

Let Us Make Man in Our Image, In Our Likeness

1: 24-31

DIG: What happened on the sixth day of creation? How does the sixth day fill the third day? What **two actions** are taken on this day? What are the three categories of living creatures? Why is the plural pronoun, *us*, significant in 1:26a? What is mankind's relationship with regard to 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 (1:26c)? What are the implications of God creating us in His own image, male and female (1:27)? What was **God's Covenant with Adam**? How is the LORD's evaluation and His expression of divine satisfaction different on the sixth day than all the others?

REFLECT: What does it mean to you to be created in God's image? Does knowing this help you feel better about yourself? Why or why not? How should this affect your relationship with Elohim? With other people? How does Genesis 1 equip you to contradict worldly beliefs in our culture? Using ideas from Genesis 1, how would you counter the Gnostic who believes that only the soul matters, because the human body and material things are decadent or non-spiritual? How would you counter the atheist who believes that we are the product of a random accident? How would you counter the one who reads the daily horoscope, believing that the position of the sun, moon, and stars ordain our personality and fate?

As we have said before, there is symmetry to this first chapter of **Genesis**. The first three **days** are days of *forming*, and the last three **days** are days of *filling*. Therefore, the **sixth day fills the third day** of creation in the same ways **days four and five fill days one and two** respectively. On **the first day God** created light; on **the fourth day He** created the sun, moon, and stars. On **the second day He** separated the sea from the sky; on **the fifth day He filled** the sea with fish and the sky with birds. And now on **the sixth day He fills** the land that **He** created on **the third day** with **living creatures**. There were **two actions** on **the third day** and there are **two actions** on **the sixth day**, which is the climax of Elohim's creative activity for it included **mankind**. And although **man** was the last creature mentioned in the creation account, **he** did not evolve; **he** was **created**.

And God said marks the beginning of **the sixth day**.

Let the land produce living creatures, or souls (*nephesh*) according to their kinds (1:24a). All of these living creatures were created from the land, meaning that *their bodies were composed of the same elements as the earth*. Now ADONAI had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air (2:19). When they died they would return to the earth. This is true of mankind as well because Adam was formed from the dust of the ground (2:7). And when we die, to dust our bodies will return as well.

The fulfillment: And it was so (1:24b), because the LORD spoke it into existence.

The first action: God made three categories of living creatures. As with the stars, sea creatures and birds, the variety of what ADONAI created was amazing. He created: (1) the wild animals according to their kinds, (2) the livestock according to their kinds, and (3) all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds (1:25a). Once again the Bible is unmistakably clear that these living creatures did not evolve from any lower life-forms, but were all created at the same time. God made each category according to their kinds. This phrase appears a total of ten times in this first chapter in Genesis and repeatedly underscores the limitations the LORD places on the variation of each species. The genetic code built into each life form maintains the characteristics of that specie. It rules out spontaneous generation, and it rules out macroevolution. Here both Scripture and science agree against the theory of evolution³⁴ (see <http://creation/how-old-is-the-earth>).

The evaluation: And God saw that it was good (1:25b) because He had made it.

Then Elohim said,

The second action: Let us make (*naaseh*) man (1:26a). The word man (*adam*) is a general term meaning *mankind*. There is a change from **let there be**, to **let us make**. This change points to the fact that something very important is going to take place. The plural pronoun, **us**, is significant because it points to a plurality in the Godhead. It does not prove the Trinity, but it clearly opens the door to plurality within the Godhead, aside from the word Elohim. **Jews do not believe in the Trinity and have had a very difficult time explaining what this verse means.**

Because of this difficulty, it is not surprising that Jewish theology has two popular interpretations of this passage. First, some rabbis teach that it refers to God and angels. They believe that this teaches us Elohim's humility because man was made in the likeness of the angels. He first consulted them, even though this might be misunderstood to mean that He made man with their assistance. So they teach that

Scripture thereby informs us that the greater should always consult and receive the permission of the lesser. Secondly, other rabbis teach that the plural denotes the LORD's and the earth, because man's body would come from the earth and his spirit (soul) from God.

But it cannot refer to **angels** because there are no **angels** in the context, nor can it refer to **the earth** because **God alone** did the work of creation. The expression: **Let us make** is not a consultation, because if **Elohim** had consulted with anyone but **the Godhead**, it would have said so in **First Kings 22:19-23**.

On **the sixth day** of creation, we are unexpectedly drawn behind the scenes into the secret council of **Elohim**, where **we** overhear a conversation among **the Father, Son, and the Ruach HaKodesh** as they draw up plans to create **the man and the woman: Let us make man in our image, in our likeness (1:26b)**. You can almost feel the excitement. This is one of several passages that indicate that **we** are made in the **image of God (Second Corinthians 4:4; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3)**. The root word for **in our image** (*betzalmeinu*) is *tzelem*, which refers to *an original image or carving*. The same word is used in **Exodus 20:4** to speak of *carved idols*. The word **image** should be understood primarily in a spiritual sense here, including such qualities as *knowledge (Colossians 3:10), righteousness, and holiness (Ephesians 4:24)*. The root word for **in our likeness** (*kidmuteinu*) is *dmut* and refers to *a model or a copy*. Because **we** are made in the **likeness of God**, each of **us** is worthy of honor and respect. Just as a coin is stamped with a king's **likeness** that represents **his** authority, so **we** are all stamped with the **likeness of God**. **We** who are believers are to be **conformed to the likeness of the Messiah (Romans 8:29)**, and someday **we** will be **like Him (First John 3:2)**.

All of **us** have been fashioned by **God**. The next time you are ready to find fault with **yourself** or others, remember that everything **Elohim** made is pleasing to **Him**, including **you (His Names Are Wonderful, by Elizabeth Vander Meulen and Barbara Malda, Messianic Jewish Publications, 2005, page 36)**.

This relationship that **God** will have with **man** is totally unique and personal, unlike any other. It is a relationship unlike that of the light, the water, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, and not even with the other **living creatures He** made. Yes, **God** spoke all these into existence, but there is never a suggestion of any personal relationship between **God** and those entities. But with **mankind** it is different. The psalmist would ask: **What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor (Psalm 8:4-5)**.

Up to this point, everything that had happened merely set the stage for what would happen at the end of **the sixth day**. **Mankind** was and is the centerpiece of **God's** creation. **We** know this because everything else will perish except for **man** (**Mark 13:24-25; Revelation 13:24-25; Second Peter 3:10**). **Elohim** created us to glorify **Him** and enjoy **Him** forever. And when everything else is gone, that is exactly what **we** will be doing. In other words, creation is like a play being played in a theater. The main character is **man**. Even **God's** own **Son** becomes a **man**. The plot revolves around **God's** grace, mercy, and compassion being poured out on those whom **He** has created in **His** own **image** and **likeness**. But after the last act, the theater is burned to the ground and nothing is left but **our** relationship with **Elohim**. In fact, because this final act of creation is so important, all of **Chapter 2** is devoted to expanding upon it. More Scripture is committed to the creation of **mankind** than to any other aspect of creation.

PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) won't be very happy about this, but the Bible declares: **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 (1:26c). The rabbis teach that when man is worthy, he rules over the animal kingdom; but when he is not worthy, he descends below his level and the animals rule over him.**

The fulfillment: So Adonai 'Oseynu, the LORD our Maker, created (bara) man in His own image, in the image of God He created (bara) him; male and female He created (bara) them (Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6). God created Adam and Eve to bear His image - to be like Him. This is the starting point for any definition of what it means to be a man or a woman. His image bearer. As believers, this is the only way to discover who we really are and discover our purpose in Christ (Ephesians 1:1-9). And it is accessible to all of us.

This may be one of the most beautiful verses in the Bible (1:27). This is the third time we find the word *bara*, which means *to create out of nothing*. It is notable that three times it is stated that **God created (bara) man in His own image**. Christ was **the image of God (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15; Second Corinthians 4:4)**. Therefore, it does not seem too much of a jump to conclude that **God created man in the image of the body that He would one day take on**. In this sense, it seems that **man was created in the image of God the Son**. **The rabbis teach that man was created last so he would not be proud**. In the status of **man** before the Fall, **he was posse non peccare**; this means *he was able not to sin*. **He was also posse peccare**, which means *he was able to sin*. But after the fall, **man was non posse non peccare**, meaning *he was not able not to sin*.

The blessing: God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28a). ADONAI, put an exclamation point beside His choice of male and female. He blessed them before presenting them with their global assignment. They were a blessed alliance. God was forging a powerful union to face the challenges they faced together. Nowhere does God's image shine brighter than when men and women serve Him together.

The Covenant of Adam is seen in 1:28-30. It comes in two parts, the first part is here and the second part is in 2:15-17. The Covenant is made between the LORD and Adam, and Adam stands as the representative of the entire human race. This will be especially important when we get to the fall of man in Chapter 3. Moses mentions four specific provisions of this Covenant. First, man is to populate the earth. Children constitute one of God's greatest gifts to us (Psalm 127:3-5). Secondly, mankind has authority over the earth and was to subdue it.

The third provision was authority to rule over the animal kingdom. God said that mankind would rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (1:28b). This has to do with stewardship rather than exploiting the earth or polluting it. The most complex of all the living creatures that God had made was then commanded to rule over all the rest. The first exercise of this authority will be seen in the next chapter when Adam names the animals.

The fourth provision is the human diet. What Elohim creates He preserves. What He brings into being He provides for. Mankind is to have as food the seed and fruit plants. Animals and birds are to have the leaves.³⁵ 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 (1:29). Both man and the animals were vegetarians because physical death could not come until after the Fall of man. 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 (1:30). **This begins the dispensation of innocence** (1:28 to 3:5).

The evaluation and an expression of Divine satisfaction: God saw all that He had made, and it was very good (1:31). Everything that is very good has the LORD at its source: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights (James 1:7). All the days were good, but the word very is added to emphasize the uniqueness of the sixth day. **The adverb very is added to denote that the perfection of the total creation exceeded that of its separate parts. 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 has emerged perfect from His hand. In God's judgment everything in the universe was very good. There was no struggle for existence, no disease, no pollution, no earthquakes, no floods, no disorder, no sin, and most importantly, no death. That would come later after the Fall.

The numbering of each day: And there was evening, and there was morning - the sixth day. There are three unique aspects of this day. First, Elohim said it was very good, in comparison to the previous days that were good. Secondly, for the first time the definite article is added so it is not a day, but *the sixth day*. Apparently each of the previous days was merely one of the days in the series of days of creation, whereas this was the last day in the sequence, the day appointed for the completion of the task. And thirdly, this day is treated in greater detail than the other days.

The rabbis teach that the definite article is added here to teach that the whole of creation was dependent upon the sixth day, that is, the sixth of Sivan (which is the name of a Jewish month), when Isra'el accepted the Torah. For had Isra'el rejected it, the universe would have been hurled back into its original state of being formless and empty (1:1).

When God the Holy Spirit inspired the human author Moses to write about these first six days of creation, He didn't give us a lot of details. As a result, our faith is tested and we find ourselves right back to the all-important truth in Hebrews 11:3: **By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.** The origin of the universe has been a long standing problem for philosophers and scientists. If they cannot figure it out logically with the human mind, they don't want any part of it. The very attempt to explain the universe, or our own being and nature, apart from Elohim is a fool's effort. But the believer insists that all truth is the LORD's truth revealed in His Word. Faith comprehends that which the natural mind of mankind, no matter how brilliant, cannot grasp. God's greatest truths are discovered by simple faith.³⁶