

MAN - GOD'S MASTERPIECE
GENESIS 1:26-2:25

NEED: TO UNDERSTAND WHO WE ARE.

PROPOSITION: A HUMAN BEING IS A MASTERPIECE OF THE CREATOR GOD.

OBJECTIVE: TO LEAD PEOPLE TO LIVE AS GOD'S MASTERPIECE.

INTRODUCTION:

The whole human family seems to be suffering from an identity crisis. Different disciplines in the intellectual world have devoted energy to answering the question concerning human identity. We need to know who we are if we are to function effectively in the world.

Many can identify with the 19th century pessimistic thinker, Arthur Schopenhauer. It is reported that he was sitting in a park contemplating the question about his own identity. The philosopher was dressed shabbily and looked unkept when the park keeper mistook him for a tramp and asked him gruffly, "Who are you?" To this inquiry the philosopher replied, "I wished to God I knew." You may be able to identify with him in that despair concerning your own identity.

God offers us an answer to the question concerning, "Who am I?" In the creation revelation God gives us an answer by revealing to us the beginning of the human family. We come to know about who we are when we understand where we came from.

We have the general statement concerning the creation of humankind in Genesis 1: "So God created man in His own image. In the image of God He created Him, male and female, He created them." After giving us this general descriptive statement concerning the creation of man, God then gives us a more personalized account of the creation. Genesis 2 is the personalized account of how the creation of humankind actually happened. We need to see these two in relationship to each other and not, as some have assumed, in conflict with each other. When we put the two accounts together, there are certain basic things about our identity that becomes obvious. It is obvious that we are indeed God's masterpiece, His final and climatic act of creation. Let us explore together some of the basic things revealed about us in this creation account.

I. A PHYSICAL BEING.

The creation account makes it clear that human beings are a part of the created order. They are made of the same kind of stuff as the rest of the creation. In the personalized account of the creation the scriptures tell us "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." And like the rest of the creation man was made from "the dust of the ground." This affirms something that science has discovered about man. One study indicates that the human body is composed of about 58 pounds of oxygen, 2 oz. of salt, 50 quarts of water, 3 lbs. of calcium, 24 pounds of carbon, and some chlorine, phosphorous, fat, iron, sulfur, and glycerin." If you were to take all of these elements and to sell them, man has a worth of a few dollars when you consider him as simply a physical being.

While this is obviously not the whole truth about who we are, it is a part of the truth. It is a part of the truth that reminds us of our finiteness and our frailty. We ignore that we were made from dust to our own hurt. When we try to ignore the frailty of the human body and our finiteness as a persons, then there will be a severe price to pay. So, a part of being God's masterpiece is being a physical being.

II. A SPIRITUAL BEING.

This is the part about our personhood that sets us apart from the rest of creation.

1. The image.

It is only of man that it is said "In His image." While the significance of this description of man has been debated, it obviously sets us apart and relates us to the creator in a special way.

2. The breath.

In the personalized account of the creation, we are told that after God had formed man from the dust of the ground that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being. It is only of man that it is said that God breathed into him the breath of life. God conveyed to the man something of himself in this creative process. When you put these two accounts together it is obvious that man has a capacity for a special relationship with God. God created the man in such a way that the man would be able to know Him and to respond to Him as Creator. This is basic when we begin to consider who we are.

It stands in conflict with the witness of the world about us. The witness of the world about us reminds me of a humorous piece of poetry that I read. It is entitled, "A Monkey's Observation." It reads

Three monkeys sat in a coconut tree;
And talked of things that were said to be. Said
one to the others: "See here, you two!" There is
rumor afloat that can't be true, That man
descended from our lofty race,
To think of such is a great disgrace.
No monkey ever beat his wife,
or starved her child, or spoiled her life;
And whoever heard of a mother monk
parking her babes for another to bunk, Or
passing them on from one to another, Til they
couldn't tell who was their mother. And
another thing you will never see,
Is a fence around the coconut tree.
If a fence I should built around a coconut tree
Starvation would force you to steal from me;
And there is another thing a monk won't do That
is to go out at night and get on a stew; Then use
a gun, club, or a butcher knife

To take another poor monkey's life.
Man may have descended, the ornery cuss;
But brothers, he didn't descend from us!"

While the image of God and man has obviously been adversely affected by man's fall into sin, there is still evidence of this spiritual side of man. Even in his fallen state he writes poems about behavior that is unbecoming a human being. He is the only part of the created order that would ever feel compelled to make such an evaluation. He is created in the image of God and bears and spiritual likeness to God in His being.

III. A ROYAL BEING.

One of the interesting things about man is that he was created to rule. In the consultation that took place in the Godhead concerning his creation God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, 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 moved along the ground." So, when God created human kind in the beginning He created them in such a way that they were capable of having authority over the rest of the creation. It seems that there is a direct relationship between being created in the image of God and the charge to rule over the rest of the creation.

In the personalized account of man's creation, this is also emphasized. There were two things that happened in that personalized account that gives emphasis to this. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work and to take care of it." God in the personalized

account assigns man's specific responsibility for the tending of the Garden of Eden. He is the steward over that beautiful part of God's creation.

The second thing that is recorded in that personalized account reads; "Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was his name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air, and all the beasts of the field." A part of the significance of man naming the other parts of the creation is his rulership over the created order. To be able to name something is to exercise of authority over it.

This was God's original intention for all humankind. We were created to rule. We were created to have authority over the rest of the created order. While that is still a part of who we are, most of the evidence seems to indicate that man has horribly abused his authority over the creation. He is better described as a destroyer of the earth than he is as a "keeper of the earth." But in your search to understand who you are you need to understand that you were created to rule. You were not created to rule over other human beings but rather to rule over the rest of the created order. You are a royal being.

IV. A MORAL BEING.

This is a part of being created in the image of God. The creator God is the one who has the capacity and the right to declare that something is good or something is not good. As we are

created in the image of God, this is a part of who we are. In the personalized account of the creation this is put before us in an interesting way. After the report that man was put in charge of the Garden we read, "And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." The presence in the midst of the garden of this tree of knowledge of good and evil is a reminder to us that man is a moral being. He has the capacity to make moral choices and to be responsible for the choices that he makes.

This is a part of our basic being that modern man wants to ignore. We are trying to create a society in which we do not hold people responsible for the choices that they make. But a part of understanding who you are is gaining an understanding that you are responsible for the choices you make. All choices have consequences. It is not in our power to determine the consequences of the choices we make, but it is in our power to determine the choices that we will make. You are by nature a moral being, and thus responsible before God.

V. A SOCIAL BEING.

Time prevents the exploration of this very much tonight, but we will come back to it. However, any presentation of man as God's masterpiece would be incomplete without considering that he is a social being.

Being created in the image of God reminds us that man is a social being. We understand now that God is Himself a social being. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is within the Godhead

this social relationship of love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as they make up, the eternal Godhead. Since we are created in the image of God then we too are social beings.

This aspect of our being became rather obvious in the personal account of creation. When Adam had named all of the other elements of the creation, the record says that he found "No suitable helper." It was in response to God's understanding that it was not good for man to be alone that the Creator put man to sleep and from his side took a rib and made the woman. God brought the woman and presented her to the man. And Adam made that famous declaration, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man."

This explains the reference in the general statement concerning creation that God made them "male and female." From the beginning we were made for social relationships. We understand who we are only as we relate to others around us in meaningful relationships.

When we consider ourselves as God's masterpiece it reminds us of an incident in the closing days of our Lord's ministry. Someone came to him and raised the question about paying taxes to Caesar. The response of Jesus to the question concerning the taxes was most insightful. When He had received a coin that had on it the image of the Caesar, He asked the question concerning the image on the coin. When they had identified it as the likeness of Caesar, Jesus responded, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's." It wasn't until recently that I was made to see the real significance of what Jesus said. He was saying to the questioner, "You are created in the image of God, so give your life to God. You owe everything to Him

, What a wonder it is! You are a Masterpiece! Made in the image of the eternal God! So you are a physical, spiritual, moral, royal, and social being. It is time for us to begin to live like God's piece instead of depraved animals.