

“The Way We Were, and Can Be Again”

I. WE WERE CREATED BY THE INITIATIVE OF GOD

A. It was His decision

B. It was His doing

II. WE WERE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

A. The reality of this at creation

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1. “So easy, even a caveman can do it.” No doubt, most of you are familiar with that popular slogan.
2. The idea behind that advertisement is that our early ancestors were something less than we are now, both in physical nature and mental ability.
3. The concept of the caveman fits very well into the evolutionary model in which humanity evolves and ascends from a lower level of ape or primate.
4. While there is evidence that points to periods of history in which some men lived in a very simple and primitive state, there really is no evidence of a monkey-man hybrid, the so-called “missing link”.
5. My dad was fond of saying, “I may have had some ancestors who hung by the neck, but I’ve never had any that hung by the tail.”
6. In Genesis chapter one, we find that the first man was in no way inferior or primitive in comparison to us. In fact, the opposite seems to be true.
7. The Bible reveals that Adam was originally created in perfection, without the flaws and frailties that plague his descendents today.
8. From reading the Scripture, we know that all the hardships and handicaps of humanity today are a result of the sin that Adam and Eve committed in the Garden of Eden.
9. As we will see in a few weeks, that sin changed everything. However, *before* that sin, Adam and Eve existed in a glorious, untainted, unblemished state. The poet, John Milton described it as, “Simplicity and spotless innocence.”ⁱ

10. For humanity, that is the way we were. However, it is not the way we are today. Man is sinful, infected with death, and fallen from his original state.
11. When we come to the New Testament, an interesting concept is introduced. Paul compares and contrasts the first man, Adam, with Jesus Christ, whom he calls "the last Adam".
12. I Corinthians 15:45 says, *"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."*
13. Over in II Corinthians, Paul says in chapter 5, verse 17, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*
14. In a sense, Adam was the first creature. Through Jesus Christ, there comes a *new* creature. The way we were is not hopelessly lost. Through Jesus Christ, man can be re-created – born again to a new life.
15. As we study the account in Genesis of God creating the first man, I believe we can see some parallels to the work of Jesus in the lives of those who put their faith in Him.
16. For those who have been born again by the grace of God, in the story of the creation of man, there is a reminder of what happens in the salvation of man as well.
17. Follow along with me, and notice these parallel truths. First of all, notice here that the Bible tells us:

I. WE WERE CREATED BY THE INITIATIVE OF GOD

1. Again, we are pointed to the great doctrine of the Trinity, as the Godhead talks among Itself in Genesis 1:26. There were read, *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."*
2. Notice here that no man was present to urge God into this act. God, of His own will, began the work of creating mankind.
3. In much the same way, when God begins the work of salvation in a person's heart, it is not because they somehow worked on Him *before* He began to work on them.
4. No, we were originally created, and we are likewise graciously converted, by the initiative of God. James 1:8 says, *"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth..."*
5. Consider this concept with me. First of all, when God created man:

A. It was His decision

1. Nowhere do we read that the angels of heaven were pressuring God to create man. The animals on the newly created earth were not crying out for God to do something additional and better.
2. No, the Bible indicates that there were no outside influences at the moment when God said, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."*
3. Motivated by nothing but His own will, God made the decision to bring man into existence.
4. When it comes to the regenerating work of salvation, there are some who believe that man is the one who makes the first decision.
5. Someone says, "I remember when I made my choice to believe on Jesus." Granted, it is a wonderful thing to believe the gospel, and receive Christ as Savior.
6. The songwriter said,

*Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice,
On Thee my Savior, and my God!*
7. It is a glorious thing to turn to Christ and be saved. However, before you ever decided on Him, He had already decided on you.
8. Ephesians 1:4 says that God has, *"...chosen us in him before the foundation of the world..."* Jesus said to His disciples in John 15:16, *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit..."*
9. Just as in the creation of man, we are reminded that our salvation was His decision before it was ours. Notice also further, as we consider the fact that we were created by the initiative of God, it was not only His decision, but notice also that:

B. It was His doing

1. In verse 26, God said, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."* Then in verse 27, we read, *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."*
2. Nowhere do we read that God called for help in this process. He decided it, and He did it, all by Himself. This was His doing.

3. In Ephesians 2:8, it says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*"
4. Much like the creation of the *first* man, the salvation of *each* man is something God does all by Himself.
5. His power alone can change a sinner into a saint, and make the hell-bound heaven-bound.
6. Notice that word "created" in verse 27. I remind you that that this verb is only used when God is the subject of the sentence. This is something only God can do.
7. Likewise, when we are brought out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of sin into salvation, it is something only Jesus can do.

*I can't take a heart that's broken,
And make it over again,
But I know a Man who can,*

*I can't take a soul that's sin sick,
And wash it whither than the snow,
But I know a Man who can.*

8. Before man was created, His Creator was willing and working to bring him into existence. Likewise, it is God's initiative that brings about the work of salvation.
9. Notice a second truth we learn from this passage in Genesis 1. We are told here not only that *we were created by the initiative of God*, but we see also that:

II. WE WERE CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

1. As we read this account in Genesis of the creation of man, we are reminded again of just how opposite the theory of evolution is from what is revealed in the Word of God.
2. Evolution views humanity as just one more animal species among many animal species inhabiting this planet.
5. Joseph Wood Crutch (Krooch), a professor, conservationist, and nature writer, once said, "There is no reason to suppose that man's own life has anymore meaning than the life of the humblest insect that crawls from annihilation to another."ⁱⁱ
6. Opposite of this view of mankind, is the one presented in the Bible. In Genesis 1, it is clear that the creation of man was different and unique from everything else that God created.

7. The key is found in verse 27. It says, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him...*" The fact that man was created in the image of God sets him apart from all other creatures that God created.

8. Consider this idea of our creation in God's image. First of all, think about:

A. The reality of this at creation

1. In his book on Genesis, Francis Schaeffer contends that for modern man, this phrase, "the image of God", is "as important as anything in Scripture..."ⁱⁱⁱⁱ

2. In fact, this *is* a very important concept. We all need to understand that men have been made in the image and likeness of God their Creator.

3. However, if you do a little reading and study on this idea of the image of God in man, you will find that Bible scholars and commentators have a variety of opinions as to what this really means.

4. The truth is; we are not completely sure how *exactly* we were made in the image of God. The reality of this at the creation is not something we perfectly understand.

5. We know it cannot mean a mere physical likeness; as if God had fingers, toes, eyes, and a nose, and that we were formed *physically* like Him.

6. In John 4:24, Jesus said, "*God is a spirit...*" He did not have a physical body until Jesus came into this world.

7. So what does it mean when Genesis 1:27 says that man was created "in the image of God"?

8. Whatever it may fully mean, we know at least this much; when man was originally created, he was made like God in a way that he clearly and correctly reflected the glory of God.

9. To look at the first man was to see a clear picture of the spiritual, supernatural glory of the God who created Him, and after whose likeness He had been created.

10. There is a clue to help us understand this concept, In Genesis 5:3, it says that Adam, "*...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.*" Seth and Adam were not exactly the same. However, when you looked at Seth, he reminded you of Adam. He looked like his father.

11. This is the reality of man being created in the image of God. Originally, we reflected the glory of our Creator. To look at Adam was to see something of God in Him.

12. Understanding that, when we consider the fact that we were originally created in the image of God, think with me not only about the reality of this at creation, but think also about:

B. The restoration of this in Christ

1. The Bible tells us that man was originally created in the image and likeness of God; a clear reflection of His glory as the Creator.

2. We also know that the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, and the curse of sin that resulted from it, has done much to mar and obscure the image of God in mankind today.

3. Like an ancient fresco painted on a plaster wall, faded by time, and covered with the dirt of the years, what was once bright and glorious in Adam, is now dim and obscure in his modern descendants.

4. When you look at the hate, violence, greed, and lust that fill the human race today, it is hard to discern the image of God in mankind.

5. However, when Jesus Christ came to this earth, He was the perfect reflection of God's glory, in a way not even Adam had been at the very beginning.

6. Hebrews 1:3 says that Jesus Christ is "...*brightness of his glory, and the express image...*" of the person of God. He said to Philip in John 14:9, "...*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...*"

7. Consequently, when you and I, though broken and blackened by sin, come to faith in Christ, He comes to live within us through the person of His Holy Spirit.

8. As He indwells us, He restores again the image of God in us. People see us, and the Christ who lives in us, and they are once again pointed to the glory of God our Creator.

9. In 2007, the city of Philadelphia raised \$68 million dollars to purchase a painting that originated in that city, and was put on sale to the public by its private owner.

10. The painting is called, "The Gross Clinic", and it dates back to 1875. After paying the enormous sum for the painting, conservationists still had to work for over three years to restore the painting to its original condition. It was finally put on display in July of this year.^{iv}

11. At Calvary, God paid an incomparable price to recover you and me from the ruin of our sins. The Bible teaches us that after purchasing us, God begins a restoration work in us, by His Spirit, in which He once again displays His image in us.

12. What was marred by sin just after the creation can be restored in us through the work of Jesus Christ.

13. There is a third truth we draw from this Genesis account of the creation of man. We see here not only that *we were created by the initiative of God*, and *we were created in the image of God*, but notice also that:

III. WE WERE CREATED WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS OF GOD

1. Notice what happens in Genesis 1, just after God creates the first man and woman. Verse 28 says, *"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."*

2. Having created man according to His will, and in His image, God proceeded to give commands to His creatures. By the way, as Creator, God has the right to give commands to His creatures.

3. In much the same way, when Jesus Christ saves someone from their sin, recreating them and giving them new life, they come under His authority, and are responsible to obey His commands.

4. According to Matthew 28:20, those who come to faith in Christ are to be taught to, *"observe all things"* that Jesus has commanded them to do.

5. Man was originally created with commands and instructions from God. So also, those who are born again through faith in Christ are also given certain commands for their lives.

6. Notice how this is revealed in the text before us. We see here in Genesis 1 that God gave the first couple:

A. A mandate for increasing in the world

1. Verse 28 says that after God created the first man and woman, He, *"blessed them, and... said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..."*

2. Obviously, this instruction was for the purpose of populating the earth. God intended that from this first marital union, more human beings would be created.

3. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He spoke to those first disciples He had brought to faith, and He blessed them saying, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" (Matthew 28:18)
4. Then He went on to give this command, there in Matthew 28, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"
5. Jesus gave an instruction very similar to that of His Father at the Creation. He said, "Go, be fruitful and multiply yourselves. Increase your number on this earth."
6. We, as believers today and new creatures in Christ have been given the command to take the gospel to those around us, and do our part to increase the number of those who call Jesus, Lord.
7. Every time some poor sinner bows their head and calls upon the name of the Lord, believing the gospel, the family grows a little bigger.
8. If you visit childfree.net, you will find a website that is designed for people who purposefully choose *not* to have any children.
9. According to the website, the people behind it prefer to call themselves "childfree" as a opposed to "childless" because: "We consider ourselves childFREE - free of the loss of personal freedom, money, time and energy that having children requires."
10. The original created couple was commanded not to be childfree, and there is a sense in which we as Christ's people cannot choose to be disciple free. We must strive to increase ourselves in this world.
11. Looking at the instructions given to man at the creation, we see not only a mandate for increasing in the world, but we see also:

B. A mandate for influence on the world

1. In verse 28, we have what some have called "the cultural mandate". God commanded Adam and Eve to "subdue" the earth, "*...and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*"
2. The idea was that Adam and Eve were to take control of the world in which God had placed them. They were to exercise authority and exert influence over the creation for the glory of God.

3. Dr. Russell Moore, one of my favorite preachers and authors, contends that redemption through Christ means that this cultural mandate has been restored for those of us who follow the Lord Jesus today.

4. He says this mandate "...does not allow for a flight from public responsibilities."^v In other words, like the first man and woman, we as men and women of God today have a responsibility to influence the world around us.

5. For too long, Christians have been locking themselves away inside of their churches, cowering from the culture, praying God will come and get them before the world does.

6. The reality is that we are not supposed to hide in compounds, quarantined off from the sin-sick world around us.

7. We are to march into the highways and byways of this world, carrying the blood-stained banner of Jesus, and proclaiming to all men that Jesus Christ is Lord!

8. Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-15, *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."*

8. In verse 16, He says, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."*

9. God has left us in this world, not to merely endure it, but to influence it and infiltrate it with the gospel of Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

10. For too long we have been backward Christian cowards instead of onward Christian soldiers. We need to remember the instructions our Lord has given us as His creatures.

1. On the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome is one of the most famous images in the world. It was painted by Michelangelo in the year 1511.

2. The painting depicts the finger of God reaching down to the outstretched hand of the newly-formed Adam.

3. As beautiful and striking as Michelangelo's masterpiece is, the truth is that no artist could ever really capture the awesome wonder of the moment when God created man in His image.

4. In much the same way, though millions of tongues have tried, no one has ever been able to fully describe the grace and glory of the salvation that Jesus brings to the soul of the one who believes upon Him.

5. As we read about the creation of the first man, we are reminded of what Christ has done for those of us who are new creatures in Him.

6. As we think about the first Adam, may we thank God for the last Adam, and the work He does in us.

ⁱ Milton, John, Paradise Lost, (Barnes & Noble Classics, New York, 2004), p. 117

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren, The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Wisdom and Poetry, (David C. Cook, 2004), p. 492

ⁱⁱⁱ Schaeffer, Francis A., Genesis in Space and Time, (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1972) *Amazon Kindle Edition*

^{iv} Lubrano, Alfred, Power of 'Gross Clinic' transfixes visitors, 7/25/10, *philly.com*, accessed 8/19/10, www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/20100725_Power_of_Gross_Clinic_transfixes_visitors.html

^v Moore, Russell D., The Kingdom of Christ, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 85