

**MILILANI COMMUNITY CHURCH
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES
March 23, 2003**

LESSON 3: MAN

In this lesson we will focus on the pinnacle of God's creative activity, his creation of human beings, both male and female, to be more like him than anything else he has made.

MAN'S ORIGIN

Our view of the origin of man will affect our entire understanding of and attitude toward man. If man is the product of evolution, then the extent of the effects of sin and the need of a Savior are played down, if not eliminated. If, however, man was created by God, then this carries with it the idea of the responsibility of man. The evolutionary origin of man relieves man of responsibility to a personal Creator outside of himself. But the Bible tells us: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them"* (Genesis 1:1,27).

THE USE OF THE WORD "MAN" TO REFER TO THE HUMAN RACE

"When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created" (Genesis 5:1-2). In Hebrew "Man" is adam, the same term used for the name of Adam and the same term that is sometimes used of man in distinction from woman (Genesis 2:22). So this same term is used to refer to male human beings and to the human race generally. Some people object to ever using the word "man" to refer to the human race in general because they claim this is insensitive to women. But since this practice began with God himself we should not find it objectionable.

WHY WAS MAN CREATED?

God created us for his own glory. *"...whom I created for my glory"* (Isaiah 43:7; Romans 11:36; Rev. 4:11; also Eph. 1:11-12). Therefore, we are to *"do all to the glory of God"* (I Cor. 10:31).

The fact that God created us for his own glory determines the correct answer to the question, "What is our purpose in life?" Our purpose must be to fulfill the reason that God created us: to glorify him. The question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "What is the chief end of man?" is properly answered, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." We were created to take delight in him and in our relationship to him. *"In your presence there is fullness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures for evermore"* (Psalm 16:11). See also Psalm 73:25-26; Psalm 84:1-2,10. Therefore, the normal heart attitude of a Christian is rejoicing in the Lord (Phil. 4:4).

When we realize that God created us to glorify him, and when we start to act in ways that fulfill that purpose, then we begin to experience an intensity of joy in the Lord that we have never known before.

MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Out of all the creatures God made, only one creature, man, is said to be made "in the image of God." The Latin phrase *imago Dei* means "image of God." The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God.

The Hebrew word for "image" (*tselem*) and the Hebrew word for "likeness" (*demut*) refer to something that is *similar* but not identical to the thing it represents or is an "image" of. The word *image* can also be used of something that *represents* something else. So these two terms "image" and "likeness" simply informed the original readers that man was *like* God and would in many ways *represent* God. Every way in which man is like God is part of his being in the image and likeness of God.

After the fall God's image was distorted but not lost. Even though men are sinful, there is still enough likeness to God remaining in them that to murder another person is to attack the part of creation that most resembles God, and it betrays an attempt or desire (if someone were able) to attack God himself (Genesis 9:6).

In the New Testament we see that our redemption in Christ means that we can, even in this life, progressively grow into more and more likeness to God (Col. 3:10; II Cor. 3:18). Throughout this life, as we grow in Christian maturity we grow in greater likeness to God. Specifically, we grow in likeness to Christ in our lives and in our character. In fact the goal for which God has redeemed us is that we might be "*conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans 8:29).

The amazing promise of the New Testament is that just as we have been like Adam (subject to death and sin), we shall also be like Christ (morally pure, never subject to death again): "*Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven*" (I Cor. 15:49).

God's purpose in creating man in his image was completely realized in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus we see human likeness to God as it was intended to be, and that should cause us to rejoice that God has predestined us "*to be conformed to the image of his son*" (Romans 8:29).

ASPECTS OF OUR LIKENESS TO GOD

Moral Aspects: We are morally accountable to God for our actions, and we have an inner sense of right and wrong that sets us apart from animals.

Spiritual Aspects: We not only have physical bodies but also immaterial spirits. This means that we have a spiritual life that enables us to relate to God as persons, to pray and praise him. We also have immortality; we will not cease to exist but will live forever.

Mental Aspects: We have an ability to reason and think logically and learn that sets us apart from the animal world. Our use of complex, abstract language also sets us apart from animals. We also have an awareness of the distant future, even an inward sense that we will live beyond the time of our physical death. God "*has set eternity in the hearts of men*" (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Relational Aspects: The depth of interpersonal harmony experienced in human marriage, in a human family when it functions according to God's principles, and in a church when a community of believers is walking in fellowship with the Lord and with each other, is much greater than the interpersonal harmony experienced by any animals.

Physical Aspects: We should not think that our physical bodies imply that God himself has a body, for "God is spirit" (John 4:24). But there are still some ways in which our bodies reflect something of God's own character and thereby constitute part of what it means to be created in the image of God. Our physical bodies give us the ability to see with our eyes, hear with our ears, speak with our mouths, taste with our tongues and smell with our noses. These are all Godlike qualities, because he can see and hear and speak, etc.

All of creation reflects some likeness to God. But only man, out of all of creation, is so like God that he can be said to be "in the image of God."

OUR DIGNITY AS BEARERS OF GOD'S IMAGE

It is amazing to realize that when the Creator of the universe wanted to create something "in his image," something more like himself than all the rest of creation, he made us! This gives us a profound sense of dignity and significance as we reflect on the rest of God's creation. We are the culmination of God's infinitely wise and skillful work of creation.

Even though man is now fallen, sinful man still has the status of being in God's image.

"Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the status of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God's image-bearer. This has profound implications for our conduct toward others. It means that people of every race deserve equal dignity and rights. It means that elderly people, those seriously ill, the mentally retarded, and children yet unborn, deserve full protection and honor as human beings. If we ever deny our unique status in creation as God's only image-bearers, we will soon begin to depreciate the value of human life, will tend to see humans as merely a higher form of animal, and will begin to treat others as such. We will also lose much of our sense of meaning in life." Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 450.

MAN AS MALE AND FEMALE

Personal Relationships: God did not create human beings to be isolated persons, but in making us in his image, he made us in such a way that we can attain interpersonal unity of various sorts in all forms of human society. Between men and women, interpersonal unity comes to its fullest expression in this age in marriage, where husband and wife become, in a sense, two persons in one: "*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24). This unity is not only a physical unity; it is also a spiritual and emotional unity of profound dimensions. A husband and wife joined together in marriage are people that "*God has joined together*" (Matt. 19:6). This union is not temporary but lifelong (Mal. 2:14-16). It pictures the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 23-32).

Equality in personhood and importance: Just as the members of the Trinity are equal in their importance and in their full existence as distinct persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), so men and women have been created by God to be equal in their importance and personhood (Genesis 1:27; 5:1-2). Since we are equally in God's image, then men and women are equally important to God and equally valuable to him.

Differences in roles: Though all three members of the Trinity are equal in power and in all other attributes, there are differences in roles between the members of the Trinity. The same is true of men and women in marriage.

The Trinity and male headship in marriage: Just as God the Father has authority over the Son, though the two are equal in deity, so in a marriage, the husband has authority over the wife, though they are equal in personhood. *"I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God"* (I Cor. 11:3).

Indications of distinct roles before the Fall: Adam was created first, then Eve (Gen. 2:7, 18-23). Eve was created as a helper for Adam (Gen. 2:18). Adam named Eve (Gen. 2:19-20). God named the human race "Man" not "woman" (Gen. 5:2). The naming of the human race with a term that also referred to Adam in particular suggests a leadership role belonging to the man. This is similar to the custom of a woman taking the last name of the man when she marries: it signifies his headship in the family. Adam not Eve represented the human race (I Cor. 15:22). The curse brought a distortion of roles but not the introduction of new roles (Gen. 3:18,19; 3:16). "Desire" (Heb. *teshuqah*) means "desire to conquer." And "He shall rule over you" (Heb. *mashal*) is a strong term used of monarchical governments. The curse brought a distortion of Adam's humble considerate leadership and Eve's willing submission to that leadership which existed before the Fall.

Redemption in Christ reaffirms the creation order: In Christ redemption encourages wives not to rebel against their husband's authority and encourages husbands not to use their authority harshly (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; I Peter 3:1-7; Titus 2:5). Husbands, therefore, should aim for loving, considerate, thoughtful leadership in their families. Wives should aim for active, intelligent, joyful submission to their husband's authority. When husbands begin to act in selfish, harsh, domineering or even abusive and cruel ways, they should realize this is the result of sin, a result of the fall, and is destructive and contrary to God's purposes for them. They are to love and honor their wives. When wives feel rebellious, resentful of their husband's leadership in the family, or when they compete with their husbands for leadership in the family, they should realize that this is a result of sin and the fall. They should not act that way, because it will also bring destructive consequences to their marriages as well.

THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF MAN

Basically man is material (body) and immaterial (soul or spirit). The terms soul and spirit are frequently interchangeable and synonymous in the Bible (John 12:27; 13:21). Scripture teaches that God creates our spirits or souls (Psalm 139:13; Isa. 42:5; Zech. 12:1). He carries on this creative activity through the amazing process of human procreation. Man's "spirit" will live on after his body dies (Luke 23:43; Acts 7:59; Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:8; Rev. 6:9).

(Material adapted from Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, chapters 21-23)