



THE CREATION OF MAN

Reading: Genesis 1 & 2

Although we are not given details about how the fish, birds or animals were created, we are given both the reason for the creation of man (Genesis 1:26-30), and the way in which he was formed (Genesis 2:7). We are also told how the woman was made and why (Genesis 2:18-25). In this study we will consider these details.

The Purpose for the Creation of Man (Genesis 1:26-30)

*“And God said, let **us** make man”.* The Hebrew word used here for God is “*elohim*” and means “mighty or powerful ones”. It is a plural word from the Hebrew “*el*” meaning “power”. This word “*el*” is often translated “God” throughout the Bible (e.g. Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:18).

The word “*elohim*” can be used to speak of **angels** for they do the will and work of God. It is used this way in Psalm 8:5 which is a commentary on Genesis 1:26. The angels *“that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word”* (Psalm 103:20) were thus entrusted with the formation of man.

* See additional notes in **appendix** at the end of this lesson - *“And God said, let us make man”*

Verse 26

“In our image, after our likeness”

Man was created in the physical shape or image of the angels. Angels have at times been mistaken for men when they have appeared (Genesis 18:1; cp 19:1; Joshua 5:13-15; Matthew 28:5-6; cp Mark 16:5-6; cp James 3:9; Genesis 9:6).

Man was also created with the mental capacity to be in the likeness of God, that is, to absorb His thoughts and reflect His moral values. Unlike the animals, man can reason on a moral plane and can comprehend spiritual ideas. This distinctive feature is the basis upon which God deals with man.

God’s purpose in creating man in His “image” and “likeness” was so that man would come to understand the glorious character of his Creator, and try to develop that character himself. God’s desire was that they might willingly reflect His image in all its glory.

Adam failed to do this by sinning against God. However Jesus Christ, who always did his Father’s will, was the complete manifestation of his Father’s character. We read that he was *“the image of the invisible God”* (Colossians 1:15), and again he was *“the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person”* (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus could say to his disciples: *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9) because he always spoke and acted like his Father.

As Jesus manifested God’s character, so those who desire to serve God are *“to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (Romans 8:28-29). He is the example we must follow that we might be like God.

“let them have dominion” God intended man to have dominion over the works of His creation. This could only be sustained as long as he remained in harmony with God. But man sinned and lost his dominion. This does not mean that God’s purpose failed, but rather that man must now look for the way back to harmony with his Creator.

God has graciously provided this way through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who by his perfect obedience gained the victory over sin and death. Through him God has opened the way for all those who faithfully obey his teaching to share this dominion in the future.

“The Lord God formed man” (Genesis 2:7)

We are now given a description of how God made man.

“formed” This word is the same Hebrew word translated “potter” (Isaiah 64:8). The angels formed the shape of man, which was after their image, as a potter shapes the clay. The same word is used for the creation of animals and birds (Genesis 2:19).

“breathed” means “blew” (Haggai 1:9).



“the breath of life” Hebrew “neshamah chayim”, literally “breath of lives”. This is the same breath as that breathed by animals (Genesis 7:22-23).

“living soul” We have looked at these same two words in Lesson 2 and learned that they are rendered “*living creature*” (Hebrew “nephesh chayim”) when referring to animals, birds and fish. These words in no way support the claim that man has an immortal soul. Man is a natural animal body. Immortality is a promise for those who faithfully serve God (1 Corinthians 15:45-54).

“It is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18-25)

Man needed companionship to provide scope for the development of Godly qualities. He needed “*an help meet for him*” (verse 18). The Hebrew word translated “meet” means “a counterpart”. The idea is of one who would reflect his character and therefore assist in a mutual development of the divine “*likeness*” to their Creator.

Adam was not deemed to be complete without his own companion. As he named the various creatures (v 19), he was aware that each animal had its mate, but he was created alone. The affinity between male and female animals is purely sensual. Man needed more than that if he was to reflect the whole character of God. He needed a companion who would help him, one ideally suited to assist him in the purpose for which he was created. So by a distinctive act of creation God made the woman out of the man.

God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam and from one of his ribs God built his counterpart-woman. Adam immediately realised that she bore a likeness to himself that was not to be found amongst the animals. So he called her “*woman*”, a word meaning “out of man”.

God now pronounced the principles for Marriage. Companionship between the man and his wife was to produce a unity in harmony with God. These principles have never been changed by God and are as valid today as they were then. The purpose for this unity in marriage is that together a man and woman may develop Godly characters through a love for their Creator and one another, and a desire to develop a “*likeness*” to Him.

References to Marriage in the New Testament

- The Lord Jesus Christ, when questioned by the Pharisees, referred them to the principles for marriage as set out in Genesis 2, thus confirming that they still applied (Matthew 19:3-9).
- The apostle Paul in his instructions to husbands and wives saw that the formation of Eve was also a parable (Ephesians 5:22-33). He saw Adam as typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the deep sleep of Adam from which Eve was formed was like the death of Christ.
- Through Christ’s death and resurrection those who believe and obey him have their sins forgiven and, as his bride, await his return when they will be united with him (Revelation 19:6-9).
- There are several other lessons relating to marriage which are to be found in the Bible (cp 1 Peter 3:7; Malachi 2:14-16).

The Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3)

The word “*ended*” in verse 2 is the same as “*finished*” in verse 1. It means “to end something because it is completed or finished”. The work of re-organisation of the earth from its state of chaos into a beautiful place where life could be sustained was finished. Vegetation was abundant and fish, birds, animals and finally man inhabited these delightful surroundings. We therefore come to the seventh day and look to the lessons that this day set forth.

“And he rested on the seventh day” The Hebrew word for “*rested*” is “shabath” from which is derived the word “Sabbath”. Its meaning is “to cease, or desist”. God did not need to rest from labour because He was weary (Psalm 121:4; Isaiah 40:28-31).

“God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” God gave this day a particular significance and by sanctifying it He “set it apart”, as the word means. The reason for this was that:

- 1 He would include it in His law to Israel hundreds of years later (Exodus 20:8-11)
- 2 He would use it as a parable of His great purpose to fill the earth with His glory when all creation would be in harmony with Him (Revelation 4:11; Numbers 14:21)



We should note the following points regarding the Sabbath:

- There is no record of the Sabbath being kept as a special day until Israel was brought out of Egypt. It is first mentioned in Exodus 16:23-30
- The Sabbath law was one of the ten commandments (Exodus 20:8-11)
- It only applied to Israel and not to the nations around Israel (Exodus 31:12-17; Deuteronomy 5:12-15)
- The spirit of the Sabbath was that a person would cease from his own works and do the works of God (Isaiah 58:13)
- Keeping the Sabbath, together with the rituals and other special days which were part of the Law given to Moses, was no longer a requirement for believers after the death of Jesus (John 1:17; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:16-17; Galatians 4:9-10; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11)
- Christians are told to regard no day as more important than another (Romans 14:5-6)
- The Sabbath, like other so-called “holy days”, is not binding on believers in Christ today (Colossians 2:16-17)
- Jesus Christ says that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27)
- The Sabbath points forward to “the rest” that God has in store for all His faithful children (Psalm 95:11; Hebrews 4:4-11)

***Appendix Note: “And God said, let us make man” (Genesis 1:26)**

The Hebrew word for “God” in the above quotation is “*elohim*”. From its use in the Bible we learn:

- It is a plural word meaning “mighty or powerful **ones**”
- It is derived from the Hebrew “*el*” meaning “power or might”, and is often used of God as the Creator (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 40:18)
- It is used of angels at times when they are involved in the work of God. The angels have derived their strength from “*el*” (Psalm 103:20).
- When the Lord appeared to Moses at the Bush, the title “God” (Heb “*elohim*”) is used of the **angel** who was there (Exodus 3:2-8). Note that Stephen says that it was an **angel** (Acts 7:30, 35). Thus the title “God” (Hebrew “*elohim*” meaning “mighty ones”) can refer to angels.
- The Law was given by God (Exodus 20:1-5), but Stephen says that it was in fact an **angel** who spoke (Acts 7:38).
- Jacob said, “*I have seen God face to face*” (Genesis 32:30), when in fact he saw an **angel** (Hosea 12:3-4; Genesis 32:1-2).
- Abraham and Lot were visited by **angels** who are called “the LORD” (Genesis 18 & 19; cp Hebrews 13:2).

The Hebrew word usually translated “angel” is “*malak*”, which means “a messenger”. We see that “*elohim*” is also used to denote these powerful messengers of God. In the New Testament the Greek word for “angel” is “*angelos*” which also means “a messenger”.

The faithful who will be granted immortality are said to be “equal unto the angels”, dying no more (Luke 20:35-36).

Who are the Elohim of Genesis 1:26?

Psalm 8:4-6 is a commentary on Genesis 1:26:

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the **angels** (Heb “*elohim*”, “mighty ones”), and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.”

These verses are in turn quoted in **Hebrews 2:6-8**. There the Greek word “*angeloi*” is used to translate “*elohim*” from the Hebrew. Clearly the New Testament writers understood that this word “*elohim*”, which is translated as “God” in the English version of the Bible, can in fact refer to the angels of God. They are His “*ministering spirits*”, or messengers that do His work (Psalm 104:4; cp Hebrews 1:14)



Therefore by allowing the Bible to interpret itself, we see that it was the angels who were involved in the work of creating man in their image and likeness on behalf of God Himself.

Summary Points

- 1 Man, unlike all other creatures, was created with the capacity to understand the will of God, and in faith and love to obey Him. Although given a “free will” in this matter he was accountable for his actions. The lower creation do not have this “likeness” to their Creator (Genesis 1:26).
- 2 The expression “*living soul*” (Genesis 2:7) is identical in Hebrew with “*living creature*” (Genesis 2:19). It refers to a “flesh and blood” body and gives no support to the popular but false idea of an “immortal soul”. There is no mention of “immortal souls” anywhere in the Bible (cp 1 Corinthians 15:45-54).
- 3 Woman (Eve) was created out of man to be a companion, “*an help meet for him*”. The union of these two set God’s pattern for all future marriages (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-33; Matthew 19:3-9). Marriage is also a parable of that union yet to come when Christ returns to take his “*bride*” of faithful believers to himself (Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:7-9).
- 4 The Sabbath law for Israel was based on the day that God “*rested*” or ceased from His creative labours (Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath points forward to the “*rest*” that God has prepared for His faithful servants (Hebrews 4:4-11). The Sabbath is not a binding law upon followers of Christ today (Colossians 2:16-17).

Lesson 3 – Questions

1. How did God form man?
2. How can we show forth God’s image and likeness in our lives?
3. Man became a “*living soul*”. What does this expression mean? (See also Lesson 2 “*living creature*”)
4. How did God make the woman?
5. Why did God make the woman?
6. What does the word “Sabbath” mean?