

In the Image of God Gen. 1:26-27

Introduction:

1. What does it mean that men and women are created in the image of God?
2. I am sure I do not comprehend fully all the implications of our being made in the likeness of God. I do know that human beings have a variety of special capacities: intellectual, emotional, psychological, relational, and behavioral, that would seem to trace back to our being like God.
3. In this lesson we will consider the several texts where this concept is mentioned in Scripture to try to understand what it means to be created in God's image. In the process we will observe some of the far-reaching implications associated with this fundamental description of human beings.

Discussion:

I. Some have worked to distinguish between the meaning of "image" and "likeness." Probably, however, these are parallel expressions with very little difference.

- A. Nahum M. Sarna in The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary on Genesis (p. 12) says, "This unique combination of expressions, virtually identical in meaning, emphasizes the incomparable nature of human beings and their special relationship to God. The full import of these terms can be grasped only within the broader context of biblical literature and against the background of ancient Near Eastern analogues."
 1. Sarna calls attention to the connection between God's sovereignty over the earth and man's dominance over the earth.
 2. He also reflects on the idea as seen in Mesopotamian and Egypt where the ruling monarch is described as "the image" or "the likeness" of a god.
 3. He observes then, "The terminology employed in Gen. 2:26 is derived from regal vocabulary, which serves to elevate the king above the ordinary run of men." Thus, all men bear the stamp of royalty (cf. Psa. 8:1-9).
- B. Indeed the idea in Gen. 1:26-27 notes man's rulership over the creation and v. 28 calls on him to "subdue the earth."

II. Fundamental to this rulership is our unique relationship to God, and thus to the created order and to one another.

- A. Creation in the image and likeness of God identifies the special relationship that we have to God.
 1. "Let Us make man in Our image."
 2. Of no other creature is this said. As a matter of fact, this is the first mention of this in the creation account and it is on the last day, but even of the other things created on the last day none is said to be created in God's image.
 3. Man is different!
 4. In addition, he sustains a different relationship to the created order than he does to God. God, as Creator is the ultimate King. He is King over man, but man is king

over the creation.

- B. So man has a unique and special relationship to the things that God has created.
 - 1. He is to rule over the creation.
 - 2. He is to subdue the earth.
- C. Necessarily implied in this is a unique and special relationship with all other human beings.
 - 1. The rulership is shared equally between male and female.
 - 2. Adam and Eve are co-regents.
- D. The image of God status is perpetuated in their offspring (Gen. 5:3).
 - 1. It is not lost in those not created in the same fashion as Adam and Eve.
 - 2. Although they are the first to have this status they are not the last.
 - 3. Thus all mankind, male and female are to rule over the earth.
- E. Gen. 9:6 necessarily implies an inherent value on the life of those created in the image of God. It is a capital offense to destroy such life. (Even though it is marred by sin.)

III. The image is marred by sin, but not destroyed (Gen. 3).

- A. Sin changed man's relationship with God (3:10).
- B. Sin changed our relationship with the creation (3:17b-19).
- C. Sin changed our relationship with each other (3:7, 12, 16, 21).
- D. Obviously the change was not good. It reflected a failure in rulership (a leadership failure). The king messed up!!!
- E. Now while both the man and the woman had co-regency there is evidence that the male, created first had some special responsibility here (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12-14). Gen. 3:16 says to the woman who has led the way into sin (Should Adam have led the way to rule more effectively? I think so.): "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."
 - 1. Is this the beginning of male headship?
 - 2. Or is this saying that marred by sin he will tend to dominate over you?
 - 3. Or is God reiterating His intention from the beginning that Adam lead in the way of God? God had said, "Don't eat." Adam had not acted to prohibit eating but had actually been led by Eve to eat. Seems that Adam has failed God, Eve and himself by not ruling as he should.
- F. Failure to rule as God rules; failure to reflect the image of God is **the** failure of man.
 - 1. This is what makes the worshiping of images (idolatry) such an atrocity.
 - 2. Created in the image of God we exchange the glory of the incorruptible God into diminished images (Rom. 1:23) of things that we are to rule over. We diminish ourselves.
 - 3. We become like what we image (worship).
 - 1. Psa. 115:1-8.
 - 2. Psa. 135:13-18.
 - 4. Isaiah chided the foolishness of this approach (44:12-20). Note the failed leadership reflective of diminished status: "I fall down before a block of wood." I am supposed to rule over it, but I have made it my god.

IV. But all is not lost. Restoration is God's plan (Col. 3:1-11).

- A. The whole of Scripture involves God's restoration of the image marred by sin.
- B. Christ is the true image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

V. I am sure I do not comprehend all the implications of being created in the image of God, but I can say they are many and far reaching. Some of them include . . .

- A. Inherent value (Gen. 9:6) both male and female.
- B. This value involves more than just respect for life (Matt. 5:21ff). It includes respect for the individual (cf. James 3:8-10), not just respect generally.
- C. There are broad moral implications.
 - 1. Submission to God as the ultimate sovereign.
 - 2. Putting on the new self (Eph. 4:24) involves broad ethical implications affecting my relationship with all other human beings, the creation AND God.
 - 3. Ex. Racism, responsibility to care for the earth (ecological concerns), responsibility to use the creation, recognition of the difference between an animal and a man.
 - 4. Self-value. I am somebody!
 - 5. Implications regarding our responsibility to lead (rule) appropriately.

Conclusion:

- 1. We need to give much attention to our being created in the image of God.
- 2. We need to reflect broadly on the moral and ethical implications.
- 3. We need to spend our energies on recovering what is marred by sin.
- 4. Begin by submitting ourselves to the rulership/sovereignty of God and then fleshing this out in our rulership based on whom we are, those created in His image.