

BEARING THE IMAGE OF GOD

The Gospel in Creation

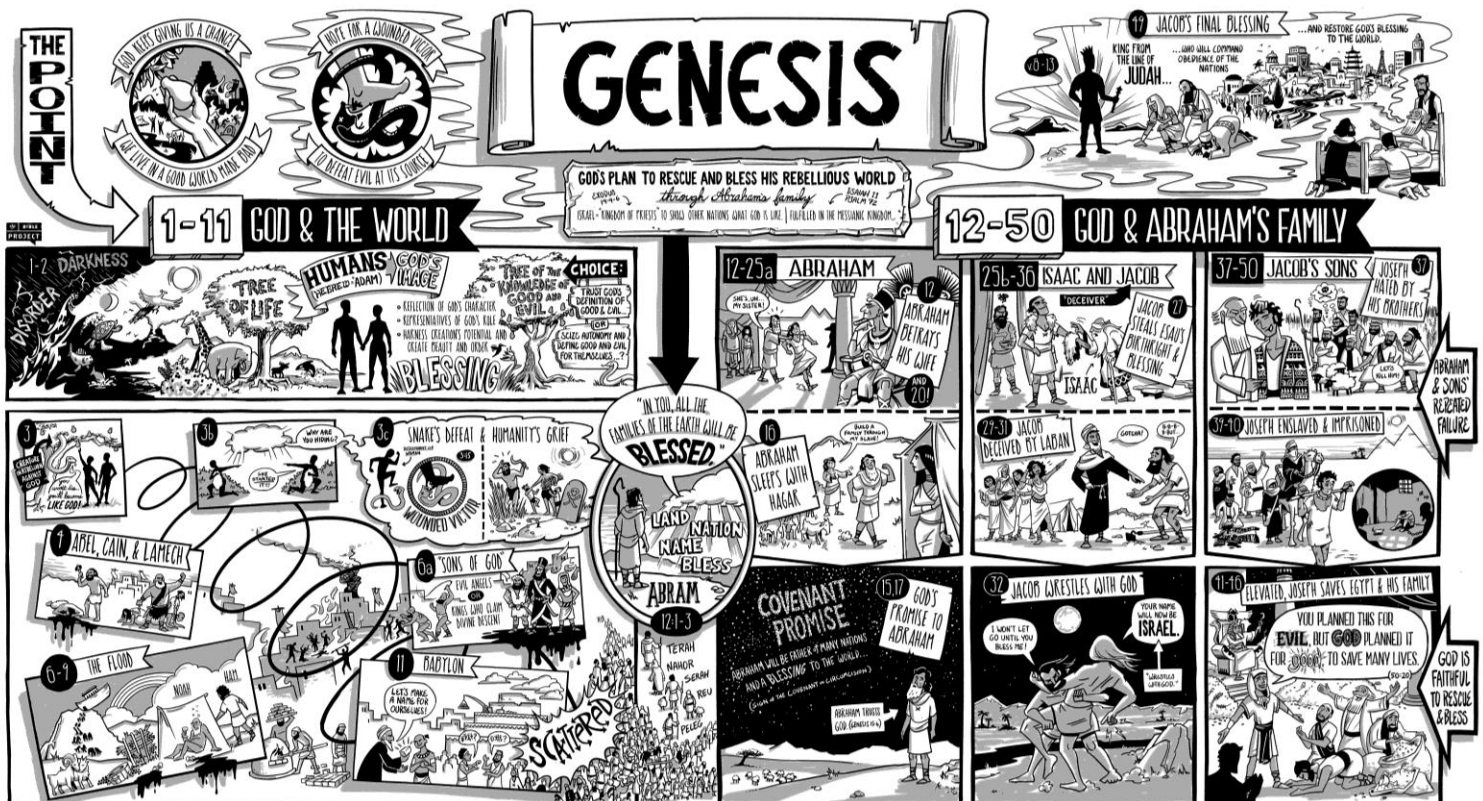
September 20, 2026

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
And let them have dominion"
So God created man in his image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

Genesis 1:26

The God who does not "speak in secret"

1. Whatever approach we take to understanding Genesis 1, the main point is the same: God is creating a place, *ha 'aretz*, to be with his people.
2. This is an important passage to review the exegesis to application movement in reading God's word to us. First, what does the text mean, and only then to apply the text to my life.
3. Listen this morning for God's purpose, the "what is it for?" question.



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Genesis 1:1-2:3

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. ⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. ¹⁷ And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

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

²⁸ And God blessed them. 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 heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything

that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

What it means (exegesis)

1. God introduces himself at the sovereign creator who delights in his creation. Everything about the way God tells his story points to this purpose: God is providing for his people a good place for his special creation to enjoy his presence (see Isaiah 45:18-19).
2. The Creator is teaching his people an important lesson: He alone knows what is good for his people. Only living in God's "good" will allow God's people to enjoy presence.

15 "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. 16 If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. 17 But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, 20 loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

Deuteronomy 30

3. Humanity's creation in the image of God sets them apart from the rest of creation which is created "after its kind." While the image includes all the ways humanity reflects God -- language, morality, dominion, relationality, unity in diversity, soul and spirit, ability to create -- the heart of the *imago Dei* is intrinsic value that comes from being created to be loved by God.

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3

What it means for me (application)

1. I am invited to enter into God's Sabbath!

¹⁸ *For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens
(he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it
(he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!):
"I am the Lord, and there is no other.
¹⁹ I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.'
I the Lord speak the truth;
I declare what is right.*

Isaiah 45

⁶ *Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷ again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,
"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."
⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.*

Hebrews 4

2. Genesis 1:1-2:4 is a polemic against the gods of the age, from and Ancient Near East to Anacortes today. Isaiah 45 provides a category for describing the spirit of this ages' counterfeit to God's good.

*"Assemble yourselves and come;
draw near together, you survivors of the nations!
They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols,
and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.
²¹ Declare and present your case;
let them take counsel together!
Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old?
Was it not I, the Lord?
And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior;
there is none besides me.*

Isaiah 45:20-21

Throughout this opening chapter God is depicted as the one who both knows what is "good" for man and is intent on providing the good for him. In this way the author has prepared the reader for the tragedy that awaits in chapter 3. It is in light of an understanding of God as the one who knows "good" (*tôb*) from "evil" (*ra'*), and who is intent on providing man with the good, that man's rebellious attempt to gain the knowledge of "good and evil" for himself can be seen clearly for the folly that it was. The author seems bent on portraying the "fall of man," not merely as a sin, but also as the work of fools. When we read the portrayal of God in chapter 1 as the Provider of all that is good and beneficial (*wayyar' 'lôhîm kî-tôb*, "And God saw that it was good"), we cannot help but see in this an anticipation of the author's depiction of the hollowness of that first rebellious thought: "The woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good [*tôb*] ... and desirable for gaining wisdom" (3:6). Here again the verbal parallels between God's "seeing the good" in chapter 1 and the woman's "seeing the good" in chapter 3 cannot be without purpose in the text. In

drawing a parallel between the woman's "seeing" and God's "seeing," the author has given a graphic picture of the limits of human wisdom and has highlighted the tragic irony of the Fall.
Sailhammer, *EBC*

3. Rejecting God's purpose in creating us male and female is one of the most harmful effects of the fall. The church's response is to speak the truth and remind the world that our God is in the image restoring business.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

Romans 1

The ultimate question is: Where should Christians place their emphasis when engaging in discussions on this topic? Transgenderism is not exclusively a battle for what is male and female, but rather a battle for what is true and real. Christians cannot simply nod and smile politely in the face of damaging lies.

Postmodernism, coming out of romanticism and existentialism, tells us that "you are what you feel." Thus, experience reigns supreme, and everything else must bow before it. *Sola experientia* ("experience alone") has won out over *sola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone").

But God is saying, You are who I created you to be. The truth is not something we feel; it is not based on our self-perception. In fact, Scripture tells us that the fallen heart "is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)). We can't trust our own thoughts and feelings, so we need to submit them to God because we can "trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock" ([Isaiah 26:4](#)).

Christopher Yuan, [He Made Them Male and Female](#)

Resources for studying Genesis 1-2

I found these commentaries helpful:

Bruce Waltke's *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001).

John Sailhammer's *EBC* commentary on Genesis (Zondervan, 1990).

[H. C. Leopold's Exposition on Genesis](#) (Baker Book House, 1950).

I recommend Lee Strobel's *The Case for a Creator* (Zondervan, 2004) as a good introduction to the argument for creation.

Alexander Maclaren has a very short summary at https://www.ccel.org/ccel/maclaren/gen_num.ii.i.i.html

All of Vern Poythess' work in Genesis is good. See "Christian Interpretations of Genesis" at <http://www.frame-poythress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013ChristianInterpretationsOfGenesis1.pdf>, "Ten Things You Should Know" at <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-genesis-13/> and "Let There Be Light" at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/let-there-be-light>

Ligon Dunon has a wonderful sermon advocating for the six-day creation position at

<https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-first-things-creation-3-the-days-of-creation/>

He also has a good sermon on the Sixth Day at <https://fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-first-things-creation-4-the-sixth-day/>

Ligonier has a “What does R. C. Sproul really believe” article at <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/what-rc-sprouls-position-creation> and a good study at <https://www.monergism.com/adams-fall-and-mine>
Also see <https://learn.ligonier.org/podcasts/ultimately-with-rc-sproul/the-goal-of-creation>

Doug really likes Spurgeon’s sermons on the first day at <https://chspurgeon.com/sermons/light-natural-and-spiritual-660> and <https://chspurgeon.com/sermons/the-spirits-work-in-the-new-creation-3134>

Ron Thompson, an engineer who writes interesting theology, posted this good description of the “Big Bang Creationism” and the polemic nature of the Genesis 1 poetic creation story at <https://gpront.blog/2024/01/20/genesis-11-5-day-1/>

Timothy Keller has a classis “The First Wedding Day” sermon at <https://www.monergism.com/first-wedding-day-%E2%80%93-genesis-218-25> It is interesting that “[Marriage](#)” was the most popular series ever preached at Redeemer.

Keller also has a good message on Genesis 3 at <https://www.monergism.com/paradise-crisis-%E2%80%93-genesis-31-9> His sermons on Genesis 1 are available at <https://gospelinlife.com/book-of-the-bible/genesis-1/>

Michael Milton has a good defense of the 6-day creation position at <https://michaelmilton.org/2010/04/01/dr-doug-kelly-creation-rts-and-the-foundation-of-scripture/>

Christopher Yuan has a fine summary of the male/female themes in Genesis 1 and 2 at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/he-made-them-male-and-female>

Doug appreciated John Piper’s study of the image of God at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-image-of-god>