

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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Man: God's Special Creation

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:4-5)

As John advances his reasoning, he moves from God's general creation of the material universe to God's special creation of mankind. Under the heading of the material creation, most conservative Christians will readily accept the basic facts of Genesis Chapter One. Sincere Christians who embrace the factual character of this chapter dealing with origins—with creation—occasionally differ regarding the length of the creation days. The "evening and morning" of each day indicates a literal twenty-four hour day, but some sincere and studious Christian people hold that the days of creation were longer periods of time. They do not compromise the fact of divine creation. They decisively reject the compromise of the late nineteenth century, theistic evolution, the idea that both Genesis and modern evolutionary theory is true by suggesting that God merely controlled the evolutionary process.¹ Hebrews 11:3 affirms the fact of creation, and the fact that faith is essential for a

¹ Although I wholeheartedly reject the idea of evolution as a valid explanation of the material universe's origin, a thoroughgoing critical assessment of evolution falls outside the scope and focus of this work. I respect the work of the Institute for Creation Research and other similar organizations. Interested readers may investigate this organization at <http://www.icr.org/>. Historically, evolution is more a pagan religious concept than a scientific concept. I reject both evolution and the rather anemic Christian view of theistic evolution (the idea that evolution is true, but God controlled the evolutionary processes). While I am distinctly inclined toward a twenty-four hour creation day, I do not believe that it is appropriate to put Christians who hold to a longer creation day in the same category as evolutionists or theistic evolutionists so long as they avoid the errors inherent in these non-Christian views and hold a clear belief that the Genesis One account deals with divine creation, not veiled or indirect evolution.

person to embrace this truth. This verse does not address the length of the creation day, so I would allow Christian liberty regarding the length of the creation days.

Genesis does not specifically record the creation of angelic beings. It promptly—seamlessly—moves from the creation of the material universe to the creation of man, just as John 1 does. We will follow this lead in our study.

The theological landscape regarding the creation of man, the forming of subsequent human life, and the nature of created man, and his relationship with God are not as simply framed or believed as the basic premise of divine creation. In this chapter we will deal with various ideas regarding man's creation and relationship with God.

Only man's creation is described as a being created in God's "...image, after our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26) While every item created is described from God's perspective as "...good and very good, including implications that address functional appropriateness, as well as both physical and moral beauty, nothing else in the Genesis creation account is described as being created in God's "image...likeness."

What did Moses intend by these terms, "image" and "likeness"? The ideas that attempt to describe this feature of man are indeed widespread. Some will assert that man is made in God's physical image. Others will assert implications of the Trinity in the likely tripartite makeup of man; spirit, soul, and body. It is notable from a contextual perspective that the next point in the creation account reveals that God assigned "dominion" over the natural creation to man. It is my personal belief that dominion addresses at least one of the primary ways in which man was created in the image and likeness of God. In order for man to have dominion he must be created with rational or reasoning abilities; he must have what we refer to as intelligence. Given God's initial definition of the relationship that He created between man

and Himself, I believe this likeness also included moral character and moral responsibility. As God created the material universe, He assigned rules of behavior or “nature” that would govern each element of the material creation. He created the sequence of light and darkness for each day. He commanded every living plant and animal (before He created man) to bring forth or reproduce “after his kind.” When we investigate God’s personal definition of the role that He assigned to Adam and Eve, and—through them—to all their offspring, we discover a moral commandment. “Do this; do not do that. If you break this commandment, you will suffer my personal judgment” [my paraphrase]. The fundamental premise of this divinely defined and assigned relationship stands on moral footing. God did not create Adam and Eve to be mindless robots, controlled by sanctified puppet strings to do both good and sinful things. He gave man what theologians describe (in terms of creation, not in terms of salvation) as free will. Adam and Eve possessed the ability to obey God or to disobey Him. They were not under any sanctified compulsion or orchestration to eat the forbidden fruit. They had the will and ability to obey, as well as the will and ability to disobey the divine command. In this sense they were “free agents,” not in terms of altering their nature and gaining salvation, but in terms of either obeying or disobeying God, with the divinely stated consequences of their choices. When they disobeyed God, there is no Biblical indication that they acted under any kind of divine compulsion. They made a willing and knowing choice, and they immediately suffered the divinely predicted consequences of their rebellion. Adam, not God, is consistently blamed in Scripture for sin. In Adam’s offspring to this day Scripture clearly perpetuates that assignment of blame for sin. James 1:13-17 clearly affirms that no man can sin and cast the blame for his sin onto God. God neither directly nor indirectly orchestrates man to sin or to less-than-perfect obedience to His revealed will and moral law.

John simply and clearly affirms that, just as God created the material universe, He also created human life. In two sentences John covers the morally upright creation of man (Adam and Eve; Genesis 1:26-27), moving efficiently from man’s morally upright creation from God’s hand to man’s present fallen and sinful state in which He fails to comprehend and respect his divine and moral origin.

Does God personally and directly create every human life that comes into existence, an idea known in theological circles as

“creationism”? Or did God establish the law that a child inherits his/her soul and body from the father and mother at conception, known as “Traducianism”? Sincere Christians differ on these two alternatives. I am inclined to hold to the Traducian view as the most consistent view to the teachings of Scripture. For example, the passages that deal with man’s inherent sinful condition never attribute the origin of man’s sinful nature to God, but to man, specifically to Adam. A far more dangerous alternative that finds no support in Scripture is the idea of “Pre-existentialism,”² the idea that God created all souls in the initial creation, and simply sends the soul of an individual to inhabit a physical body at conception or at some time during prenatal development. This view is dangerously akin to the eastern idea of reincarnation, not in the least supported by Scripture.

While the Biblical record of man’s initial creation uses the terms “image” and “likeness” with a specific reference to God’s “image” and “likeness,” subsequent Scripture that describes the birth of children after the incredible impact of sin on both Adam and Eve represents their offspring as being begotten in *their* personal image and likeness, not in God’s, Genesis 5:3 (KJV), “And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a *son* in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth....” However we interpret the implications of sin and the fall in the Garden of Eden, we must acknowledge that Adam and Eve no longer bore the precise moral image of God that they enjoyed in their perfect creation. Whatever implications the fall made on them, this verse affirms that Adam’s offspring received his compromised or fallen image, no longer the unaltered image of God. Psalm 8 affirms that man still holds a position of dominion over the material universe, but it does not indicate that man still enjoys moral perfection. It rather questions why God in His holiness, His moral perfection, would remotely be mindful of fallen and sinful man. How extensive is the sin-altered image in Adam’s offspring? Is it partial or total? Did any part of man’s essential constitution escape the impact of sin? In the next chapter I will explore the specific impact of sin on Adam and Eve, and their offspring.

² Grudem, Wayne, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1994) I have used all three terms as outlined by Grudem on pages 484-486 of this text. Grudem personally appears to adopt a compromise view between “creationism” and “Traducianism.”

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Worship service each Sunday 10:30 A. M.
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