

God's Love For Man As Shown In The Creation

In the creation account of Genesis chapters one and two we are not told exactly why God created; only that He did. We're told that He created in six days the earth its seas, the heavens and all that inhabit them. We can know too, that God made man on the sixth day of creation. But beyond the understanding of "In the beginning God "created", it is important for us to examine what God did with His creation. Mainly, what is it about the creation account that shows us the extent of God's love for mankind? Could that even be the reason for the Psalmist question; *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?..."* (Psalm 8:3-4a)

The Creation Of Man

There is a most important statement made about the creation of man that is not made concerning any other creature in the creation account. *"And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them* (Gen.1:26). God created man to be like Him. Truly, man must be the most important of all creatures in God's creation. No other being was made to be like God. But what does it mean that God created man in His own image? To answer this question we turn our attention to the second chapter of Genesis. *"And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"*(Genesis 2:7).

Man was created first a body. God took the dust of the ground and used it to form the first man, Adam. But we also learn that man was not meant to be merely a physical being, for God breathed life into man's body and he became a "living soul". With this thought we are reminded that without the spirit (soul), the body is dead (Jms. 2:26). The physical body of man then, is the house, or abiding place of man's soul. So God created man in two elements, a body and a soul. Of these two elements then, which one is "in the image of God"? Surely it must be the soul, in that God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24) and not a physical being. The creation account of chapters one and two of Genesis then, tell us that man is the only creature to which God gave a soul, meaning that man is the only creature on this earth made in God's image.

Since God created the soul of man to be in His image, there must be then, certain characteristics or attributes that are found in the spirit of God that are also found in the soul of man. Let's briefly examine the main characteristics of man's soul that can be considered to be in the image of God.

- 1) The Mind: God gave man a mind that is capable of learning and understanding; of thought and processing information. That makes man different from the animal kingdom.
- 2) The Heart: God made man with the capacity for emotions. These emotions enable us to love, hate, rejoice, to feel sorrow and compassion.
- 3) The Will: God, Himself, has the capacity of will to choose to do or not to do. God has placed in the soul of man the capacity of freedom of choice.
- 4) The Conscience: It is the conscience that guides man and governs his actions.

When considering the entirety of creation and man being the only creature with these attributes in God's image, surely we can begin to understand God's love for us.

Man's Placement in the Creation

The first man was placed in a most unique environment. Unlike our present world, it must have been a place of peace and tranquility; a place of splendor unknown to men today. Gen. 2:8-25 describes an environment where, for a time, there was perfect happiness. Let us examine the things that God provided in the Garden of Eden for man's happiness and well-being.

Beyond daily contact with the natural surroundings of Eden, in which man was able to commune with the plants, animals and elements of nature, man was alone. God, in His love and wisdom, deemed that it 'was not good' for man to continue in this state (Genesis 2:18). Man was given companionship. *"And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which Jehovah God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man"* (Gen. 2:21-22). Even though the relationship between Adam and Eve was more along the lines of a marriage, it also is evidence that God intended for man to be a social being and to be able to have interaction with others of like kind.

Another aspect of the environment that added to man's happiness is the ability to work. God placed man in the Garden for specific reasons. *"And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to*

keep it"(Gen. 2:15) Contrary with the opinions of some, work is not a bad word, and is not contrary to man's happiness; it is a vital part of it. Work was given man to do in the garden before sin took place there, so it is not even a punishment for bad behavior. The ability to work effectively and make a productive contribution is a major component of "self-esteem". Along the same lines, another basic principle of man's nature as beings created in God's image is the ability to 'give'. Man was created to be a giving and productive being. Oftentimes it is through our labors that we are able to gain what may be shared with others.

Another blessing given to man in the garden was God's law. There was a stark difference in the attitudes and disposition of Adam and Eve before and after their sin. Before their sin: *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed"* (Gen. 2:25). After their sin: *So he (Adam) said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself"* (Gen. 3:10). Breaking God's law led to fear of God, a guilty conscience, blame and excuses, doubt, and exile, none of which were present as long as man was obedient to God's will. Limitations and governance is as essential in the moral realm as it is in the physical realm. Contrary to modern philosophical teachings, words like discipline, control and boundaries are good. God's law is good. It is a vital part of what makes our highest happiness possible. Man is severely limited in the area of leading himself in the way that is best for his own sake. The prophet Jeremiah said it in this manner: *"O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23).

There was a time in Israel's history that there was no king in Israel and "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Without regulations, rules, guidelines and the like, there can only be near chaos. God was gracious in giving man His laws to guide man toward happiness.

Last but certainly not least in our discussion of God's blessing in the garden for man's happiness is the fellowship with God. He had given to man a sense of logic (Gen. 2:20), language (Gen. 2:23), and a sense of awareness (Gen. 2:23, 25). Unlike the animals and the rest of creation, man was given the mental capacities to be aware of and communicate with God. This direct fellowship and communication with God enabled man to have the close relationship with God that no other created thing or being was able to have. Although the sin of Adam and Eve destroyed the kind of direct fellowship with God that man originally had, God has enabled man to have fellowship with Him through the sacrifice of Jesus, His Son. *That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: and these things we write, that our joy may be made full.*¹ John 1:1-4

God's Love For Man... Before The Creation

In the beginning of this writing, a question was put forth; What is it about the creation account that shows us the extent of God's love for mankind from the very beginning? It has been the purpose of this writing to answer that question through Bible Scripture, through knowledge and through logic. Surely we can tell from the Scriptures that God has loved man from the beginning. Logically, knowing that man has an eternal soul, that he has been created in the image of God, that he has been given dominance on earth over all other created things that occupy it, and that he has been provided access to life's necessities for happiness we can understand a measure of God's love and providence for man from the beginning. But there is another way that we can know of God's love for mankind. The Scriptures tell us that God loved man and was providing for him, even before the beginning of the creation event. Let's notice a few of the passages that validate this. 2 Timothy 1:8-9, *"...according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal,"* Ephesians 1:3-4, *"...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world,"*¹ Peter 1:18-20, *"...even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world."* Matthew 25:34, *"...inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

These are but a few of the many passages in Scripture that validate many things that were taking place, in the mind of God, before the creation event. God was planning to manifest Himself through Christ; God had decreed a remedy for man's sins before the creation and the 'fall' of man; He was planning to reveal the kingdom of heaven to men; He was preparing that kingdom for future occupants; all before "the foundation of the world". Not only that, but God was planning to reveal to men all of these truths and more, as He determined "the fullness of times". Ask yourself, "Why"? Perhaps that answer has been best stated in the following verse written by the apostle Paul. *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* R

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What a wonderful and loving God we serve who has provided all we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), because He loves us and desires fellowship with us, to the extent that He has prepared wherein we might be able to spend all of eternity with Him. He didn't have to... but He did. Know dear reader, that God does love you!

"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way."
John 14:1-4