

Made in God's Image

Lesson for Sunday, February 19, 2023

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Last week we began a new series: The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses.
 - Who remembers last week's verse? Anyone want to quote it?
 - A sentence summary of week #1: Genesis 1:31 – God created it all.
- ⇒ This week we are staying in Genesis 1 for the second highlight in the story of the Bible.
 - Last week we saw how this critical chapter of the Bible teaches us a lot about God. This week we will see that it also has much to say about us.
- ⇒ Our text: Genesis 1:27-28 (read it together as a class).
 - One of the biggest issues in culture today is identity. Who am I? What if I don't like who I am? Is my identity intrinsic, is something I earn, is it something I discover, etc.?
 - What does it mean to be a human being? Today's text has God's answer!

BIBLE STUDY:

1. The Creation of Man
 - a. As with every Biblical text, these verses must be taken within their context. The context is important in understanding the difference between mankind and the rest of God's creation.
 - b. In 1:3-4 we see the beginning of a pattern that flows through the creation narrative:
 - i. "And God said...Let there be...it was good."
 - ii. It is repeated in: vs. 9-10; 11-12; 14, 18; 20-21; 24-25.
 - c. When we come to today's text, the pattern changes:
 - i. Vs. 26: "And God said"...so far so good!
 - ii. "Let *us* *make*"...a significant difference! (Genesis 2:8 gives the details.)
 - iii. Vs. 31: "It was *very* good!"
 - d. Even the language itself, the creation of the first man and woman signals that there is a distinct difference between human beings and the rest of creation.
2. The Meaning of the Image
 - a. Why the difference? When we study today's text, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that God created Adam and Eve for a specific role: to serve as His image bearers, or representatives, in the world. What would an ancient reader think of this idea?
 - b. Kings would often set up statues of themselves in the areas that they ruled to remind people who was ultimately in charge. Whenever one nation conquered another, down would go one statue, and up would go another, to show who was in charge of the area.
 - i. Remember Nebuchadnezzar?
 - ii. Remember when Saddam Hussein was overthrown that his statue was pulled down and demolished as a visible indicator that his power was gone?
 - iii. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, they similarly had lots of statues and paintings of Lenin and Stalin, and they got removed, too.
 - c. When Genesis claimed that people were made in the image of God, this is one thing that the ancient readers would probably think of. An image represents a ruler.
 - d. God created a three-dimensional image of himself, and human beings *are* that image! We were all made in the image of God – and we were made to rule, on God's behalf, over the earth.
 - e. We *are* rulers, but we are not images of ourselves. Rather, our identity must be seen by reference to someone else, someone more powerful than we are. We are images of a ruler who has even more authority than we do – God himself.
 - f. NOTE: Notice that both Adam and Eve were created in God's image. While men and women have specific roles that God designed them for, both are made in God's image. The word "man" in vs. 27 applies to both sexes.

3. The Responsibility of Mankind

- a. In Genesis 1:2 we read that “the earth was without form and void.” It was shapeless and empty. The rest of the chapter, God shapes His creation and fills it.
 - i. He shapes the land and the sea, and fills them with life.
 - ii. He sets the boundaries of outer space, and then fills it with stars.
- b. When God commissioned Adam in verses 27-30, He turned over the job of shaping and filling to humanity. Being made in the image of God meant that Adam and Eve were able to do what God had called them to do.
- c. In this text, God called Adam and Eve to two important responsibilities:
 - i. They were called to fill the earth and subdue it. This is more than simply having children!
 1. Genesis 2:8 tells us that God planted a garden in Eden. This was the place where God would meet with His people. But this implies that there was a lot of room outside the garden that needed to be filled.
 2. Adam and Eve were called to expand the garden! It was a command to expand the territory where God Himself lived.
 3. In a way, Adam and Eve were commissioned as the first missionaries. As they had children and humanity expanded, it would be their job as His image bearers to make God known throughout the earth.
 - ii. They were also called to “have dominion” over the earth.
 1. Being made in God’s image meant that Adam and Eve were supposed to be His representatives on the earth. This was a command to use the earth and its resources, not to abuse it.
 2. This meant that they were to rule the animals and the rest of the earth in the way that God Himself would rule them. They were to be faithful stewards.
- d. It’s important to remember that at the end of Genesis 1 the creation was perfect.
 - i. God had made the first humans to represent Him in this very good creation.
 - ii. They were to expand the dwelling place where God’s glory would be on display, and to rule on His behalf.
- e. Then in Genesis 3, everything changed. Come back next week!

APPLICATION/DISCUSSION:

- ⇒ Draw the timeline on the board and fill in the first two points:
- Genesis 1:31 – God created it all.
 - Genesis 1:27 – We are all created in God’s image.
 - Encourage the class to memorize the verses.
- ⇒ The doctrine of the image of God is critical in addressing the majority of social issues of our times:
- Every life is valuable because it bears the image of God...
 - This makes taking of life (abortion, euthanasia) wrong.
 - This should dictate how we treat all people regardless of any other factor (racism, bullying, etc.).
 - The image of God is the foundation of our identity. Our identity should not be based on what we do, how much we earn, our possessions, even our sexuality or preferred gender.