

Last time we finished with God restoring the earth in preparation for the creation of man.

- ◆ However we need to remind ourselves that in spite of an environment that was infested with evil influences, God is in complete control of the process whereby his special creation, man, would eventually blossom into the image of God.
- ◆ This is where we now pick up the story.
- ◆ ***Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” 27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.***
- ◆ In our earlier session on creation we talked about two amazing realities that makes life on earth possible.
- ◆ First was the precise positioning of the earth in the so-called habitable “Goldilocks” zone, and secondarily the unexplained miraculous appearance of life itself on the planet.
- ◆ Now we encounter another extraordinary event that defies our understanding, and that is, “human consciousness”.
- ◆ Understanding how our brain causes human consciousness is the holy grail of both philosophy and neuroscience and has challenged philosophers from pre-Socratic times.
- ◆ The challenge has been to understand the relationship between the physical and the mental.
- ◆ In his opening statement from his first lecture on Mind, Body and Questions of Consciousness, Professor Patrick Grim outlines the hard problem of consciousness for philosophers and neuroscientists.

“How do our physical brains produce our subjective experience? If we opened up your skull we would find about three pounds of grey matter. Look closer and we would find distinct layers within the folded grey mass. Look even closer and we would find an unfathomably complex tangle of specialized cells, but that’s all we’d find, three pounds of matter.

Okay, I’ve told you what we would find if we opened your skull. Now you tell me what you find when you open your eyes? You open your eyes in the morning and you see the glow of the sun streaming in the window. You feel the warmth on your cheeks. You hear the chatter of birds outside. Perhaps your spouse is already up and you smell the coffee. On the one hand three pounds of grey substance, something we can hold in our hand and publicly probe from the outside, weigh, map and measure, on the other hand something we can’t publicly probe from the outside the phenomenon of your subjective experience – the way the sun looks, how it feels on your cheeks, the sound of the birds and the smell of the coffee. The major question for both philosophers and scientists is how those two things go together. How can three pounds of matter produce not merely the objective phenomenon of electro-chemical impulses across synapses but also the subjective phenomena of sights, and feels and sounds, and smells? It sounds like we perform a little bit of Aladdin’s magic every waking moment. We produce a subjective genie from an objective lamp. The question is, how that magic happens.”

- ◆ Despite major advances in understanding how the brain functions and new innovative ways of measuring brain activity, the question of how three pounds of grey matter can produce the complex phenomena mentioned above remains elusive.
- ◆ And we haven’t even begun to address the brains capacity to produce emotions, its ability to reason, to communicate, and its creative capacity.
- ◆ The problem facing neuroscientists is, they can explain the easy part, and that is, how much of the physical brain functions, the hard part is discovering how these functions are transformed into conscious or subjective experience.
- ◆ William James, a 19th century philosopher and psychologist who is widely regarded as the founder of American psychology summed up the difficulty facing the hard problem of consciousness this way with this brutal assessment; “The same atoms that chaotically dispersed make up the nebula of the universe now jammed and temporarily caught in peculiar positions form our brain – how can that produce consciousness?”
- ◆ Although advances in neuroscience have come a long way since William James, the hard problem remains.
- ◆ Scientific analysis fails to explain the consciousness that transcends the physical processes of the brain.

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- ◆ The failure to explain the hard problem of consciousness has left the scientific community with little option but to resort to using terms like, “There’s hope for a miracle”; “It may take a radical change in our physics by adding ‘consciousness’ to concepts like mass and space-time”; “This is a problem we cannot solve, ever and in principle, simply because our brains lack the intellectual capacity in the same way a raccoon doesn’t understand scientific principles”.
- ◆ Once again we find science banging up against a mystifying component or force in the universe that cannot be explained or measured by empirical means.
- ◆ Their efforts have instead concentrated on purely physical means to explain subjective phenomena.
- ◆ To do otherwise is to venture into the realm of “superstition”.
- ◆ This has not always been the case. French philosopher René Descartes introduced the concept of “dualism” which divides the universe into two distinct realms, the thinking mind, and the physical body.
- ◆ In his “Discourse on the Method,” Descartes argues, “I think, therefore I am” and concludes, “the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from body.”
- ◆ Descartes is quite explicit about identifying the mind with the thinking soul.
- ◆ He may be closer to the truth than he realized when this statement is looked at in the context of the two realms we spoke about earlier, a spiritual realm in which God inhabits and a physical realm humans inhabit.

There is no doubting the fact there’s something “magic” going on within the human brain and the solution has to do with this statement from God, “Let us make man in our image”.

- ◆ Earlier we spoke about the special relationship of unity and love enjoyed between the three persons of the Trinity.
- ◆ Although they exist in a totally different dimension to us, the one thing that transcends both the eternal and physical dimensions is the ability to relate not only to other humans, but also to God.
- ◆ Following in the dualism concept of Descartes, I would suggest “consciousness” is the unique capacity with which God has gifted humanity in order for us to relate to one another and to God Himself.
- ◆ After all, the capacity to communicate is the most essential component we need for relationships and it is this factor that makes humanity unique in the natural world.
- ◆ As mentioned earlier, of all of God’s creatures, it is only humans and angels who have been given this capacity to “know” and to “love.”
- ◆ ***Genesis 2:7 Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.***
- ◆ This breath from God was more than a simple breath that gave him the capacity to breathe like other animals. As the verse goes on to explain, the man became a “living being” which implies all the unique characteristics associated with human life including consciousness.
- ◆ We see God’s breath and human consciousness linked together in the book of Job.
- ◆ ***Job 32:8 But it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives them understanding.***
- ◆ Just as God defines Himself as a person by using the term “I”, (“I AM WHO I AM.” Exodus 3:14), we too have been given the capacity to define ourselves as a person by also using the term “I.” No other animal has been given this unique capacity.
- ◆ Later on in the New Testament we see it is with this God given human spirit that the Holy Spirit of God relates to us across the two dimensions.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.***
- ◆ God in creating us, built into us both the ability and need for relationships, both on a physical, emotional and social level with other humans, and also on a spiritual level with our heavenly Father.
- ◆ Even after sin entered the world, these drives are still very much a part of our make up.
- ◆ Much of what drives us and leads to both happiness and heartache is the pursuit of a relationship with another human being.
- ◆ This gift of the human spirit to humanity may also explain the quantum leap in human development recorded in the fossil record.
- ◆ However, agreement breaks down completely on the question of when, where and how these anatomically modern humans began to manifest creative and symbolic thinking.

Another reoccurring theme we see introduced here is the connection of the Holy Spirit with new beginnings.

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- ◆ As mentioned earlier, we saw the Spirit of God hovering on the face of the water at the beginning or renewal of the physical creation (Genesis 1:2).
- ◆ Now here at the creation of Adam and Eve, God breathed life into mankind (Genesis 2:7).
- ◆ And later we will see this same action repeated at the beginning of God's spiritual creation, the New Testament church
- ◆ ***John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.***
- ◆ So we see the work of God the Holy Spirit active at these important milestones in God's plan of salvation. The first at the physical creation and second at the new spiritual creation.

With the creation of Adam and Eve there is another important aspect we need to emphasize which is crucial to the process

- ◆ Although God has given humanity this amazing gift of consciousness that gives us the unique ability to relate to one another and to Him, we should not assume Adam and Eve were the finished product, complete in God's image at this stage.
- ◆ Although God did classify His newly created humans as being "very good," they were a long way from reflecting God's perfect nature of love, joy, mercy, grace, holiness, righteousness, justice, peace, etc.
- ◆ This "very good" was not a moral judgment but rather a comment on the marvelous functioning of the human body He had created.
- ◆ Of course, if they were the finished product, complete in God's image, they would never have sinned in the first place.
- ◆ This was simply the beginning of the process.
- ◆ If it takes years of study to become a doctor or engineer, we would have to assume it might take some time to become true children of God.
- ◆ So we should regard this statement, "Let us make man in our image," more like, "Let us turn this young man and woman into fully created sons and daughters of God!"

So the question that needs to be asked is, "How does God develop the same holy characteristics that distinguish Him as God into His human creation?

- ◆ There are two possibilities, the easy way or the hard way. One involves humility and trust, the other pain and suffering.
- ◆ Either way, God is committed to the process.
- ◆ The decision comes down to how one exercises their freewill and on two trees situated in the middle of the Garden of Eden.

It is here that we pick up the story.

- ◆ ***Genesis 2:8 Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.***
- ◆ So into this ideal landscape beautifully created by God Himself, man is placed.
- ◆ But, two trees were different. They did not have botanical names, but rather moral names.
- ◆ ***"In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."***
- ◆ We spoke earlier about a moral universe.
- ◆ We have a caring Creator who has engineered a cosmos where free agents have been given self-determining freedom and the power to make morally responsible choices.
- ◆ Consequences, either good or bad based on those decisions have been carefully engineered into the process.
- ◆ It's more than coincidence the subject of good and evil is introduced right here at the beginning of humanity's creation.
- ◆ God's placement of these two trees in the garden creates the possibility of choice.
- ◆ But with that choice there comes both a prohibition and a warning from God.
- ◆ ***Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."***
- ◆ The Garden of Eden played a unique role in God's good creation. It was the place set aside by God where humanity could come and commune with Him face to face (Genesis 3:8).

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- ◆ Just as God designated other holy sites as places of worship such as Bethel (Genesis 31:13), Shiloh (Joshua 18:1), and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 5:2), the Garden of Eden played this role for Adam and Eve.
- ◆ God's presence along with the tree of life confirmed this location was holy ground (Genesis 2:9; Exodus 3:5; Revelation 22:1-2).
- ◆ By God placing Adam and Eve in this holy location with the instruction and responsibility **"to work it and take care of it"** they were the forerunners of those who would later become representatives of God's people in their interaction with God, i.e. "priests of God".
- ◆ But as we will see in the case of the two trees, this "representative" principle will play a very important role in the events that unfold.
- ◆ We mentioned earlier the importance of the three words, "holy", "work" and "rest" mentioned on day seven of the creation account (Genesis 2:1-3).
- ◆ Now we begin to understand the full implication of what God was referring to when He designated this seventh day, "holy" and a day of "rest."
- ◆ For six days He had been "working" preparing a suitable habitation for His special creation, man.
- ◆ But God's goal was not just the creation of man, but to be in "holy communion" with His newly created beings.
- ◆ This is what He had effectively achieved as He sat and "rested" with them in this holy place on that seventh day.
- ◆ All was at peace between God and man as they dwelt together in intimate relationship with one another.
- ◆ Unfortunately this idyllic scene did not last long, and God would have to begin "working" again in order to achieve a permanent rest with His created beings.
- ◆ We will come back to this subject when we look at the subject of covenants.
- ◆ What is unique about this event is what it reveals both here at the beginning of scripture and at the end of scripture.
- ◆ God sitting down enjoying intimate relationship with His special creation, human beings.
- ◆ ***Revelation 21:2-3 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.***
- ◆ God's is committed to His plan of securing this end but it will only be achieved through much pain and suffering for both God and humanity.

There are two other important principles at work here we need to understand about this situation before we proceed any further.

- ◆ We will look at these two principles next time.