

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE - Part four - Teaching #1350

Sunday, February 28th, 2010, 6:00 p.m.

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

ONE MALE, ONE FEMALE - THE CREATOR'S DESIGN TO STAMP HIS IMAGE ON EVERY MARRIAGE

Genesis 1:24-27 - "And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. [25] And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. [26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Genesis 2:15-24 - "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. [16] And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." [18] Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." [19] So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. [21] So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." [24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

I have long had the following concern about the way Christians have come to view these wonderful passages. I sometimes think we focus our attention on something smaller than the main point. When my grandson was much younger than he is now I can remember walking with him by our house. A fire truck went by and I, being the wonderful granddad I am, wanted to show him something he'd not seen before. I shot my arm out, pointing my finger, and said "Look, buddy! Look at that!" And what he looked at was my *finger*, not the *fire truck*.

Now, there's nothing wrong with my finger. I have a wonderful finger - in fact, ten of them. But there was something *bigger* than my finger going on at that moment. And his very act of focusing on my finger *kept* him from seeing that huge, red fire truck.

Let's just assume certain things for a moment. Let's just assume we've proven God is the creator of heaven and earth. Let's assume we all know evolution is not only *improbable*, but absolutely *impossible*. Let's go even further. Let's assume we all agree that the earth is no more than about seven or eight thousand years old, that the fossil evidence showing otherwise is unreliable, and that all the genealogies and Biblical dating tools are foolproof.

Let's grant *all* of those conclusions from the Genesis record. My conviction is that, in thinking *those* are the biggest issues of Genesis one and two, you're still looking at my finger instead of the fire truck. Assuming the *truthfulness* of all those things, they are still no where near the biggest issues to be pondered and applied from these great texts.

Please don't miss my point. I *agree* with many - even most - of those creation truths. I'm a committed *creationist*. Yet I'm still convinced more is gained by studying the *nature* of Adam and Eve than proving their *existence*. More profit is gleaned by studying their *relationship* to each other and to God than their *chronological age*. And yes, I know we don't have to *choose* between these things. Yet it's precisely the *implications* of the specific creation of Adam and Eve that rarely get examined in the church today. We're so busy fighting evolutionists we're missing our Creator's design and heart for sexual purity, wholeness, and fruitfulness in the greatest, most foundational relationship of life on God's earth.

Here's what's most important about the creation account of Adam and Eve. It far outstrips everything else you will learn from these chapters in Genesis. Without Genesis one and two we don't know what marriage *is*. If God doesn't *tell* us what marriage is we won't know - not ever. Our fallen minds will tell us marriage is about *companionship*, or *sexual fulfillment*, or *being in love*. And *none* of those things, nor all of them taken *together*, are God's primary concern in marriage. We desperately need to know what marriage *is* - the *meaning* of marriage - because if we don't, we'll put all our energy into our *own* meaning for our marriages. And if we do that, they will never stand. And I think the contemporary

church is living proof of that.

We're just going to start down this path of study today:

1) **MALENESS AND FEMALENESS IS TIED DISTINCTLY TO THE IMPRINT OF THE IMAGE OF GOD ON OUR BEINGS**

I had not noticed this as a very strong emphasis in the text until just recently. See if you catch it in our text from Genesis chapter one. You actually need to go back to Genesis 1:20 to get a running start at what I'm talking about:

Genesis 1:20-28 - "And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." [21] So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. [22] And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." [23] And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. [24] And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. [25] "And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. [26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Now, obviously there was male and female in creation before Adam and Eve were created. Without this, the command to species to **multiply** (22) would be meaningless. But the terms **male** and **female** are never used until **after** God's **image** is described (verse 26), and until **after** the **creation of man** (27).

So something is being **singled out** - something is being **highlighted** - about the nature of our God as it's revealed in the creation of this one part of the whole that's specifically said to be made "**in His image.**" And what's being highlighted is the fact that God's image can't be captured by either **maleness** or **femaleness** alone, but **both together** are needed to yield a more accurate picture of what our God is like - "**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them**"(1:27).

Notice also the two **phases** of the sequence of the creation of man - "**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them**"(1:27). Notice how in this one verse there is a transition from "**him**" to "**them**" in the description of the human creature. Even though Adam is created **first**, Genesis one anticipates the expanded account of Genesis two.

Adam is created first - **alone** - to reveal to everyone who would later read the creation account that God actually **demonstrated** the necessity of the creation of **Eve**. The aloneness of Adam in the beginning is meant to highlight the **incompleteness** of the creation of man **before** the woman came on the scene. The image of God isn't complete apart from both **maleness** and **femaleness**.

2) **THERE'S A VERY IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE TWO ACCOUNTS OF CREATION**

The two accounts are not a **problem**. They're a very specific **blessing**. The expanded account in Genesis chapter two gives a clearer understanding of how and why **male** and **female**, taken together, give the only accurate rendering of the image of God in mankind.

Genesis 2:15-24 - "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. [16] And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." [18] Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." [19] So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man

called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. [21] So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

[22] And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called **Woman**, because she was taken out of **Man**." [24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Why isn't Eve formed from the dust of the ground? I mean, she *is* a creature of dust, just as Adam. She will die and, as the Scriptures say, "*return to dust*." But why isn't she *directly* created from the dust of the ground? Does it really *matter* that she's literally taken *from* Adam? Why is the text so careful to give us these strange details? Wouldn't the whole account be easier to believe without this stuff about Adam's rib?

And my answer to that is this account is designed to (excuse the pun) literally *flesh out* the way in which the image of God is hinged to both *maleness* and *femaleness* in the creation account.

Consider how it works out. Adam is originally *one*. Then there is *plural*, but not in the same sense as there would have been had Eve been created out of the dust as Adam. The *two* are plural, but, as Adam shouted in wonder, Eve was still "*bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*"(23).

But there's more. Consider how there is both *sameness* and yet *differentiation*. This is very important in coming to terms with many of the moral issues of our day. Eve is not only *distinct* from Adam in the sense of being *another* being. She is also *different* from Adam in the sense of being *like* him - "*bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh*" - but still not the *same* as he.

Then we're told something else. God's plan is to bring these two back together again. They were *one* before they were *two*. Then, amazingly, in the covenant of marriage, the *two* will become *one* flesh again.

Why are we doing all this creational hair-splitting? It matters a great deal! Now we're ready to ask the important question. Given all this information about Adam and Eve - *one*, yet *plural* - *same*, yet *different* - *tell me, what Being in all the universe does that seem to describe?*

It's our God. So now we see what God is doing. God creates man male and female to *put something of Himself on display* in His creation. There's a purpose to genders that goes far beyond the fashion industry. It's deeper than the movies would lead you to believe. It's not an incidental part of the Creator's work that can be tinkered with or ignored. The sit coms and soap operas blaspheme this holy understanding. They all conspire to make it almost impossible for the next generation to think Biblically about what God is up to with genders in this world.

There's one more important point:

3) THE CREATION ACCOUNT OF MAN AS MALE AND FEMALE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD EXPOSES THE NATURE OF THE REBELLION AGAINST GOD IN OUR FALLEN WORLD

Let's just pretend for a minute. Imagine there *was* a revolt against the true, Creator God going on in this world. Imagine that through some cosmic Fall a rejection of God and His ways was actively taking place right in front of our eyes. What if there was some dark "spirit of the age" turning minds and hearts in an attempt to *erase* any fingerprint of God in His creation. Where might such a rebellion start? How might we *expect* it to manifest itself? No doubt, there would be many, many different ways. But what might we expect to see at the *heart* of a rebellion against this Creator?

The attack would start with the image of God. The attack would manifest itself at the very *cornerstone* of the Creator's handiwork. The war would break out against the God-given beauty of distinct *genders* in this world. Differences in gender would either be *erased* to whatever degree our society might allow, or genders would be at *war* over station and power. Men would be taught to *exploit* women in dominance and lust. Women would be encouraged to *compete* with men, out of a sheer desire to prove themselves just as selfish and fallen as they.

In fact, if any of this *were* true, you might see something like this happening right now in our world:

Romans 1:20-27 - "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.[24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. [26] For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."

How different this world is from the one pictured *before* the Fall. Adam immediately recognizes the appropriateness - the *divine rightness* - of the *woman* to complete his own being in the image of God. In his *unfallen* state Adam knows and inwardly embraces the Creator's design of the one who Jesus called Adam's "*wife*." God didn't *ask* Adam what kind of partner he wanted. Adam didn't *choose* from several designs. *God* creates Eve for Adam. It's all God's doing. It's totally God's say. This is *His* created order.

In fact, God gives the first bride away in the Bible - **Genesis 2:22-23** - "**So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."**