

Genesis

Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 4



The NAME

*Then Moses said to God, 'I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you". But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?' And God said to Moses, 'I Am who I Am. This' he added 'is what you must say to the sons of Israel: "I Am has sent me to you".' And God also said to Moses 'You are to say to the sons of Israel: "YAHWEH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you". This is **MY NAME FOR ALL TIME**; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come ...'*

-- Ex. 3:13-15 (JB)

MAN, the IMAGE OF GOD (1:26-30)

1:26-27 What might 'the image of God [Elohim] mean?

The plural "we" was regarded by the fathers and earlier theologians almost unanimously as indicative of the Trinity; modern commentators, on the contrary, regarded either as *pluralis majestatis*; or as an address by God to Himself, the subject and object being identical: or as *communicative*, an address to the spirits or angels who stand around the Deity and constitute His council. -- **C.F. Keil**, *Genesis* p. 62

This likeness consists not in his nobler external form, -- for God has none; not in his imperial rule over earth and her inhabitants, -- for this would be only a consequence of his likeness to God; -- but in his superior spiritual nature, which he has by direct communication from God, as the parallel account, ch. ii.7, gives it. This spiritual nature, when free from sin, reflected in small the spiritual nature of God himself. When sin intervened, it lost its purity and dignity, its holiness and blessedness, but not its basis and form. -- **Henry Alford**, *The Book of Genesis* p. 8



Gordon Wenham calls Genesis 1 – "the intellectual underpinning of the scientific enterprise"

Man is the image of God by virtue of his spiritual nature, of the breath of God by which the being, formed from the dust of the earth, became a living soul. -- **C.F. Keil**, *op.cit.*, p. 63

This notion of creation by the divine will presents us with yet another radical departure from paganism. In polytheistic mythologies creation is always expressed in terms of procreation. Apparently, paganism was unable to conceive of any primal creative force other than in terms of sex. It will be remembered that in *Enuma Elish*, Apsu and Tiamat represent respectively the male and female powers which, though the "commingling of their waters" gave birth to the first generation of gods. The sex element existed before the cosmos came into being and all the gods were themselves creatures of sex. On the other hand, the Creator in Genesis is uniquely without any female counterpart and the very association of sex with God is utterly alien to the religion of the Bible. When, in fact, Genesis (1:27; 5:2) informs us that "male and female He created them," that God Himself created sexual differentiation, it is more likely that we are dealing with an intended protest against such pagan notions. -- **Nahum M. Sarna**, *Understanding Genesis* p. 12

1:28-30 In what way is man's God-likeness demonstrated in his present assignment? (Ps. 8:1-9)

Remark these words well, dear children. See how distinctly the Scripture declares to us, in the very first chapter, the unity of the human race. ... Ancient Science refused to believe that all men had sprung from one the same father. She taught that there were nations of monsters on the earth, and she imagined that generic and fundamental differences existed in the structure of the different races of men. But she has now been obliged to confess that all the discoveries of geography, as well as those of science, testify to the historical, physiological, and moral unity of all the families of men. -- **L. Gausen**, *The World's Birthday*, pp. 228-9

It appears from this, that vegetable diet alone was originally assigned to man ... Traditions of the same fact are found in various Gentile writers of Greece and Rome, and the ancient practice of Egypt, India, and Syria agree thereto. -- **Henry Alford**, *op.cit.*, p. 9

The NAME: The CREATOR of the UNIVERSE is also GOD of ISRAEL (1:31-2:4)

1:31-2:1 Comment on how God's judgment of His own creation can be used to combat unbelief's argument from the existence of evil. (Deut. 32:4,5,19,20; Eccl. 7:29)

Gen 1 formed the basis of the first article of the Christian creed, "I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth." In more recent times Gen 1 provided the intellectual underpinning of the scientific enterprise. Its assumption of unity and order underlying the manifold and seemingly capricious phenomena of experience rests on Gen 1's assertion of the one almighty God who created and

controls the world according to a coherent plan. Only such an assumption can justify the experimental method. Were this world controlled by a multitude of capricious deities, or subject to mere chance, no consistency could be expected in experimental results and no scientific laws could be discovered. -- **Gordon J. Wenham**, *Genesis 1-15* p. 39

... a comparison of the Babylonian creation story with the first chapter of Genesis makes the sublime character of the latter stand out in even bolder relief. *Enuma elish* refers to a multitude of divinities emanating from the elementary world-matter; the universe has its origin in the generation of numerous gods and goddesses personifying cosmic spaces or forces in nature, and in the orderly and purposeful arrangement of pre-existent matter; the world is not *created* in the biblical sense of the term but *fashioned* after the manner of human craftsmen; as for man, he is created with the blood of a deity that might well be called a devil among the gods, and the sphere of activity assigned to man is the service of the gods.

In Gen. 1:1-2:3, on the other hand, there stands at the very beginning *one* God, who is not co-united and coexistent with an eternal world-matter and who does not first develop Himself into a series of separate deities but who creates matter out of nothing and exists independently of all cosmic matter and remains *one* God to the end. Here the world is created by the sovereign *word* of God, without recourse to all sorts of external means. God speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. Add to this the doctrine that man was created in the image of a holy and righteous God, to be the lord of the earth, the air, and the sea, and we have a number of differences between *Enuma elish* and Gen. 1:1-2:3 that make all similarities shrink into utter insignificance. These exalted conceptions in the biblical account of creation give it a depth and dignity unparalleled in any cosmogony known to us from Babylonia or Assyria. -- **Alexander Heidel**, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-40

"Remark these words well, dear children. See how distinctly the Scripture declares to us, in the very first chapter, the unity of the human race ...", a proposition totally at odds with the myths of the ancient world, according to L. Gausen

2:4 Why is it most appropriate that The NAME first appear here?
(Ex. 6:1-8; compare Jer. 31:31-35; When did Moses first "know Jehovah"?)

... *Yahwe*, the proper name of the God of Israel, and in fact the name *par excellence* of the true God ... -- **John Skinner**, *The Divine Names in Genesis* p. 12

When God is spoken of in those general aspects of his being in which he is related alike to the whole world and to all mankind, e.g., in creation and providence, Elohim is the proper word; but when he is spoken of in his special relation to the chosen race as the God of revelation and of redemption, and the object of their worship, Jehovah is the appropriate term. -- **W.H. Green**, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* p. 542

"Elohim" is the general Semitic word for the godhead. It is the name of a class, by means of which man can refer to everything that he looks upon as possessing divine characteristics. Where this expression is used in Scripture for the one, true God, the emphasis is on His universality. Elohim is the God of nature, of the human race, of the world, and He is therefore also, as in Genesis 1, the Creator. The emphasis lying behind the name Jahweh, on the other hand, is quite different. Jahweh is a proper name, the name of a particular individual therefore. He is, in fact, the specific national God of Israel, the God of positive revelation and of the history of salvation. Without pressing the distinction too strictly and absolutely, we may say that Elohim is God as He reveals Himself in creation and in nature, and that Jahweh is God as He reveals Himself in history and in His gracious acts. -- **Henricus Renckens**, *Israel's Concept of the Beginning* p.62

NEXT: What made Eden paradise?

2:2-3 Do these verses legislate a universal Sabbath celebration?
(Ex. 31:12-17)

Therefore when we hear that the Sabbath was abrogated by the coming of Christ, we must distinguish between what belongs to the perpetual government of human life, and what properly belongs to ancient figures, the use of which was abolished when the truth was fulfilled. Spiritual rest is the mortification of the flesh; so that the sons of God should no longer live unto themselves, or indulge their own inclination. So far as the Sabbath was a figure of this rest, I say, it was but for a season; but inasmuch as it was commanded to men from the beginning that they might employ themselves in the worship of God, it is right that it should continue to the end of the world. -- **John Calvin**, *The Book of Genesis* p. 106