

# SPECIAL AGENTS IN CHARGE

GENESIS 1:26-2:4a JULY 7, 2021

On opening day at Disneyland in 1955, Walt Disney delivered a simple, 40 second speech<sup>1</sup> to the first guests of the new park. He welcomed everyone to that happy place, saying he hoped it would be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world. Of course, anyone who has visited the park more than once knows that the work wasn't finished in 1955. In fact, Walt famously said: "Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world."<sup>2</sup> Since 1955, more than 700 million people have visited the happiest place on earth, and the work goes on.

So far in Genesis we've read about all the things God created in this universe. Energies and elements, the stellar heavens and our atmosphere, the oceans and the continents, birds and fish and animals. But all of it was simply a backdrop and set dressing for the final component of our cosmos: Human beings. That last creative act is what we'll focus on tonight.

As we go through this text, the major point is just how special human beings are. The way God made us, the reason *why* we were made, our function in this universe, all of it is revealed to be significant and distinguished in the mind of God. That's the idea that comes across in these verses.

We'll see that humans would not only be a special of God's attention and affection, but that we would also be special administrators of the rest of God's creation. When God formed man from the dust of the earth, He wasn't only giving him an incredible, lavish gift. God was also giving him a great responsibility and appointment to carry on the work the Almighty had begun. So, let's take a look at our start, beginning in verse 26.

**Genesis 1:26-27 - <sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.**

As always, please note the uni-plurality of this one true God. Let *us* make in *our* likeness. Yet, God created in *His* own image. God is Three in One - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Not three gods, just One Who is triune.

While we're on the subject of the nature of God, we might as well discuss the issue of whether God is a 'man.' Or, rather, is God male? God is Spirit. Both Old and New Testaments explain that He is invisible. He has no body. Therefore, He is not 'male' in the sense that we use the term. That is, until God the Son put on flesh that He might dwell with us. When He did so, He came as a man with a real, physical body. Now He is resurrected and He will remain the GodMan forever.

The issue doesn't stop at Jesus, however. Even before the Incarnation, God chose to reveal Himself as a *Father* and a *Son*. Not a mother and a daughter. Jesus uses masculine nouns and pronouns when referring to the Father.<sup>3</sup> Whenever God appeared to people in a Pre-Incarnate visit to earth, He did so in the form of a man.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-Ebp2PHofw>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.imagineeringdisney.com/blog/2013/5/31/as-long-as-there-is-imagination-left-in-the-world-putting-th.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-male-female.html>

But what about where it says male and female were made in the likeness and image of God? Well, remember, God has no body. So our *bodies* are not what is being referred to when it comes to His image. What is?

That is a question that much has been written about for many centuries. But it comes down to unique attributes and unique assignments.

The unique attributes include things like our ability to think at a high level. No animal looks up at the stars to ponder the meaning of life. We do. No fish has the capacity for love like we do. No bird is able to think through abstract philosophy. We do. Man's ability to think and determine and contemplate and believe is a reflection of the mind of God that no other creature has.

We also have spiritual attributes that are unique to humanity. No lion feels guilt for his selfish murders. Morality is written on human hearts, not animal hearts. Since the fall, creation groans, but it does not seek the Lord the way man can.

The Bible never lumps human beings into the same category as the animals.<sup>4</sup> Though we're physically made up of the same matter as the others, God has made us altogether different. In kindness, in justice, in devising and designing, we are able to do what no other creature on earth can do. These are significant differences. One commentator points out that God made humans a little lower than the angels, not a little higher than the beasts.<sup>5</sup>

Why did God do so? Partly because He wanted to make us a special object of His attention and affection. But also because of the assignment He had for us. We see it there in verse 26. Human beings were to rule over all the earth and the creatures within. In every realm, land, sky and sea, man would have dominion.

What sort of rulers would we be? Well, when you consult Bible dictionaries they will describe the term "rule" in these ways: To tread down.<sup>6</sup> To subdue.<sup>7</sup> To lead, manage, direct or govern.<sup>8</sup> We live on a pretty big planet, which makes this a pretty big job. How would these humans accomplish this?

They would do so as representatives of God Himself. Since humans were made in God's likeness and image they would be His special agents in charge, made to rule the way God would. Before the fall, humans were to be the "visible, corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God."<sup>9</sup> And, because of that, God gave all authority and ability that men and women would need to do the job.

Before moving on, given the times in which we live, there's an issue that must be addressed. Genesis reveals *reality* to us. It shows us the workings of God and His design. It establishes truth for us. And what we find here, written indelibly, is that human beings are created by God as either male or female. That is not something that culture assigns later. It's not a social construct. Every man, every woman, has been specifically crafted by God according to His design. For a human male to claim that he is female is a detachment from reality. Some people in our world today have a hard time with this reality. Our purpose is not to demean or belittle anyone, but simply to share the truth which has been revealed. For those that deal with what is known today as "gender dysphoria," we

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<sup>4</sup> *CSB Study Bible Notes*

<sup>5</sup> James Montgomery Boice *Genesis: An Expository Commentary vol. 1*

<sup>6</sup> *Strong's Concise Dictionary*

<sup>7</sup> *NASB Dictionary*

<sup>8</sup> *DBL Hebrew*

<sup>9</sup> *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

have this today: your feelings may be real, and your struggle may be painful, but God has explained what is real and what is true. You were *created* by Him according to a set design. And He knows you and loves you and has a specific purpose for your life. To reject the fact that you are male or female is not only a departure from truth and reality, it also is to flee from God who made you and loves you.

**Genesis 1:28 - <sup>28</sup> God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”**

This is very similar to what God said to the other creatures, but it adds on the command to subdue the earth. That command is a *blessing*. From the beginning we’re being shown that to obey God is the way to a happy, fulfilled life. And we’re shown that work is not a bad thing. It is a very good thing.

The word “subdue” has a negative connotation to us. The term here might be described this way: “Harness the potential of the earth.”<sup>10</sup> God gave us so much in this earth to innovate and utilize and enjoy and develop. We’re to do so in ways that reflect God’s character and nature. Meaning humans shouldn’t treat the world the I treated my *SimCity* metropolis when I was in middle school. I would build up this city just so I could send tornadoes and earthquakes and Godzilla attacks and watch it all come crumbling down.

We don’t need to feel sheepish about using the resources God has generously supplied, but our aim should be to develop, rather than destroy.

Now, a question that comes up sometimes is: Should I have kids in a world that’s in so much trouble? Today, climate change alarmists are pressuring people to not have children, because (they argue) there aren’t enough resources to go around. It’s a bit like Thanos’ philosophy. One organization called *World Population Balance* says that what we *really* need to do is get the global population down to 2 or 3 billion people and it can only be *that* high if all of you (if you’re lucky enough to not be majority who needs to die) consume 40% of everything than you do now.<sup>11</sup>

Even those who aren’t worried about the environmental aspect sometimes wonder if having kids in an evil world is a good idea. On the *individual* level, the answer is: You should only get married and have kids if that’s what God wants for you, whether the world is good or bad. But, on a *philosophical* level consider this: God gave Adam and Eve this command *knowing* just how bad the world was going to be. After all, these were the two people who brought sin and death into the world. But God has sufficient grace, power and victory for our families, no matter how bad the world is.

**Genesis 1:29-30 - <sup>29</sup> God also said, “Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you, <sup>30</sup>for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth—everything having the breath of life in it—I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.**

I often think of Adam and Eve in the confines of the Garden of Eden, but here we see that God intended for them and their offspring to reach every corner of the globe. As they spread, they’d be sharing things with the animal kingdom. It made me wonder: Were all animals *friendly*? We only get clues. Even though, at this point, animals weren’t eating each other, humans would still have to rule

<sup>10</sup> NET Bible Notes

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.worldpopulationbalance.org/3\\_times\\_sustainable](https://www.worldpopulationbalance.org/3_times_sustainable)

and subdue and take charge of the administration of the planet. It *seems* as if animals were able to communicate with man, although that's a bit of speculation. At any rate, the job God was giving them was not just a walk in the park. This was an immense undertaking.

But, notice there in verse 29 how God says, "Look!" He was excited to have his special creatures check it all out. To study and discover and wonder at His creation.

**Genesis 1:31 - <sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed. Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.**

At the end of the work week, things were not only good, they were *very* good. Creation was humming along in worshipful harmony.<sup>12</sup> This reminds us of how things will be one day. When God establishes His Millennial Kingdom on the earth the world will be restored. The creation will harmonize again as Christ undoes the effects of sin. What a wonderful time that will be!

But this also reminds us that the things God establishes are very good. He established creation. It is good - ruined in many ways for the time being - but good. God established the institutions of family and the Church. These are very good things indeed when they are enjoyed and implemented according to God's design. He's given us these things for our good, so that we might thrive and grow and carry out our functions in this world.

**Genesis 2:1-3 - So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. <sup>2</sup> On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation.**

God completed His creation, but He wasn't done working. After His day of rest a *new* effort would begin: His work in the lives of man and woman. All the work so far led up to this new phase where He would *commune* with His people. Walking with them, talking with them, directing them and helping them. He would have to! After all, God had given mankind dominion over the whole earth, including the realms in which they couldn't live - the sea and the sky. Twice He said, "You'll be in charge of everything in the sky and everything in the sea, along with everything on the earth." This job would be *impossible* without God's help and empowering. God wasn't retiring. Jesus said in John 5, "My Father is still working. He's always at His work, and so am I. (*paraphrase*)"

The question that arises here is what relationship we should have with a Sabbath day of rest? Some suggest that since God's day of rest predates the Law, therefore it still should apply to Christians.

This issue has been specifically, plainly dealt with in the New Testament. Jesus said man was not made for the Sabbath, but Sabbath was made for man.<sup>13</sup> Paul wrote, "Don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day."<sup>14</sup> In Romans he said that every day is the same. During the Jerusalem council, when the church was about to be split over the issue of keeping the Levitical Law or not, the answer was that Christians do not have to keep it and nothing about the Sabbath was prescribed. Rather, we see in Acts that the Christians, at certain times, met *every day* to enjoy the presence of God. Jesus offers us His rest not once a week, but moment by moment. He says "Come to Me and I will *give* you My rest." We find God's rest not in

<sup>12</sup> Henry Morris *The Genesis Record*

<sup>13</sup> Mark 2:27

<sup>14</sup> Colossians 2:16

a list of what we do not do on a certain day, but by entering into what Jesus freely offers every singly day. If you feel led to mark a specific day of the week with certain acts of worship and devotion, great. You may not force it upon Christians at large.

Now, before moving to our close there's something tucked away here for us to take note of. You've probably heard before that, in the Bible, seven is the number of completion or perfection. The idea is definitely woven throughout the Scriptures. Seven is a very significant number, Biblically speaking. This is the first use of it in God's word and we always want to pay attention to the first mention of doctrines. This is where the idea gets its origin. Why is a week 7 days instead of 3 or 10 or some other number? Because God says so and because, as He reveals Himself, the number 7 would have an important place. And here it is used for the first time and connected to the idea of perfect completion.

### **Genesis 2:4a - <sup>4</sup>These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation.**

This phrase is a specific one. Ten times in Genesis we're going to encounter this kind of statement about the "records" of a certain lineage. Your translation may say "history" or "generations" or "account." It's a specific Hebrew term that helps us divide up the book. In each case except this one it will refer to people. But here we have the first division, the lineage of creation. From this point forward, the focus will be on God's special creation - humanity.

So now, God's special agents have been placed on the earth to be in charge of administrating things God's way. Of course, we know everything goes sideways and for thousands of years, God has been working tirelessly to fix what we humans broke. And we look forward to that day when it's done.

But for us here tonight, how might this passage direct us? Of course, we believe this to be a historical record, but it's also for us, meant to lead us in life and Godliness. First, a text like this should cause us to *appreciate* what the Lord has done. Thinking about Creation and how it's all been made for us so that we might fulfill this incredible function, should fill us with gladness. But not only should we appreciate Creation in the sense of being thankful, but also to gaze in wonder at it. A lot has been spoiled by sin, but so much beauty remains. God still invites us to "look!" To explore what God has given and consider the wonder of His design

Second, this passage should cause us to *anticipate* the coming age, when things *will* be restored to what they were designed to be. God is going to put everything back together and let us live in that perfect restoration, where we will dwell in peaceful rest and comfort.

Third, this passage should cause us to *acknowledge* who we are in the eyes of God. You are not a mistake. You are not just a bundle of nerves and carbon. You are a special creation of incalculable value. It wasn't just that God specially made Adam and Eve and the rest of us are just part of the swarm. No, we're told that God still does a special work of creation in the case of each life - that He knows us before we are born and He fashions us in our mother's womb. He knits us together. You are made *on purpose for* a purpose. And that purpose leads us to our fourth point of application.

*Accept* the assignments God has given you. Now, Adam and Eve gave dominion of the earth over to Satan. But we still are able to function in certain aspects of that office. It is still good and Godly to cultivate, to multiply and fill the earth. And we should still live our lives in a way that represents God to the world around us. But, on *this* side of the Fall and *this* side of the Cross we've been given an *additional* assignment. Not to just go through the world multiply biologically, but to go spreading the Gospel and making disciples. Like Adam and Eve's job of administration, this assignment is

*impossible* without the empowering and enabling of God. But He has given it. So, our aim should be to live in blessed obedience to Him. In that way we fulfill our special place in God's plan and receive the special blessings set aside for us *and only us*.