’ as some have called it, is clearly a very expressive figure of speech for, first, intense study of the earth (with all of its intricate processes and complex systems) and, then, utilization of this knowledge for the benefit of the earth’s inhabitants, both animal and human.”* [Morris, 76f]

**MANKIND IS TO ‘FILL’ THE EARTH** — Note some translations (AV, ASV, Modern English Version [MEV]) state that mankind is to ‘*replenish the earth,*’ which those who accept the Gap Theory (discussed in lesson 8) mistakenly use to teach the earth was once populated, destroyed, and now Adam and Eve are to ‘*replenish, refill*’ the earth. *Neither the Hebrew nor the Old English term itself supports this teaching and the majority of Bible versions correctly translates this as ‘fill the earth.’*

**v. 29, 30 – ‘And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every flying creature of the air, and to everything that moves on the earth, wherein there is the breath of life, [I have given] every green plant for food.”’ – WAS MANKIND AND ANIMALS ORIGINALLY VEGETARIANS? —** The majority of those I studied suggest mankind and animals were initially vegetarians, although several allowed for the possibility of meat eating prior to the flood. Cassuto is an example of those believing all were vegetarians:

*“You are permitted to make use of the living creatures and their service, you are allowed to exercise power over them so that they may promote your subsistence; but you may not treat the life-force within them contemptuously and slay them in order to eat their flesh; your proper diet shall be vegetable food. It is true that the eating of flesh is not specifically forbidden here, but the prohibition is clearly to be inferred. No contradiction in this regard is presented by 3:21 (garments of skin), 4:2 (Abel was a keeper of sheep), or by the sacrifices of Abel and Noah (4:4; 8:20)... Apparently, the Torah seeks to convey that in principle man should refrain from eating meat, and that when Noah and his sons were granted permission to eat flesh (9:3) this was only a concession subject to the condition that the blood was not to be consumed. This prohibition implies respect for the principle of life (for the blood is the life) .... The Torah presents here a kind of idealized picture of the primeval world situation. Not only man but even the animals were expected to show reverence for the principle of life. In full accord with this standpoint is the prophetic view that the prohibition was never annulled, and that in the Messianic era it would be operative again and even the carnivorous beasts would then feed only on vegetation (Isa 11:7; 65:25: the lion shall eat straw like the ox).” [Cassuto, 58f]*

*Even if all were initially vegetarians, man was later given the right to eat meat (9:3), but since the Lord provided Adam with garments of skin (3:21), Abel kept and sacrificed sheep (4:2-4), and Noah distinguished between clean and unclean animals (7:2), then 9:3 may have just been ratifying the post-fall practice of meat-eating rather than inaugurating it. Prohibited or not, it may have also been possible some of the antediluvians ventured to do this against God’s command; e.g., Jabal introduce cattle raising, Gen 4:20. Derek Kidner is among those who believes man and animals were meat-eaters from the beginning: “The assigning of ‘every green plant for food’ (RSV) to all creatures must not be pressed to mean that all were once herbivorous, any more than to mean that all plants were equally edible to all. It is a generalization, that directly or indirectly all life depends on vegetation, and the concern of the verse is to show that all are fed from God’s hands.” [Kidner, 52]*

**‘And it was so.’ —** The explanation we have given of this expression is not invalidated by its use here; despite the fact that a change came about later, when permission was given to Noah and his sons to eat meat, the prohibition was not abrogated but was only temporarily suspended.

**v. 31 – ‘And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.’ —** “Instead of the usual simple formula, we have here, at the conclusion of the story of creation, a more elaborate and imposing statement that points to the general harmony prevailing in the world of the Almighty. *On the previous days the words ‘that it was good’ were applied to a specific detail; now ‘God saw EVERYTHING that He had made,’ the creation in its totality, and He perceived that not only were the details, taken separately, good, but that each one harmonized with the rest; hence the whole was not just ‘good,’ but ‘very good.’ An analogy might be found*

*in an artist who, having completed his masterpiece, steps back a little and surveys his handiwork with delight, for both in detail and in its entirety it had emerged perfect from his hand.”*

[Cassuto, 59]

**A CREATION WITHOUT SIN, DEATH AND FOSSILS** — “[G]enesis 3 and the rest of the Scriptures (particularly Romans 5, 6 and 1 Corinthians 15) teach with one voice that evil and death entered the universe only after Adam sinned.... There are many things in the Scripture ‘hard to be understood’ (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), but this is not one of them. Nothing could be more clear than the fact that the original created order was a place of holy beauty and peace, but then that ‘... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...’. There can be no other sensible interpretation of Genesis 1:31.” [Kelly, 292]

**‘And there was evening and there was morning – the sixth day.’** — The Hebrew here has ‘day’ without the definite article (but followed by an ordinal number with the definite article) is not uncommon in the Bible, according to Cassuto. All the previous days did have the definite article attached to the noun ‘day’ but this construction here (unique in the creation story) is apparently because each of the preceding days was merely *one of the days* in the series of days of creation, whereas this was *the last day* in the sequence. This day was the day *appointed for the completion of the task*.