

## Made in the Image of God

“And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves about on the earth.’”

I believe this is the beginning of the most important part of God’s creation. The Hebrew word for God here is “elohim.” The International Standard Bible Dictionary defines elohim saying “its form is plural, but the construction is uniformly singular...it is characteristic of Hebrew that extension, magnitude and dignity, as well as actual multiplicity, are expressed by the plural. It is not reasonable, therefore to assume that plurality of form indicates primitive Semitic polytheism. On the contrary, historic Hebrew is unquestionably and uniformly monotheistic. It is the reasonable conclusion that the meaning is ‘might’ or ‘power.’

The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions defines it as (plural) rulers, judges, divine ones, angels, gods and (plural intensive-singular meaning) god, godlike one, works or special possessions of God, the true God, God.

Obviously in this passage “elohim” is referring to the monotheistic, singular intensive meaning, “the one true God.” The Creator God has just, through His might and power, created the physical creation evident around us.

Now He says, “let us make man in our image.” There is some debate over who God is speaking to; who is doing this creating with him and why is this new creation in the image and likeness of “us.” The book of Revelation speaks of many “divine” beings around the throne of God. John describes the throne room; he sees the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders on twenty-four thrones, the seven spirits of God, and billions of angels, and the resurrected Lamb of God. (Rev. 4:1-6, 5:8-12). Were some of these divine beings involved in helping God to create?

If man was now to be created in “our image, and our likeness,” how is that different from the rest of creation? Does God state this because we are made in the image of the divine and our potential outcome is to become divine, like those in the heavenly realm... to have a spiritual body, as Paul speaks of in 1 Cor. 15:42-49? Paul says, “As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly man.” We are different from the creation we see around us. We have abilities to create that are not seen in the rest of creation. I suggest this is why God spoke to all who surrounded His throne and said, “let us make man in our image, in our likeness,” that of the heavenly realm.

Then God says, “Let them have dominion.” This word dominion means “to tread down, to subjugate, to rule over.” Elohim, meaning “power and might” is now giving some of this to man. Man is given might and power over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. The one true God, the Creator of all, the all powerful and mighty, is giving power and might to man, but only over creatures on the earth. Does this also makes us more like the “heavenly realm” than like the creation around us?

God does not give man power over other men although we know throughout the history of mankind this is what man has taken for himself. Jesus spoke about this when he said in Luke 22:25, "the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you." Jesus instructed us to be servants of one another. Strangely enough, even Israel wanted a man to rule over them. Israel wanted a king to rule them and not God. 1 Sam. 8:5-7 says, "The LORD said to Samuel, they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." God did not give us power to rule over each other, yet in every aspect of society we see this relationship between humans. God gives power and authority as He wills.

So God created man in His image, in the image of God He created Him. Of all the heavenly divine beings around the throne, we are made not in the image of angels or other divine beings, but in God's image and likeness. In fact, Hebrews 1:14 says the angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation." They are to serve mankind. What incredible potential God has given us! He instructed that we be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. God made man in His image, and gave him power and might to subdue the creation He had just made. God was to be our King, and our Ruler; the earth is under our control and rule.

However, what God has given us now does not fulfill us becoming in His image. This is just the beginning. There is a Greek word used in scripture "aiones" and is translated as "age(s), or world, or forever." As you look at many places where this word is used you find there are different "ages" of which God speaks.

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 Paul speaks of those who do not believe and "whose mind the god of this world (age) has blinded." In Gal. 1:4 he says speaking of Jesus, "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age." And in Eph. 2:1-2 it says, "you who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."

Clearly there is a present "age" that is evil. It is affected and influenced by a god, known throughout scripture as Satan. In the book of Job we see a reference to Satan "going to and fro on the earth and walking back and forth on it." We see examples throughout scripture of demons being cast out of people, but also human interaction with angels. So the angelic and demonic realms are a part of this age and our world. Hebrews 2:5 says, "He has not put the age to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels." This seems to imply our present age is under the subjection of the angels. Certainly when Satan tempted Jesus in Matt. 4 he talked as though he had power over the kingdoms of this world. I also suggest if he had such power, this was not complete power. His interaction with God about Job shows he was limited in his scope of power.

The disciples wanted to know from Jesus, "what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3) The parable of the tares says, "As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age." And Jesus said, "Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come." Clearly, this age will have an end and there is a new age that will come.

What else does scripture say about this the age to come? Jesus says, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the

resurrection of the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.” (Luke 20:35-36) So the age to come belongs to those who are resurrected and given eternal life—divine as the angels, yet having a different status, that of sons of God. This is the potential spoken of by Elohim, the one true God, in Gen. 1:26-27. We are made in the image of God with the potential to be resurrected divine as His sons. Paul speaks of this boldly in Eph. 1:15-23 saying, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”

Jesus, the first born of the dead has already attained this resurrection and power which is also promised to us. As stated in Hebrews 2:5-9, speaking of the “age to come” (verse 5), it says, “What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now, we do not yet see all things put under him.” Our potential is to be resurrected as Jesus has been and for all things to be in subjection as they are now with Jesus. Paul says in Romans 8:17, “If we are children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...that we may also be glorified together.” Many scriptures speak of the righteous inheriting the kingdom of God and everlasting life. Rev. 21:7 says “he that overcomes will inherit all things.” Paul also speaks in 1 Cor. 15 saying “now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (died). For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at his coming.” (1 Cor. 15:20-23)

This is the big picture! Christ is the firstborn from the dead, appointed heir of all things. (Heb. 1:2) We are joint heirs with Him when we are resurrected. This is why Jesus is not ashamed to call us “brethren.” (Heb. 2:11) He will reign as King (Rev. 19:16) and we will be a kingdom and priests to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:6, 5:10). We will all be subject to Elohim, the Creator God. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever (Rev. 1:6). This age is coming!

Rev. 11:15 proclaims, “the seventh angel sounded: ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’ The twenty-four elders...worshiped God, saying ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.’”

Daniel spoke of this in his vision. “Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” (Dan. 7:27)

Jesus told his disciples about this time saying, "...in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. 19:28) He also said, "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of his glory...then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared from you from the foundation of the world.'" (Matt. 25:31, 34)

When speaking to the church of the Laodiceans, it says, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Rev. 3:21) What an incredible future the Most High God has prepared for us!

The Creator God, who gave us all life, made us in His image to be His sons forever. This is why He says, "Be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44, 19:2, 20:7, 1 Pet. 1:16), and "pursue peace with all and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14) We are exhorted to become perfect like our Father (Matt.5:48) and to overcome sin because our God and Father is making us completely in His image and likeness.

Paul says, "Then comes the end when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15:24-28) God has given Jesus the power and authority to rule till all are subject to Him and we are destined to rule with him. 1 Cor. 6:2-3 says, "Do you not know that we will judge the world? Do you not know that we will judge angels?" All will be subject to our Lord and King, Jesus and all the saints till he delivers the kingdom to our Lord God Almighty.

God spoke in the beginning, "let us make man in our image and in our likeness." In this age we are like God in that we are different from the creation around us with our creative abilities, and our power and might over the creation. God's plan from the beginning is that we become completely in His likeness and image, the resurrected, divine sons of God.

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Heb. 12:28)