

Who Am I? Genesis 1:26-28; 2:4-24

This is a popular question and perhaps the single most significant question that human beings like you and me ask- Who Am I?

It is the big question in reference to our identity if not the ultimate one.

For thousands of years people have been asking this and other questions like it such as, what does it mean to be a human being? Or, why am I even here and is there really a God who actually cares?

Everyone at some stage in their life tends to ask them.

To answer such questions as a Christian we turn in the first instance to the Bible, and in particular to the book of Genesis, to find the answers to such important and key questions. In Genesis 1 we have in general terms the description of the creation, including mankind, then moving on to Genesis 2 we encounter the specifics of just how the Lord God made man and the woman. And today we will look at this story to help us answer the ultimate question of Who Am I? As a Christian I know that:

I am Special because in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth our magnificent planet for humankind to have a home to live in, therefore, we are privileged and blessed, special and unique. Genesis 1 & 2 makes this point in the way more is spoken and written about humankind than any other single part of creation. In fact when it came to talking about the creation of humankind God changed his language from the usual "Let there be..." to "Let us make..." God's creative mood actually goes up a few gears when Elohim decides to deliberately, intentionally and in a different way from anything else that's been created up to this point in the story, "make mankind in our image".

Genesis 1:27 in the Hebrew language is actually a short poem that celebrates the creation of humankind

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

As amazing as planet earth is with everything created on it and in existence, it is only people that actually move the Lord God to speak the very words contained in this poem! And that should tell me and you that we are special. You may have suspected it before, but now we know the truth that as humans we are special to God because we were made intentionally and therefore we are significant! So as such super special significantly, deliberately and intentionally made people we can declare:

I am made in the image of God

With regards to the origin of humanity a lot of people, including academics and teachers, would say or write and publish as the truth a yet unproven theory which states that we are descended from animals, apes in particular. So it is important that we study Genesis to find the truth as to whether we are merely descended from animals as the theory goes or, are we something else, uniquely different from the rest of God's creatures?

As we read the opening chapters of Genesis we learn that we actually have some things in common with animals: 1. On day six of Creation both humans and animals were made (1:24-28); 2. Both were formed from the dust of the ground (2:7,19); 3. Both were made male and female (1:27; 6:19); 4. Both were told to increase, be fruitful and multiply in number (1:22, 28); 5. Both were given a vegetarian diet (1:29-30); 6. Both were Blessed by God (1:22,28); 7. Both were given the breath of life (1:30; 2:7); 8. Both were called living creatures or beings (1:27; 2:7) and lastly, to state the obvious 9. Both were the work of the same Creator or manufacturer, the Lord God/Yahweh Elohim. However, although we have these nine similarities existing between animals and humans when we read Genesis 1 and 2 it clearly tell us that we are unique and distinct from all other creatures and therefore we are not animals and neither have we descended from them, I'll prove it:

1. God made Adam from the dust of the ground. Genesis 2:7 clearly states that Adam was made from the earth and not from any animal or living creature, ape, algae or otherwise. The very dust of the ground that Adam came from would be the very same to which he would return when he died (Gen 3:19).

2. God gives four times more attention to Adam in Genesis 1. God deliberately emphasises the creation of humanity over any other part of it that he's made in order for Adam uniqueness to stand out along with his importance in comparison to the rest of creation- animals included.

3. Adam did not belong to the animal world because Adam required the breath of life to become a living being (2:7). The animals when God created them already had the breath of life in them (1:21, 24, 30). Had Adam evolved from the animals, he would have derived the breath of life

from them, rather than having it directly and separately imparted by God rather than the Lord God who “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man/Adam became a living being.”

4. Adam found no counterpart in the animal world (2:19-22). There was clearly no matching part in the animal world to complement him, plenty of pets to choose from but no partner which is why God decides on one last act of creation to make things just perfect by creating for the man a suitable helper and partner, woman from his very own rib to be sure, and not from another animal. Anyway,

5. **Man and Woman were superior to animals** (1:26,28) with God having made them to rule over all the creatures of the earth. And lastly, 6. The fundamental difference in the Book of Genesis between humankind and animals is the obvious point that **Humans are made in God’s image** (1:27) and animals are not! And not only that, but humans are God’s designated rulers on planet earth while animals are ruled over (1:26, 28).

So who am I? I am special because I have been created as a human being made in God’s image, descended from Adam and Eve the first humans which makes us humans distinctly different from all other creatures which means that we did not come from a non-human, sub-human or pre-human creature. The creation of humankind was a deliberate and sudden event where Man and woman were made as human beings, they didn’t just gradually appear on earth as many people would choose to believe, including teachers and academics because it was God who designed and created mankind, making and forming them, blessing them to multiply in number- a number which is over 7.3 billion now resident on planet earth.

What an awesome thought it is to think that humankind was made in the image of God and that there is a continued increase, just as God said, in the overall population of the planet, being fruitful and increasing in number every minute of the day. You can go online and view the increase on a world population meter. At the same time, as we acknowledge that we are created in the image of God, it is a humbling thought to remember that we all then have our origins in the dirt, the soil, the dust of the earth because God designed us to be ‘earthlings’, people

who were made to live on, work, take our food from, subdue and rule over the earth including the animals as good stewards, and it is to this earth, it's soil, that our physical bodies will one day return. Perhaps God made Adam from the dust to remind him, and therefore us as his descendents, of his humble position as a creature because the dust of the ground is a symbol of that which is lowly and fragile. Even though humanity is created unique and special in God's image we are not to over step the mark and think more of ourselves than we ought because when we do as humans we honour ourselves as equals to or even above God, which is the same thing as calling ourselves God and believing that we are God, when in actual fact our high honour as God's human deputies on earth must be balanced in all humility with our lowliness as creatures made by God from the dust. We are not, and never will be God.

When the Psalmist, King David one of Israel's greatest kings, reflected on the creation of the heavens and earth and everything in it including humankind he was incredibly aware of the truth of who he was and how significant he was, in fact just how humankind has a significance far out of all proportion to our size but when he compared humans to the vastness of the universe, he saw that humans look so insignificant as those who are here today and gone tomorrow. The Genesis story has left David amazed as he proclaims in

Psalm 8:5 You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honour.

When you hear these words and ask yourself the question, 'Who Am I? I hope that if you have not done so before, that you have or are coming to the realisation that you are special, unique and having been made in the image of God as a human being descended from Adam and Eve have been crowned with glory and honour, not because of what you or any human being have done, but because of what God has made, ordained and through his love for us bestowed upon us a significance and purpose for our lives which David states in

Psalm 8:6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet.

The knowledge of being created in the image of God leaves us both humbled and yet inspired to live life in God's image as the Creator's managers of the planet, the 'movers and shakers' in his absence who have been blessed to be fruitful and multiply and rule over creatures and creation alike as good stewards. We may have been made in God's image having had the planet placed in our hands but we remain accountable to our Creator as humankind which should forever serve as a warning that it is not open slather to rape and pillage the earth for our own selfish ends because as God's image bearers on earth we are appointed to care for the world, develop it and shape it, in keeping with God's values. This important role has been given to us, not animals, so as image-bearers we are supposedly here to make a difference, which begs the question – is this happening in our stewarding role and care of God's creation? A significant thought to dwell and then act on as those who are special to, made in the image of and passionately loved by God. And we are able to consider such questions because we are so differently made from all other creatures having been made to design and make things, think about things, made to do the right thing because we unlike animals have a conscience, an inner moral compass as moral beings, which means that we are made to love and value people more than things, something which all human beings are capable of because as humankind God revealed his passionate love for us, and each one of us, our own incredible value when he saw us made. So lastly, who am I?

I am loved passionately by God So I am incredibly valuable and I matter very much to God and His Creation in this one life I have been given to live. Thomas Merton encapsulates this idea well when he said, "To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name."

So, as someone who is created special and unique in the image of God as well as passionately loved by God, now that you know who you are, and the position that you have been given in the order of creation, the challenge remains for you and me of how we will each choose to honour from this day forth, and bring glory to, God with our thinking, speech, creativity and actions with regards to God's natural world, it's people and animals? Do you think that you could do it in such a way that people in

the world who are asking the question, 'Who Am I?' might witness the living answer in us as we seek to glorify God living our lives in His loving image? What might our church, community, social circle, workplace, club or interest group look and feel like if we all committed ourselves to bring glory to God in this way- living as His special, unique and passionately loved creations who matter to God and to whom creation matters to us!