

## **Back to the Basics**

### **The Creation Story and its Crown Jewel**

You all know how DEEPLY philosophical I am...I believe I still hold the school record at my alma mater for the shortest tenure in a class before being ejected by the professor. One of my favorite definitions of philosophers is, “Philosophers are people who talk about things they don’t understand, but they make it sound like it’s your fault.”

Although I am not generally given to quote philosophers, they do have their moments and I cannot improve on this age-old axiom, “Wherever there is a thing, there must have been a preceding thought...and where there is a thought, there must have been a thinker.” This is a great framework to discuss creation. Let’s look at an example – there are several automobiles in the parking lot so we can use them to illustrate the point. As we look at the automobile, I say to you, “You know, there are folks who believe this car is the result of someone’s design...but I know differently. Let me tell you the story about what really happened.”

*Many, many centuries ago, all this iron, glass, rubber, plastic, fabric, leather and wires came up out of the ground. Furthermore, each substance fashioned itself into various shapes and sizes...and holes evolved at just the right places, and the upholstery began to weave itself together. After a while threads appeared on bolts and nuts and – amazing as it may seem – each bolt found nuts with matching threads! And gradually everything sort of screwed up tightly in place. A little later correctly shaped glass glued itself in the right places. And you see these tires? They became round over the years. And they*

*found themselves the right size metal wheels. And they sort of popped on. They also filled themselves with air somehow. And the thing began to roll down the street.*

*And one day, many, many years ago – centuries really – some people were walking along and they found this vehicle sitting under a tree. And one of them looked at it and thought, “How amazing. I think we should call it ‘automobile’.” But there’s more! These little automobiles have an amazing way of multiplying themselves year after year...even changing ever so slightly to meet the demands of the public. Actually, that process is called “automutations.”*

I have a suspicion that, having heard all that, you would want to remove yourself from my presence while questioning from what height I was dropped on my head as a baby...

It would be ridiculous for me to believe that automobiles evolved. The auto is in the category of a **thing**, and it reflects **thought**. And for there to have been thought given to the design of the automobile, there must have been a **thinker...a designer**. Now multiply that design process an infinite number of times, and you find yourself in touch with the universe, which God said He made. In fact, He was bold enough to say in the first sentence of the Bible that He **created** the heavens and the earth. There are only ten words in the first sentence of our Bible, and yet that has become a watershed of controversy. Why? Because people far more brilliant than we have come up with the theory that the world really wasn’t created; it has evolved, as has mankind. Why would people with bright minds embrace the theories of man rather than the statement of God when it comes to the creation of the world and the origin of mankind? Perhaps it’s just too simple for the

sophisticated. It requires a belief in a thinker, a supreme being greater than they. And, to them, that's a leap in the dark. They work on the premise that "seeing is believing" rather than the Believer's premise that "believing is seeing."

Last week I talked about the attributes of God the Father and we noted that God was the creator of the universe and all that is in it ex nihilo (out of nothing).

Today, I want to expand on that discussion briefly and cover some critical points about the creation and Man's place in it. While I could spend hours discussing the evidence supporting the intelligent design concept of the universe, you will be relieved to know that I don't intend to do that this morning – maybe some other time, if you are interested...

No, this morning I want to focus on only one creature of the entire creation of the universe. The crown jewel of God's creation. This morning I want to declare the creation of man and briefly discuss the roles and responsibilities God gave us.

Please open your Bibles to Genesis 1 as we will be referring to the text frequently. Now it's time to read another story, only this time I'm going to ask you to participate. This story comes from Genesis 1 and, for the sake of consistency; I'd ask everyone to refer to the NIV translation in your pew Bibles. I would like three brave volunteers to read short passages from this section.

The first passage is verses 11-13. Now for 20-21. And finally, 24-25.

Did you notice the often repeated words "according to their kinds?" Meaning what? When God created living things He maintained species distinctions. Distinct species. These vast categories of created things and beings are spelled out in quick order in Genesis 1. And each one has a uniqueness about it, each is according to its kind. The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the livestock and wild animals of the land. Each one according to its kind. There is a very

significant statement in 1 Cor 15:39: <sup>39</sup> Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.” God made each with a different physical texture, a different internal makeup. You can’t ignore those distinctions and lump them all together and maintain the correct Biblical position on creation.

Continuing in 1 Corinthians, with verse 45: <sup>45</sup> So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being” the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.” This is really important! Look again at the words, The first man.” This is a translation of the Greek terms *Ho Protos Anthropos*. A paraphrase might read, “the first in the category of mankind” was Adam, the first created human being. Adam’s “kind” was a first. Nothing before him fell into the category of his species. In Adam we find a fully developed adult human being, equipped with intelligence and godlike capabilities from the very beginning: intelligence, emotions, will. No other living thing or living being was like *Anthropos*. No animal or fowl or fish or plant could know God or love and respond to God or obey God or utilize the earth’s resources in ways consistent with God’s creative purposes. In other words, *Ho Protos Anthropos* was, and still is, unique.

Someone please read verse 26 for me. <sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” Reflecting on the philosophical axiom I quoted earlier, we see that the statement is in reverse order here in the creation account. First is the **thinker** – “Then God said.” Then comes the **thought**: “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.”

And the **thing?** Verse 27 provides that answer: So God created mankind in his own image...” When it came to the first in the category of mankind, the pattern God followed was “in Our image.” In other words, the man will be unlike anything I have created. No other created being has a mind to know Me. No other created being has a heart to love Me. No other created being has a will to obey Me. Therefore, no other creation has an eternal destiny like this created being has. We’ll make him distinct. Only humans will have *imago Dei*, the image of God, stamped on them. What a privileged position!

Let me recap a couple of observations about our creation that were true then and remain true today.

1. Mankind is **unique**. We are unique because this species is the only species created in God’s image, after God’s likeness.
2. Mankind species is **superior**. No other creature was told to rule over anything. Verse 26, however, states, “that they may rule.” The Hebrew verb is vivid: “to trample down, to dominate, to master, to prevail over.” Strong words. This creature (and none other) is destined by God to dominate the world in which he finds himself. God gave *Anthropos* that superior position.

Listen to verse 28: <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Now here is man, receiving instruction – he is told to reproduce, and he is told to rule. I gotta tell you, as a man, this is sounding like a really sweet deal to me so far! I am here to reproduce and rule – this is the stuff teenage boys’ dream of. But, just like everything else, with the role comes responsibility.

Genesis 2:15 introduces us to the concept of work. <sup>15</sup>The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” It is important to note here that God’s command to work the garden came before the entrance of sin. Contrary to popular opinion, work is not a curse. Work was created in the context of absolute innocence. The earliest occupation was landscaping – the work of horticulture. It was to maintain and cultivate the garden. And man was given one and only one negative command. It had to do with the tree in the garden called, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” That tree is mentioned in verse 17 of the 2d chapter: “<sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

Would Adam and Eve have lived forever had they not taken of the tree? Yes, indeed. And because they took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they introduced death to this world of ours – not only death but also all that precedes it by way of sickness and disease. The issue of this tree was of utmost significance – representing a nonnegotiable command...plain, clear, and simple: “Don’t eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” There was no way Adam could have misunderstood.

God created man to rule over the whole world. Everything else God created, was subject to man’s authority. God granted man the highest of all privileges – He made us in His own image. By endowing us with such power, He also expected us to acknowledge, love, and obey Him. In return, only man would have an eternal destiny.

Mankind shares the characteristics of personhood with God. Humans have intelligence and can think abstractly. We are able to be conscious of ourselves and to reason about persons and ideas. We have the ability to be rational about our

commitments enabling us to choose to act out our love regardless of the circumstances or responses. We also have a moral sense, a conscience which no other created being has. Perhaps the greatest privilege and most daunting challenge is that God gave us free will. We have the right to be right or wrong. We can choose to obey or disobey. The exercise of this particular characteristic on one historic moment changed mankind's destiny forever.

Next week, we will continue the story discussing the entrance of sin into God's perfect creation.

