

3. CREATION II. “Who Are We? And WHERE Are We?”

Genesis 1.26 – 2.25

Last week, we talked about two tools that can help you understand the Bible better.

- FIRST, we talked about learning to see the Bible as a single story. Do you remember how many parts the story has? Do you remember the names of the parts?
- SECOND, we talked about seeing the Bible as a story where _____ is the main character. Who? Who is ALWAYS the hero of whatever story you are reading?

We also talked about Genesis 1 and how that story describes God. We talked about having a biblical picture of God, who he is and what he is like.

Today, we will talk more about seeing the Bible as a single story, and review the six parts of the story and how they fit together.

We will also talk about two other characters in the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2, and begin to develop a biblical view of those two characters.

THE BIBLE AND “BIG QUESTIONS”

The “big questions” have we addressed in the first part of the story, “Creation”:

- What is God like?
- What does it mean to be human? (What are we like? Who are we?)
- What is creation like? (How should we think about the world around us? WHERE are we?)

These are WORLDVIEW questions.

What is a worldview? A worldview is the framework that people understand and interpret the world through. The stories in Genesis 1&2 are central statements of a biblical worldview.

Stories make and communicate worldviews. These stories are the foundation of how the Bible wants us to think about God, ourselves, and the world around us.

Different stories about God (or humanity, or creation) try to persuade us to think about God (or humanity, or creation) in different ways, some good and some not so good.

The Bible is telling us a story about God, ourselves, and the world around us. The Bible’s story wants us to believe in it and commit ourselves to living in its story.

How do stories call us to faith? What do they do?

Stories create their own worldview, their own coherent way of looking at, understanding, and responding to the events of our lives.

Worldviews are built from the answers to a cluster of these questions, like “Is there a God? What is he like?” and “What does it mean to be human?” and “What is the world around us supposed to be like?”

So these are the three first worldview questions.

1. WHAT KIND OF GOD? Is there a God? If so, what is he like?
2. WHO ARE WE? What does it mean to be human?
3. WHERE ARE WE? What is the world around us supposed to be?

In the previous session, I mentioned *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian creation story, where the world was created accidentally, the by-product of a fight to the death between two of the Babylonian gods (who happened to be grandmother and grandson.)

Based only on that story, how do you think the Babylonians would have answered those worldview questions?

- Are there gods? What are they like?
- What does it mean to be human? Is there any special dignity or purpose that comes with being human?
- What is the world around us supposed to be like?

How does the BIBLICAL creation story answer the same questions?

- Is there a God? What is he like?
- What does it mean to be human? Is there any special dignity or purpose that comes with being human?
- What is the world around us supposed to be like?

In this study, we will continue to build answers to those first three worldview questions, AND answer three more:

4. WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?
5. WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?
6. WHERE ARE WE HEADED? HOW SOON WILL WE GET THERE?

WHO ARE WE?

Genesis 2 contains a second creation story, different from Genesis 1. The two stories don’t contradict each other; they differ because the second story has a different focus. It supplements the first story.

The first story focused on God. The second story focuses on a second character in the stories, humanity (Adam & Eve), and what it means to be human. Just like last week, with our pictures of God, there are good pictures and bad pictures of what it means to be human.

1. What do people around us think it means to be human? For example: if we evolved by chance, with no God guiding the process, then what does “being human” mean?
2. Last week, we saw that our picture of God affects the way we live. What we think it means to be human ALSO affects the way we live, because “what it means to be human” tells us what our *purpose* is.

In college, my psychology professor told us that the purpose of all life (animal & human) was reproduction, “to contribute your distinctiveness to the gene pool.” **Notice what he was saying about what it means to be human:** that we are just like the animals, that our purpose is egocentric (about ourselves and from ourselves), that our purpose is sexual.

Notice: if you think that you are simply the product of evolution, here by chance, you will not make decisions about right and wrong the same way someone who believes they were created by a loving God will make the same decisions.

3. Genesis 2 gives us a helpful description of what it means to be human. As we read the story, notice what Adam (the man) is like. What does the story seem to be saying about Adam? What is humanity like?

Here are the things I notice, and what they seem to say about being human:

- God gives Adam work with a purpose, taking care of the garden (2.5, 15). **This means that God made us for meaningful work, which benefits people or things beyond us.**
- Adam (and we along with him) makes choices about right and wrong, and faces the consequences of those choices (2.16-17). **This means that we make moral choices (decisions about right and wrong) and face consequences. We are moral creatures.**
- It was not good for Adam to be alone, he needed companionship (2.18). **God created us for relationships. We are social creatures.**
- Adam is different from (higher than) the animals and other created things around him (2.15, 19, 20b: “for Adam no suitable helper was found.”) **The Bible consistently says that people are not just talking animals. Being human is higher and more important.**

Do you notice anything else about what it means to be human in Genesis 2?

4. Backtrack for a moment to Genesis 1.26-31, where God creates humanity “in his image.” God does NOT create the animals “in his image,” just mankind. What does “created in his image” mean?

I think the stories in Genesis 1-2 show us what “in God’s image” means, by having the man and woman repeat things that God has done previously.

God	The man and woman
Rules over creation (all of Genesis 1)	Rule over the animals that God created (1.26, 28)
Creates & fills creation (all of Genesis 1)	Are “fruitful” (i.e., creative) and “fill the earth” (1.28)
Works at tasks (2.2) that benefit the things he is in charge of (e.g., creating food for the animals he created, 1.29-30)	Works at tasks that benefit the things he is in charge of (irrigating the garden in 2.5, 15; naming the animals in 2.19-20)
Names the things he is in charge of (1.5, 8, 10)	Names the things he is in charge of (2.19-20, 23; cf 4.1-2, 25)
Is social & relational (“let us”, the heavenly King addresses his court; 1.26, cf. 3.22)	Is social & relational (2.18)
Is moral, making choices about what is right (2.18)	Is moral, making choices about what is right (2.16-17)

If I’m reading it right, “in God’s image” means that, in some essential ways, we are supposed to be like God. We are supposed to live with the same purpose. The work that we are supposed to do is HIS work, and we are supposed to do it HIS way.

Looking at Genesis 1-2, do you see other parallels between God and the man & woman?

What being made in “the image of God” teaches us about what it means to be human:

- We have dignity and value, for we bear God’s image and likeness (1.26).
- It means that the people around us, even those who are very different from us, have dignity, worth, and purpose, because they also bear God’s image.
- It means that we are supposed to live our lives in ways that are consistent with God’s character as revealed in the Bible, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- It means that God has given us the task of taking care of the things that God has entrusted to us (1.26, 28; 2.15). We are to care for these things as if God himself was doing it through us (because he IS.)
- God created us with essential differences (male & female) and essential similarities (both in the image of God) (1.27, “in the image of God he created them.”)
- We are different from (higher than) the animals and other created things around us (2.15, 19), because only we bear the image of God (1.26).

So: If Genesis 1.26 – 2.25 was all the material you had to describe what it means to be human, could you describe it? What would you say?

WHERE ARE WE?

5. There is a third “character” in these stories, creation itself. Think back over Genesis 1 & 2, and notice what these chapters teach us about creation?
 - That creation is GOOD.
 - That it is NOT God, but is separate from God. (We should not worship nature.)
 - That God created it for our benefit and responsible use. (While we are higher than the rest of creation, we cannot abuse it.)
 - That God entrusted it to us, for us to be stewards of it. It doesn’t belong to us, it belongs to him.

6. These chapters (Genesis 1 & 2) make up the first part of the biblical story, “Creation.” What is the next part of the story?