

## Made in the Image of God

### Week 2: The Image of God in Creation (Genesis 1–2)

#### Genesis 1 as *Temple Liturgy*

1. Genesis 1 is a *highly structured* account:
  - Creation takes place over seven days and the first six days fall into logical pairs:

<b>Day 1</b> light and dark separated	<b>Day 4</b> lights created in the sky
<b>Day 2</b> waters separated	<b>Day 5</b> waters filled with hosts
<b>Day 3</b> land appears	<b>Day 6</b> land produces creatures
<b>Day 7</b> all is finished/God rests	

- The phrase “And God saw that . . . was good” appears seven times (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).
  - In Hebrew, Gen 1:1 = 7 words; and Gen 1:2 = 14 words.
2. Genesis 1 appears to describe the creation of a *temple* (i.e., creation is God’s temple).
    - Genesis 1 is remarkably similar to many temple creation texts from the ancient Near East (see Walton, Beale, & Lints).
    - This is later supported by Exodus 39–40, where the tabernacle is a reflection of the created order.
    - See also Acts 17:24–26.

\* *The fundamental purpose of creation is **worship**. Scripture actually begins with worship!* \*

#### The Creation of Human Beings in Gen 1:26–31

1. The creation of human beings is the climax of all God’s activity in Genesis 1.
  - The verb *bara* (“create”) occurs three times in Gen 1:27.
  - God then reflects on all of creation and pronounces it “very good.”
2. Human beings are more directly related to God than the rest of creation.
  - In Gen 1:11–12, 21, 24–25 God says, “Let . . . produce . . . according to its kind.”
  - But in Gen 1:26, he says “Let *us* make humankind according to *our* image.”
  - In other words, we are God’s *kind*.
3. Because human beings are created in God’s image, their multiplication (Gen 1:28) means filling all creation with God’s own image—i.e., his glory.
4. We can think of it as God’s holy temple being *filled with the glory of the Lord* (cf. Exod 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10–11).

\* *Our chief purpose, too, has to do with **worship**: to glorify the Lord by illuminating his creation.* \*

#### “Image” (*tselem*) and “Likeness” (*dāmut*)

1. These two terms are not always synonymous, but they seem to be here (cf. Gen 5:3).
2. *Tselem* and its Aramaic equivalent usually denote *idols* or *graven images* in Scripture.

3. In fact, every use of this word in the OT outside of Genesis is negative.<sup>1</sup>
  4. Old Testament scholar Catherine McDowell has further shown that these two terms, “image” and “likeness” are primarily used in three contexts in ancient literature from the cultures surrounding ancient Israel:<sup>2</sup>
    - a. Kinship
    - b. Kingship
    - c. Worship
- She also demonstrates that each of these nuances is present in Genesis 1–2.

### Human Beings as God’s Children in Genesis 1–2

1. Relationality seems to be expressed in Gen 1:26-28.
2. “Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23; cf. Gen 29:14; Judges 9:2-3; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:11-14; 1 Chr 11:1): human beings immediately embody kinship.
3. The same terms, “image and likeness” are later used to describe Seth as Adam’s son in Gen 5:3.
4. So one meaning of being made in God’s image is that we are his *children*.

### Human Beings as God’s Vice-Regents

1. In Gen 1:26, 28, God also creates human beings to “have dominion” and “subdue” the earth (cf. Psalm 8).
2. “Subdue” (*kavash*) can be negative, but it can also mean to bring something into order to make it more beautiful or productive (like mowing a lawn or weeding a garden).
3. *Gardening* is also a common metaphor for kingship in the ancient Near East; in Gen 2, Adam is a gardener/farmer (cf. John 20:15).
4. So God effectively makes us managers over his creation.
5. The idea is that we should be *stewards* and *cultivators*: take what he has given, care for it, and make the absolute most of it (cf. Matt 25:14-30).

### Human Beings as God’s Representation

1. We have already seen that Genesis 1 is a *temple liturgy*.
2. We have also seen that the creation of human beings in God’s image is the climax of that liturgy.
3. And we have seen that the word *tselem* (“image”) most often refers to an idol or graven image of a god.
4. In God’s creation-temple, *human beings* are the image that represents God himself.
5. Our final purpose is to bear that image and so fill all of creation with his own likeness.

### Practical Implications

1. You are God’s child, which means you are dear to him. You were created in and for love.

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<sup>1</sup> See Gen 1:26-27 (3x); 5:3; 9:6; Num 33:52; 1 Sam 6:5 (2x); 6:11; 2 Kings 11:18; Ezek 7:20; 16:17; 23:14; Daniel 2–3 (17x); Amos 5:26; 2 Chr 23:17.

<sup>2</sup> See Catherine McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015).

2. You are meant to care for and cultivate whatever God has put before you—from the environment, to your own family, your neighbor, and creative pursuits.
3. You are meant to show the whole world what God is like, which means exemplifying his own goodness (cf. Matt 5:13-16 – salt & light)

### Questions for Further Reflection:

1. How does the realization that God has created us in *his own image* (i.e., as his children, to reign on his behalf, and represent his likeness in the world) change how we view ourselves and others?
2. What has God given me to care for and cultivate?
3. What would it look like for me to represent God in my day-to-day world?

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