

Man, The Created by Jeff Strite

Genesis 1:26-2:8

OPEN: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3IRZPjdpr0>

(Video "Imago Dei" on youtube.com - play it through the 1:00 minute mark then fade out)

Psalm 8:3-4 asks an intriguing question:

"When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?"

What is man?

According to evolution, man (or Humans) are the end product of chance collision of molecules. Mankind came into existence purely because of a mindless and unplanned accident of nature.

Someone has referred to this kind of thinking as being "From Goo To You by Way of the Zoo"

According to this kind of thinking you and I are not that much different than birds in the sky or fish in the sea, or the slug in the mud, or an amoeba in the waters. We're all pretty much the result of the same purposeless interaction of atoms.

Thus we really have no intrinsic value. No value to really speak of that sets us apart from the rest of the world.

And there may be times we might agree with that evaluation.

There are times we don't think we're worth very much.

Times we think that we've messed up so badly that no one could want us around.

Times when we wonder if anybody would even miss us if we were gone.

Sometimes we may even wonder if it matters that we even exist.

But the Bible doesn't agree with that.

The Bible teaches that you that you are NOT an accident

YOU were planned.

YOU have purpose

And YOU have value all because God says YOU do.

ILLUS: I once saw a poster with a cute little boy on it. And it had these words

"I know I'm special, 'cause God don't make no junk!" (show poster on screen)

And Psalm 8 agrees.

It not only asks the question: "what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? BUT it answers that question:

"You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas." Psalm 8:4-8

Allen Webster interprets this passage this way:

"Evolution sees man as one step above apes.
Scripture sees him as one step beneath angels"

That's how important you are!

And that is the primary message from Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

God makes it very clear that everything in creation was made for US

In Genesis 1:26 - God says, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

And you can see how important it was to God by the way Genesis tells us God felt about creation.

On the first day God said "Let there be light!" and there was light. And the Bible says "and it was GOOD."

The 2nd day God created the earth's atmosphere and then we're told "and it was GOOD."

On day 3 God created vegetation – the trees and the grass and the shrubs and again it says "and that was GOOD."

Then on the 4th day God created the Sun, Moon and the stars and said "that was GOOD"

On the 5th day God created the birds of the air and fish of the sea and He saw that "that was GOOD."

But then – on the 6th day - God created man.

And when God had created man we're told "it was VERY GOOD."

But it doesn't stop there.

Reading Genesis 1 is like looking through a telescope at Creation.

That first chapter tells about each day of creation, but there's very little detail telling us how God did what He did. It's kind of like an overview.

Then chapter 2 kicks in and it's like looking thru a microscope. God takes us back to the 6th day of creation and He goes into great detail telling us HOW He did it.

ILLUS: Before I went to Bible College I attended a secular University for a couple of years. Some of the classes I took there were "philosophy" classes, and for the most part many of their instructors were not Godly men. They hated Scripture because it got in the way of the teachings they wanted to place in the minds of their students. So they made it their goal to undermine the Bible wherever possible, and one of the ways they'd do was by trying to expose "contradictions" in the Bible.

And they just loved chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis.

Because here, in these verses they THOUGHT they'd discovered a glaring error and they rejoiced in the opportunity to expose their classes to this obvious problem in Scripture.

Now, what did they THINK was the error they'd found?

Well in Genesis 1 we're told that God created vegetation on day 3... but man on day 6.

But (they said) it's obvious that in Genesis 2 man was created BEFORE vegetation. And then they'd read this text:

"These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:4-7

Do you see the problem?

No plant of the field, no herb of the field existed before man was created.

(PAUSE)

How many of you have ever been to the Doctor's office or the Dentist's office?

Have you ever noticed all the magazines they have there for you to read?

When I go to the doctor's office I head right over to the magazine rack and look for one

specific magazine: “Highlights”. It’s a kid’s magazine, and I love it. But I only look at one page in that magazine - you know which one? The “Hidden Pictures” page.

(Show a hidden picture puzzle on screen)

Within the picture are other pictures, and if you look closely enough you can see those hidden things... because they NEVER were really hidden. They were just so much a part of the picture they weren’t obvious to you at 1st.

It’s the same way with Genesis 2. There’s something that’s hidden from the sight of atheists and skeptics, because they’re not looking for it. It’s hidden to them, but not to us.

Look again at verse 5 –

“no SHRUB OF THE FIELD had yet appeared on the earth
and NO PLANT OF THE FIELD had yet sprung up,
for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth
and there was NO MAN TO WORK THE GROUND.”

What kind of shrubs were these? (of the field)

What kind of plants were these? (of the field)

Why hadn’t these plants sprung up yet? (no man to work the ground)

If I drive down the road and I see a field of corn, what does that tell me? (Somebody’s planted that corn). If I drive a ways more down the road and I see a field of wheat, what can I know about that? (There’s been a farmer plant those crops). Corn, wheat, soybeans, and so on are all plants “of the field” and the only way they get “in the field” is if there’s a man to work the field!

Now, why would God bother with this part of the story? Why bother to tell us there was no shrub and no plant of the field and no man to till the ground? Well, because God was telling this story to farmers... shepherds... black smiths... and computer techs. He was speaking to working people and telling them that before there was anybody who ever walked the face of this earth and did any work whatsoever, God had created the very FIRST man.

And in Genesis 2 God wanted to show them the special attention He gave to this one man.

(ASK FOR VOLUNTEER)

ILLUS: I want us to go back in time and imagine what it must have been like to be there

the day that God created the most perfect man who ever lived.

(pause to look doubtfully at my volunteer)

I want to visualize God kneeling down in the mud and beginning to shape Adam. Some believe that God may have started with the feet and worked His way up but I think it was more likely He began at the head. This is where the mind is/ nerve center/ spinal cord begins.

(Pretend to shape the head, the eye sockets, the nose & mouth, stand a little off to the side).

Then God began to work His way down the body and as He shaped and formed the arms and hands, you can almost see sparks coming from God's hands.

THEN, when God had completely formed the man He breathed the breath of life into the man. (pause) Anyone have some breath mints?

(Have volunteer sit down)

Everything else God created - he merely spoke and they appeared. He wanted a daisy, He spoke it into existence. He wanted an Oak tree, He spoke and appeared. He wanted a rabbit, a deer, a hawk, a trout in the river... all He had to do was speak and they appeared.

BUT when God created man He climbed down into the mud and got His hands dirty. Nothing else in all of creation required this kind of attention. Nothing else in all of creation called for that degree of involvement by God.

WHY?

Because this part of creation was something that was made in GOD'S IMAGE. And unlike every other thing that God created... God breathed the breath of life into him. You and I are a special and valuable because God took His time making forming and shaping our ancestor. We are special because God doesn't make no junk

But, now there's a problem.

Man was created in God's image... but over the years that image has become warped and wounded. It's kind of like going to a "scratch & dent" sale where a store will sell you an appliance that had once been a beautiful showpiece but now nobody wants to pay the full price because it's been roughed up. It may still have some of the inner workings, but it's just not as pretty as it once was, so it's not nearly as valuable as it once was.

It's kind of like in that video we showed at the beginning, where people said:

"Sometimes it's hard to tell I'm made in the image of God.

Sometimes I don't feel much like I'm in the image of God.

And sometimes I don't BELIEVE I'm in the image of God.
Because God is perfect but I make mistakes.
God is all loving... but I don't know how to love.
I keep falling, and I keep failing.
How can I be an image of God?"

ILLUS: I remember reading the story about a woman who'd been arrested for prostitution. As the woman was dragged into the police station, you could tell life had been hard on her. She was dressed provocatively, and she was attractive after a fashion. But the person who told the story said that her eyes showed a weariness and despair. And as she was sat in the chair next to the arresting officer's desk she looked over at him and said "Really, I'm not like this. This isn't who I am."

In her heart of hearts, this prostitute sensed there was something about her that wasn't a harlot. Deep inside of her soul there was the feeling that she had damaged what she REALLY was.

Now, that prostitute may not have felt real bad about herself when she compared herself to other prostitutes. She was probably not that much different than the rest of us who may feel bad about ourselves, but we find comfort in comparing ourselves to our neighbors, or our fellow workers, or a relative. On a scale of 1 to 10 we may come in at a 6 or 7... but at least we're two points above that other person.

And this prostitute may have been able to find comfort in the fact that – compared to some of the other prostitutes, or the pimp that ran her life – that she was at least better than some of them. But once she faced judgment – suddenly she realized how dingy and depressing her life had become.

Inside of her – there was this feeling that - yeah I'm a prostitute/loser/worthless to most people.

BUT this isn't who I am.

I wasn't meant to be this kind of person.

In her heart of hearts she may not have understood the theology of it all, but she sensed the truth that she'd been made in the image of God.

And she's messed it up. She'd damaged and warped something special.

How can she ever make it right?

THAT'S THE QUESTION

If I was made in God's image, and I've damaged that image... how can I make it right?
Where am I going to REGAIN that image that we've lost?

Now, this is where it gets good.

This is where the genius of God's plan is shown to us.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we're told about "... the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

Who is the image of God? (Jesus)

And in Colossians 1:15 we're told that "(Jesus) is the image of the invisible God..."

Who is the image of the invisible God? (Jesus)

You and I were MADE in the image of God... but we've kind of messed it up.

But here we're told that Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

If we could just find a way to wrap ourselves up in that image of Jesus, if we could find a way to put Jesus on us like a coat, then maybe we'd be ok.

Wouldn't we???

That's exactly what the Bible tells us God wants to do for us.

Galatians 3:27 promised us that "... as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have (PAUSE) PUT ON CHRIST."

Isn't that neat!?

When you and I became Christians we were buried in the water, and then we were raised up out of that watery grave a new creation. We went down into the baptistery a warped image of God... and we came back up wrapped in Jesus – THE PERFECT image of God.

We put on Christ in baptism so that when God looks at us He sees His perfect image on us.

But was that all that God did?

I mean was this like having some kind of spiritual cosmetic surgery?

When we put on Christ in baptism did we just get a face lift?

Oh no. God didn't stop there.

When we got wet, we got changed INSIDE as well.

Acts 2:38 tells us – that to become a Christian we need to "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you

will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

You see, when we put on Jesus in baptism God put His Spirit inside of us to do some tinkering with us. God’s Spirit was now inside us to remake us and remold us in HIS image so that we begin to look more and more like Him.

CLOSE: It comes down to recognizing WHO we are... and WHO we were born to be.

The story’s told of a preacher that was traveling with his wife and stopped at a restaurant for a meal. They just wanted to eat and be on their way. But an older gentleman walked over to their table and wanted to talk. They really didn’t want to talk... but they were too polite to say so.

“What do you do for a living” the older man asked.

“I’m a preacher,” was the reply.

“Well then, I have a story you may find interesting. My mother wasn’t married when I was born. When I started to school my classmates had a name for me, and it wasn’t a very nice name.

I used to go off by myself both at recess and during lunch time because of the taunts of my playmates, which cut me deeply. What was worse was going downtown on Saturday afternoon and feeling every eye burning a hole through you. They were all wondering who my real father was.

“When I was about 12, a new preacher came to our church. I would always go in LATE and slip out EARLY. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel every eye in church on me.

Just about the time I got to the door... I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me.

“‘Who are you, son? Whose boy are you?’

“I felt the old weight come upon me. It was like a big, black cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down, I thought.

“But as the preacher looked down at me, studying my face he began a big smile of recognition.

‘Wait a minute,’ he said, ‘I know who you are. I see the family resemblance. You are a son of God!’

“With that, he slapped me across the back and said, ‘Boy, you’ve got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.’

At that, the old man got up and left.

When the preacher and his wife finished their meal they went to the cash register to pay their bill. The waitress said: “Do you know who that old man was that was speaking

to you? That was Ben Hooper, the former governor of our state. This is his home town, and he retired here a few years ago.”

Just a few words from a preacher telling this young man he was made in the image of God changed his life. And it can change yours too. That’s why we offer an invitation at the end of every service.