

VOTC – March 2017

## 1. A Good Start with God

Hello dear listeners.

I would like to start off the meditations for this month with a question: what does it mean to be human? What makes someone human? In many ways this question is as old as the human race, but it has yielded a *diversity* of opinions especially since the dawn of the theory of evolution. Many have become *unsure* of who man really is. The theory of evolution says that man is merely a product of chance, and therefore lives without real lasting purpose. Being human is all about survival. Atheism says that there is no God who decrees what one may or may not do, and so what is right is determined by the community in which you live. Truth is relative. And that means that we as humans are ultimately responsible to no higher authority. We are autonomous. That's what it means to be human. Or consider another opinion. Today, the discussions over gender and sexual identity are rampant—there are a growing number of people who *feel* that their *biological* identity contradicts their *psychological* identity as male or female. That seems to suggest that our *mind* and *feelings* are what identify us, make us human.

So who are you? What does it mean to be human? Have *you* ever wrestled with the question? For the month of March, I would like to consider that question with you. The only way to gain clarity on the matter is to consider the instruction of the One who made humans. That's the God of the Bible. From that instruction, we learn that what it means to be truly human is to live in true fellowship with him. That's the high position where humanity started, and then from which we fell. So the only way to be restored to that position is by being rescued, by grace alone, through Christ alone. What our focus needs to be in these meditations, then, is on the *big picture* of the Bible: the creation, fall, and rescue of man. That's how we shall come to see what it means to be truly human.

And so we start at the beginning. The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. Its very first chapter is God's revelation of himself as Creator; he spoke and there it was. And he did it right the first time. That's why at the end of the sixth day he could review all he had created, and declare it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Our God delighted in his handiwork! Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." God's creation reflected who God was; it declared something about him!

Well this truth becomes the clearest in what happened sometime on the sixth day of creation. God has been busy creating, and through it all, demonstrating his orderliness. One of the ways we see that is in the fact that he created everything *according to its kind*. Plants produced seed of their own kind; sea animals produced seed of their own kind; land animals: seed of their own. For five and half days, God created everything *according to its kind*. We see his *orderliness*.

Yet we see this the clearest in the last thing God created. That's where God's *desire* that his creation proclaim something about him is expressed in bold letters. God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). Notice, the creation of mankind was something different from previous days. Up until this point, God had said, "Let there be," and "there was." Now, God spoke within himself and said, "Let us make man in our image." What is happening here is that you and I get a window into what you might call a *conference* between the three persons of the Trinity. God "confers with himself and rouses himself to make men in his image."<sup>1</sup> That's to say, dear listener, that after the plants were made according to their kinds, and the animals according

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, 184.

to their kinds, God said, “Let’s make something according to *our* kind. Let’s make something in *our* image.” And so, Genesis 1:27, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” This is what the order of creation was working toward: humanity according to *God’s* kind.

Yet what does that really mean, “God’s kind,” “God’s image”? That people are little gods? Not at all. Or maybe, God has physical characteristics which we share? No. Instead, it means that God created humanity to *reflect* him. Man was created to reflect qualities that God has. And this sets man totally apart from all other creatures. Man was created to do what blue jays and barrier reef cannot do.

Can you wrap your mind around that? Sovereign, eternal, holy God creates man, tells him, “Imitate me. By the way you act, all creation should see something of what I am like!” Well how exactly was humanity to imitate God? He spells that out in Gen. 1:28, “And God blessed [Adam and Eve]. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” God gave man the exalted position of ruling creation on God’s behalf, and in God’s way. To be as explicit as possible, the most *visible* way in which mankind was called to imitate God was through the way man *cares for* God’s creation. That’s how creation may come to see something of what their Creator is like. As God is righteous, holy, loving, truthful, so man is to be righteous, holy, loving, truthful.

That’s an amazing thing to think of! Man has been set in the world to be God’s *personal* representative! Man was set as child of God in God’s world, and there to rule as kings of the earth.

Let’s not miss how glorious a position God gave to mankind! Man was to imitate God! What does that say to us? What does it really mean to be a man, or a woman? To know the Creator so that you can imitate him. Adam and Eve had to make it their business to know God well. To know what his righteousness looks like, what his holiness looks like. God created man to know God his Creator. A *real* man, a *real* woman, you see, has God’s instruction at the forefront of their mind. So that by knowing him, you can respond to him with love. Adam and Eve were created with the ability to respond to God with all their heart, soul, and mind. Not because they *had* to, but because they *wanted* to. God created them to be full of love for their Creator. Yes, they were created to know him, love him, and therefore live for him, by serving him and praising him and communing with him in all their work.

This is why God created man. To know God so that man could know what pleases him. And what pleases him is a life of true righteousness and holiness. Because that’s who God is, and therefore what God delights to see in the crown of his creation. And that’s how Adam and Eve lived.

So you can understand well that life was good. Very good. Adam and Eve were truly human. They were sinless image-bearers, living under the reigning King and Father. They enjoyed a good start with God. Unfortunately, that didn’t last forever. Tune in next time to hear what really happened when Adam and Eve fell, and just how that affected also you and me, living thousands of years after the glorious creation of man. Till then!