

# Genesis – Lesson 3

## The Creation of Humanity

### Read Genesis 2:1-17.

1. Compare Genesis 2:4,7 to Genesis 1:27. Why does the author seem to give a *second* account of the creation of humanity in chapter 2? What *point* might this chapter be making about us?

Although often described as a “second account” of the creation of humanity (implying to some that there is a time prior to Adam where humans may have already existed), it is apparent that chapter 2 is simply a more detail *retelling* of the creation of humanity. In essence, chapter 2 retells the concept summarized in 1:27; whereas chapter 1 describes humanity as the pinnacle of God’s total creative work, chapter 2 repaints the creation of humanity in detail, thus making the point that the place of humanity is the *most important aspect* of all that God had formed.

2. (a) From 2:5-6, describe the *condition* of the earth before the creation of humanity.

At this point, the earth appears to be in a state of non-growth; although plants have been formed, with the *potential* to reproduce, it does not appear that they have started to do so, for there was no one to till the ground and help them do so, and God had not yet sent rain. The implication is that God intended for humanity to be the *agent* of plant reproduction, specifically through the work of cultivation.

(b) Using verse 7, list at least two things about God’s creation of humanity that *differs* from how he created all other things. *Why* is this significant?

First, God formed man *directly* from elements of the earth itself; Adam was not created *ex nihilo*, he was created from the dust of the ground, physically. Second, God *breathed* life into Adam once his physical form had been completed; Adam’s life was *directly* from the very nature of God himself. The image of God (i.e. the *Imago Dei*) entered into Adam through the act of God breathing that nature into him. Thus, humanity is distinct from all other creatures because 1) he possesses a physical nature that was *intimately* formed by God directly, and 2) he possesses a nature that flows directly from the character of God (see 2c below).

(c) According to 1:26, humanity was created in the “*image*” of God. What *is* the image of God, and how was that image *infused* into us?

The image of God (i.e. the *Imago Dei*) is the nature of God that has been *inculcated* in human beings by virtue of having been formed *directly* by him and through the process of being brought to life *directly* by him. It is the various “higher” characteristics of humanity that are not present in the animal world, but are clearly visible in the character and nature of God himself. Such characteristics include things like will, emotion, intellect, reason, self-awareness, consciousness, conscience, morality and ethics, language, artistic ability, etc. All of these, although present in *rudimentary* form in animals (i.e. instinct), are “higher” in human beings, to the point where humans are *distinct* from the animal world in their ability to reason, contemplate their own mortality, and distinguish between moral and ethical choices. In other words, humans are *more than the sum of their parts*: human beings have a nature which *exceeds* the simplistic view of simple animals. Human beings do retain *all* of these attributes given to them by God, *but all of them have been corrupted by the Fall*. Total depravity is the biblical idea that *all* of the God-like attributes given to human beings in the *initial* creation of Adam have been *corrupted*, and we are *unable* to use these characteristics in the way that they were *originally* intended, specifically to live in a way that is pleasing to God or in satisfying his righteousness.

3. (a) From 2:8-9 and 2:10-14, describe the *conditions* of Eden. Why such a *detailed* description?

The conditions of Eden were designed to be *idyllic*: it was a garden, that grew all of the foods that would be needed for human life. The garden was special, also, in that everything that human beings might like to “have” (i.e. as luxuries) were also available there, such as gold and precious stones. In other words, God formed a garden that was both lush and luxurious: Adam had a place where he could enjoy every aspect of physical, human life.

(b) According to 2:5 and 2:15, what was Adam supposed to be *doing* in the Garden? Hypothesize what that may have *entailed*, and what the Garden may have *needed* for him to do.

It would appear that Adam was intended to *work* the Garden, to cultivate the plants and keep the garden orderly and functional. Given that death had not yet come, it is difficult to grasp what this work might have entailed (i.e. since weeds and other hindrances to growth were not yet around). However, it is obvious that this work 1) was not laborious or difficult, and 2) accomplished perfectly whatever was needed within the garden. Given that God expected Adam to work the Garden, it seems reasonable to conclude that the act of plant reproduction was accomplished through cultivation. Thus, the Garden “needed” Adam to work it, as a part of its created nature.

4. What were the *names* of the special trees God planted in the center of the garden? What were their *purposes*? Which were *forbidden* and which were *allowed*? Why?

Verse 9 tells of two special trees in the center of the Garden: 1) the tree of life and 2) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From their *names* we can deduce their purposes: 1) the tree of life provided an unending source of life to those who would eat from it, 2) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would provide the consumer with a *direct* knowledge of the distinction between what was good and what was evil. Adam *probably* had an *indirect* knowledge of that which was right and wrong. In his *innocence*, he was conscious of the *concept* of evil (or wrong) although he had never *experienced* it. God, in the same way, is fully *aware* of the concept of evil, although he has never experienced it himself. This awareness was given to Adam by God as part of the *Imago Dei*. The tree of life was *always* available to the first humans, and it is very probable that Adam and Eve did (in fact) eat from this tree prior to their banishment from the Garden. But, God prohibited eating from this second tree because he did not desire for humanity to have a *direct* knowledge of good and evil (i.e. experientially); to eat from the second tree would change Adam into a being which now *understood evil personally*, as one who had *experienced* it firsthand.

### Read Genesis 2:18-25.

5. (a) From 2:19-20, list two (2) reasons why God *brings* all of the animals to Adam?

God brings the animal to Adam 1) to name them (i.e. to describe their nature by virtue of their name), and 2) to seek from within the animal world a helper or partner for Adam, since he was alone. This act distinguishes the animal kingdom from humanity: no animal will ever be “equal” to humans because the very nature of animals makes them a lower class of creature. Although human beings are to dominate (i.e. domesticate) animals, they will never properly substitute for human to human relationships.

(b) *Why* did God create Eve? Why do you think God used a *part* of Adam to create Eve instead of forming her directly from the ground (as he had done in forming Adam)?

God created Eve because 1) it was not good for Adam to be alone (v. 18a), 2) because he needed a helper (v. 18b; i.e. for reproduction), and 3) because no other creature could provide the kind of *companionship* and *relationship* that Adam needed (v. 20). It is this *last* reason that seems to be the most *compelling*: Adam needed a companion that was *most like him* in order to fulfill the *God-given* need of relationship, the kind of relationship that God himself understood as a Triune God of multiple persons in perfect relationship. In the *Imago Dei*, God had filled Adam with a basic need for intimate relationship, and that could only be satisfied by a person *most similar* to Adam in form. Because the person whom Adam related to *best* must be most similar to himself, God chose to create Eve *directly* from him, as though the woman were a “part” of him or an “extension” of himself. If God would have formed a “different” creature from the ground, Adam would not have had the same kind of *intimate* relationship to it that he would have with someone created *directly from himself*. Thus, God created Eve from Adam in order to satisfy *perfectly* Adam’s need for an *intimate* companion (see 6a below).

6. (a) List some things *created* in the relationship between Adam and Eve (from 2:23-24)?

First, the relationship between Adam and Eve created the first truly *human* interaction, fulfilling the intimate relational need within the *Imago Dei* inherent with Adam. Second, the relationship between Adam and Eve created the first human *marriage* relationship, whereby a man and a woman together form the basis of a permanent entity from which family springs. And, thirdly, the relationship between Adam and Eve create the beginnings of *human civilization*, built upon the foundations of family, the human race will now reproduce itself to fill the earth and develop the *Imago Dei* into every aspect of culture, language, etc.

- (b) What *point* does Jesus make in quoting from Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:3-6?

Jesus appeals to the *creation ordinance* developed within Adam and Eve in his defense of marriage. Just as Adam and Eve were formed by God in a *permanent* union, thus all marriages are to be defended as a permanent, monogamous, covenantal relationship. However, Jesus also (by implication) addresses every form of human sexuality, particularly his view of how the creation of Adam and Eve (i.e. a man and a woman) undergirds every aspect of sex. The reality is, according to Jesus himself (as he interprets Genesis 2:24), that God formed human beings as either male or female, and that those categories are *fundamental* to what it means to be human. Thus, every question regarding human sexuality is addressed: every person is born (inherently) with a sex that is essential their humanness, sexuality is only to be acted upon with this binary equation, and marriage is only to be between one man and one woman.

- (c) What *essential* element of the nature of humanity is presented in this chapter, which stands at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The essential element of humanity is the *Imago Dei*: the image of God, a subset of God-like attributes that come directly from the nature of God in his intimate formation of man. Humanity was formed with a physical and spiritual *perfection*, directly flowing from the very nature of God himself. Although we are never deity, as nature as image-bearers means that we possess a *natural* knowledge of God, his righteousness, and his expectation of righteousness within us. The gospel addresses the *corruption* of this image by seeking to redeem fallen human beings “back” to their state of innocence prior to the Fall. The gospel is the “good news” over against the awful news that our original creation has been deeply flawed by sin; the work of Christ will be, in the end, the restoration of a perfect innocence, even after we have experienced the knowledge of good and evil.