

REDEMPTIVE GENESIS CONNOTATIONS IN THE CREATION NARRATION

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Excerpts of a sermon preached from
Genesis 1:26,27

26 AND God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

It is marvellous to see the depth, richness and divine wisdom in the very first chapter of Genesis. Save for the first three verses, the second chapter of Genesis is not a continuance of the narration but an elaboration and amplification of the events that transpired in the first chapter. No other passage of the Bible is subject to so much malignity and assaults of man than this sacred account of creation and the beginning thereof. This passage is the foundation of the entire Scriptures. *"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"* (Psalm 11:3) If there be scepticism concerning this holy preface of Scriptures, then of necessity there must be misgivings of the remaining Scriptures. Surely such attacks and censures smack of the wicked serpent's artifices.

The account of creation magnifies God's wisdom, His omnipotence and above all, His special love for mankind. The account itself is written in such a way that it affirms the wonders of plenary inspiration. *"I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad"* (Psalm 119:96). The Gospel message is succinctly concealed in the words employed to describe the beginning of all things. For the connotations of redemption are alluded to in the creation narration. So many aspects of redemption are wonderfully prefigured in creation. Hence David says, *"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun"* (Psalm 19:4). It is obvious in this psalm that the Spirit of God is referring to the Lord Jesus Christ when citing the sun.

From our text, it is evident that man was uniquely created to occupy a very special place in the creation of God. *"For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, 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"* (Psalm 8:5,6). He was given dominion over the beasts of the field, the flying fowls, and the creatures of the sea. Eden, eastward, was the paradise God created as home for man. Man was to exert a benign and welcome influence in his God-given role of being the custodian of God's creation.

Also implicit in our subject text is the understanding that man was created in a unique and distinctive way in comparison to other creatures. While God made all living creatures by the word of His power, He moulded Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. *"... And man became a living soul"* (Genesis 2:7b). Moreover Eve was formed from the rib of Adam, when the latter was put into a deep sleep. We are told that man was created in the image of God, after the likeness of Him. Man's nature distinguishes him from all other creatures. Man is a spiritual being, in that Adam was originally afforded the facility to have fellowship and communion with God. Man is also endowed with a conscience to preserve him from moral and spiritual deviation from the holy law of God. This law is

imprinted in his soul (*Romans 2:15*). Adam was made in his first estate with a natural propensity to worship God and be at intimacy with Him. Hence man is not just body and mind but he is body, mind and soul integrated together, with the spiritual aspect of his being having the eminence. When man draws away from God, when he increases in his remoteness from God, he becomes less and less the prototype pattern wherein God first made Adam and more and more beast-like. We note that both man and the beasts were created on the sixth day. Why were the beasts and creeping things not created on the fifth day, wherein God made the creatures of the sea and the flying fowls? The beasts of the land were created on the same day as man to remind man that when he ceases to function as a spiritual being, he tends to conform to the likeness of any other beast. Man is never static in his spiritual disposition. His spiritual condition is always dynamic. Man will be either progressive in sanctification or plummeting into the abyss of spiritual putrefaction. When man fails to conform to God's image, he is inevitably overtaken by the process of degeneration. In his fallen estate, man possesses a soul that is *"without form and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep"*. Unless the third Person of the Godhead, even the Spirit of God, quickens him through the Word of God, he will remain in his unregenerate state. And hence the redemptive implication of the words: *"And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"* (*Genesis 1:2*). Water in the New Testament is a symbolic reference to the Word of God. *"This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth"* (*I John 5:6*). Darkness, desolation and barrenness mark man's spiritual state when he is without God. All men will grope in spiritual darkness until God casts light into their souls. Only when God Himself says *"Let there be light"* will men be illumined and enlightened as to their true spiritual condition. Just as Christ Jesus is the Fountain of life, He is also the source from which all light emanates. For note that there was light on the first day of creation without the celestial bodies and stars, including the sun and the moon, which were created and placed in the firmament on the fourth day. *"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"* (*John 1:4,5,9*). Without receiving the remission of sins through repentance by the grace of Christ Jesus, no man can receive spiritual life and light.

When the angel took John to see the fall of Babylon, he took him into the wilderness. The background scene is a very appropriate context to depict the nature of Babylon. Babylon, which represents the apostate Roman Catholic church, is a picture of spiritual darkness and howling waste (*Revelation 17:1-3*). Likewise when God takes away His can-

dlestick (His light and His presence) from the churches, they will become "Ichabod". In the Old Testament "Ichabod" transpired when the ark of God was taken away and the glory of God departed (*I Samuel 4:21,22*). Isaiah refers to such a plight when he prays "*Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation*" (*Isaiah 64:10*). Without the presence of God and the quickening work of the Holy Spirit, the churches will languish in spiritual dearth. Our world is also filled with paganistic darkness. Heathendom is wallowing in pitch darkness because it abides in superstition and falsehood, having rejected the light of God's truth.

Life will remain still, listless and sterile if the love of God through Jesus Christ is spurned. When men reject the Word of God and do not render full obedience to it, they will adamantly remain in spiritual darkness. All men need the light of God's Word to rule over them in the darkness of this world, until the Day Star from high, even the greater light, the Sun of righteousness, even the Lord Jesus Christ, arise with healing in His wings (*Malachi 4:2*). "*And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night*" (*Genesis 1:16a*). Again it is apparent that the lesser light represents the Word of God and the greater light the Incarnate Word, even, the Lord Jesus Christ. As Peter says, "*whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts*" (*II Peter 1:19b*). O, to wait upon the Word of God in hope and faith until the dawning of the day! The souls of men remain in wretchedness and misery, until Jesus, the Fountain of life will send His Spirit to move upon the face of their souls.

When Adam suffered the loss of his first estate because of his sin in eating the forbidden fruit, he retained the impression of the image of God and his likeness to Him, although it was sorely marred and distorted. In his fallen estate, man will be at enmity with God, being alienated from the life of God.

The Scriptures declares that some men are somewhat restored to the original estate of man through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would to God that this be our very own experience! For when a man is redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ, he is reconciled to God, he is delivered from the power of his former enmity with God. Man's capacity to have communion and fellowship with God is once again renewed. "*Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness*" (*Psalms 51:14*). Through his regeneration, by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, man will be inclined to worship and love God once again.

None is more at tandem and in harmony with creation than the Christian; but the great irony is that the Christian reckons himself a stranger and a sojourner to this world,

seeking for another country, a better country, an heavenly one (*Hebrews 11:13-16*). The Christian alone can truly be in sympathy with creation because the Creator has sealed him with the Holy Spirit. His lips alone can utter the doxology, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created" (*Revelation 4:11*). Only the Christian can maintain that creation "is my Father's world". However because of sin and the devil, the Christian yearns for the Sabbath rest. Hence the Gospel significance in the institution of the Sabbath day. As a living soul, man has to reckon with the afterlife. For his soul will continue to exist after physical death overtakes him. This is not the case for all other living creatures. They do not have any form of existence in the afterlife. Again, in this sense, man is distinguished from all other creatures. For man, the afterlife yields either of two diametrically opposite destinies. One prospect is living in heaven with Christ Jesus. The other, the most dreadful prospect of all, is to be eternally damned in the lake of fire, where the fire is not quenched. Men are to seek diligently the tender mercies of God in Christ Jesus so as to escape from the eternal wrath of God. For salvation from eternal perdition is obtained through Jesus' Name. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (*Acts 4:12*). He that is delivered from God's wrath through faith in Jesus Christ shall enjoy the bliss of heaven. This is the eternal rest that all living souls are earnestly urged to attain to. Men are to labour to enter into this rest just like God laboured in creation to enjoy the creation-sabbath.

As God laboured to enter His rest, Christ Jesus too laboured, in accomplishing His atoning work on behalf of the elect, to enter into His rest (*Hebrews 4:10*). God's people are to labour diligently to enter into a rest which Christ Jesus had obtained for them, just as Moses led the Israelites to the Canaan rest. Hence the declaration of the apostle "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (*Hebrews 4:9*). But many in the day of Moses did not enter into the Canaan rest because of unbelief. Instead they fell as corpses and carcasses in the wilderness. Should men neglect so great salvation, such an end be theirs also though they pretend to aspire to enter into the eternal rest (*Hebrews 2:3; 3:16*). The creation rest is but figurative of the eternal rest, which is the believer's portion "if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (*Hebrews 3:14*).

The keeping of the sanctity and sacredness of the Sabbath day, which for the Christian is now shifted from the last day of the week to the first day of the week, is an issue of unfeigned faith. They that honour and sanctify the Lord's day (the Christian sabbath) not only attest to God as the Creator of all things but they also declare Christ Jesus as the Redeemer. He who cherishes the sabbath day testifies that

he aspires for the bliss of eternal rest.

All three Persons of the Godhead, namely, the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit were all equally engaged in the work of creation. Hence the first person personal pronouns in our text are plural, when God addresses Himself, "*Let us make man in our image...*" Thus the Scriptures equally accredits the designation of Creator to the Father as well as the Son. Hence often the Lord Jesus Christ is ascribed as the Creator even as His Father is. For instance, John is relating to the Lord Jesus Christ when he says, "*all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made*" (John 1:3). But it is the apostle Paul who brings the connection of Saviourhood to the Creator in the Person of Jesus Christ when he writes in the epistle to the Colossians, "*In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him (the Lord Jesus Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible... all things were created by Him, and for Him*" (Colossians 1: 14-16).

No man can really enjoy creation without first enjoying the Creator as his own Redeemer. Jesus Christ, Who is the only begotten Son of God, is the expressed image of God's person. He who does not bear the image of Christ and is not after His likeness, will abuse the dominion that God has conferred on man for the domestication and regulation of this world. Little wonder man is alleged to be the destroyer of the very environment and ambience which he is supposed to order and maintain for the benefit of all life. "*For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*" (Romans 8:20~22). The fact that there are overwhelming tokens of the travail and anguish of creation underscores the unbelief and forlornness of the teeming masses. It also underlines the anticipation of creation for the eternal Sabbath. "*For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*" (Romans 8:19). "*And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*" (Revelation 21:4b). "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" (Revelation 22:20b). ❧



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