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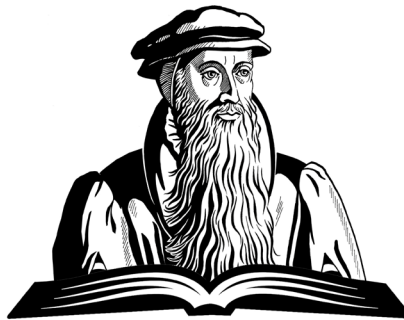
VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

Lecture #7

God's Creation of Man

Catechism Question 10



The John Knox Institute
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Lecture #7

God's Creation of Man

Question 10: *How did God create man?*

Answer: *God created man male and female, after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.*

In our previous lesson, we considered God's great work of creation. He made all things by the word of his power, in the space of six days, and all very good. He did this, as we saw, out of nothing. Well, in this lesson, we look more closely at a particular part of his creation—mankind; you and me. It may be helpful to notice that the *Catechism* follows the order of the Bible. Genesis 1:1 through chapter 2, verse 3 gives us a big picture of all of God's creation. In Genesis 2, verses 4 through 25, there is a zooming in, to focus more particularly upon the creation of the earth, and even more particularly upon man. These aren't two different creation accounts. Genesis chapter 1 is a general survey of God creating the whole universe, and Genesis chapter 2 focuses specifically upon how he created man.

So let's look at our Question, #10, "How did God create man?" Now, before we get to the Answer, we should note that the word here "man" is being used in a general sense. It is speaking of humankind, or humanity, or, as we sometimes say, mankind—that is, both males and females. Now, the Answer to our Question is, "God created man male and female, after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures."

One word that may be new to you is the word "dominion." It's a word that means to have lordship, or authority. This means that God made man with authority over the rest of the creation. Though man is a creature, yet God has given man authority over the rest of creation. It may be helpful to understand that the word "creatures" does not merely refer to things living. Sometimes when we hear the word "creature," we think only of animals or insects. However, the word itself simply means "something created." In other words, rocks are creatures. They aren't living creatures, but they are created, so they are non-living creatures. Planets and stars are creatures. They don't live, think, and feel, but they were created by God, and so they are creatures.

With these words then clear, let's move to the main points of our lesson. Today we have three. First, *Notice that Man Was Made to Reflect God.* Second, *Notice that Man Was Made with a Distinction by God.* And third, *Notice that Man Was Made to Serve God.*

So first, *Notice that Man Was Made to Reflect God.* The *Catechism* tells us that "God created

man...after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.” Notice the word “image.” God created man after *his own* image. Of course, this is what the Bible tells us. In Genesis 1, verse 26, we hear God say, “Let us make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Here, God is speaking with great majesty, as a King. This is why he speaks in the plural, “Let us.” Of course, as you’ve learned earlier, our one God is three persons. However, it seems that what is being emphasized here is his great Majesty.

So notice what this great and glorious King over the all the earth says, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The words “image” and “likeness” are synonyms. They are different words that mean essentially the same thing. Both words mean something that reflects something else, or resembles something else. So if you look in a mirror, you see your reflection, your likeness. If you see a picture of yourself, you see your image. So man was made to resemble God.

Before looking more particularly at how we are made in God’s image, let us not overlook the fact that God made man with a body and a soul. Notice in Genesis 2, and verse 7, “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.” There are two things to consider.

First, when God made the first man, Adam, he shaped him from the dust of the ground. Man comes from the earth. What a thought—that we were formed originally from the dust of the earth. Second, though God had formed Adam’s body from the earth, man was not alive until God gave him life by breathing into him. In other words, there are two parts to man. He has a physical body, and he has a spiritual or a reasonable soul. Both of these are what make up a human being—a body and a soul.

We actually see this at Christ’s death. His body was hanging upon the cross, and at the end of suffering on the cross, we read, in Luke 23, and verse 46, “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” And you’ll remember, there were two men that then took the body of Christ down and buried it in the tomb. So his human soul left his human body. This is what death is. It’s the separation of our soul from our body. When we’re alive, as God made us, our body and soul are united in a mysterious and yet true way. At death, our body and soul are separated. At the resurrection, our soul and body will be reunited.

So never forget that you have a real body, made by God, and a real soul. You’re not one or the other. Both of these are what you are. Your body is made by God and ought to be treated with dignity, as everyone else’s body. And your soul, which though you can’t see, is real, and needs to be cared for, and watched over, and tended to. Just as you care for your physical body, so you need to care for your spiritual soul, and this can only be done by God’s grace, through Jesus Christ.

Well, as we saw last time, all that God made is good. We should make this connection. Our physical bodies, as they are made by God, are good. We should not think upon our bodies as something evil in themselves. Nor should we think of the right use of our bodies, or the right enjoyment of the world God made, as if that’s wrong. When we see a beautiful sunset and we smile and are happy, we should thank God. He made us to enjoy his creation, and to do so to his glory. When we eat a delicious meal, we should do so with enjoyment and gratitude, and give thanks to God. When we’re sad, and our mom or our dad give us a hug, and we’re encouraged by them, we should thank God for that good expression of love. He made our bodies, and he made them to be used for his glory. It is, as Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 31, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

You see, the physical world is not the problem. Our enjoyment of good things in this world

is not the problem. It is when we use the world or our bodies contrary to God's commandment, or when we use the world or our bodies without honoring God. To enjoy God's creation without thanking God is wrong. To set up the world and our bodies as our main goal and focus—that's wrong. You see, to use God's creation, including our bodies, contrary to God's commandment is the problem. But to use our bodies in this world rightly is good and right, and is one way of honoring the Lord.

Well now, getting back to God's image, we should be careful. Saying that God made us after his image doesn't mean that we look like God physically. It's true, as Genesis shows us, that God made our physical bodies. But remember, God is a Spirit. He doesn't have a body like you and I have. So what does it mean to be made in God's image? The *Catechism* helps us. Notice, it says, "in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." These are things that God has in perfection. He is perfectly all-knowing. He is perfectly righteous. He is most holy. These are perfections of God. Yet, he made us to resemble him. He made us to be knowing, to be righteous, and holy creatures. We are to be creatures that think and understand. In doing so, we resemble God who understands. We are to be creatures who live righteously and according to what is good. And in doing so, we resemble God, who does what is right and good. We are to be creatures who are set apart from sin and profanity, loving what is good and pure. And in doing so, we resemble God, who is completely free of sin, and loves what is pure and good. This is how God made us.

The problem is that man turned from this and listened to Satan's lies. Instead of living by understanding the truth, man turned to live by a lie and deception. Instead of doing what was right, he did what was wrong. Instead of loving what is pure and hating what is evil, he embraced what is evil, and turned from what is pure. Man has done the exact opposite of what is good, and what he should have done.

This doesn't mean that man absolutely lost God's image, in his sin. It means that he abused God's image and corrupted God's image. This is the great wickedness of sin. Instead of living as a reflection of God, man has turned to distort God's reflection. Instead of showing the rest of creation what God is like, we corrupted God's likeness.

That men are made in God's image gives them tremendous dignity. Men and women are to be treated with honor and kindness. They aren't just random developments from apes, or other creatures. They aren't the random outcome of several processes throughout history. Humans were uniquely created by God to resemble and reflect him. Even the way we speak to other humans is to reflect this truth. Notice what James writes, in James 3, verses 8 through 10: "But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Though men have been marred and corrupted his image, they are still worthy to be treated with respect. So when we are tempted to be unkind or mean to others, we should think, This person is made after God's image. For God's sake, I will treat him with dignity and kindness.

Before moving to our second main point, notice that one part of Christ's work for his people is to renew this image in them. We see this in Ephesians 4, verses 23 and 24, Paul writes, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Notice also Colossians 3, verses 9 and 10, "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." When we put these two together, we see a few things.

One, God is renewing his people by renewing his image in them. When he converts a sinner

from his state of sinful rebellion and death, he begins a work renewing his own likeness and image in that person. The saved person begins to resemble God more, and to do so more fully, all by God's grace.

Two, notice how Paul speaks of the new man as "after God," and "after the image of him that created him," that is, according to or like that image. The image being renewed in the Christian is God's image. And so, the work of salvation, among other things that take place, is God restoring his image that was ruined by sin.

Finally, notice that this image is in righteousness and holiness, as Colossians 3 says, in knowledge. These are the three words that our Catechism uses, "after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." These are the ways in which God's image particularly shines forth in his people.

Now, second, *Notice that Man Was Made with a Distinction by God*. So we read in the *Catechism*, "God created man male and female." This should be obvious to us today. Everywhere we look, we can see men and women, boys and girls, and this is how God made mankind. Notice that both males (men and boys), and females (women and girls) are created by God as part of mankind. They all share in an essential dignity, as those who bear God's image. Males and females are truly and equally bearers of God's image. This means both men and women, boys and girls, are to be treated with honor and respect.

Now we do see that there are obvious differences. These differences are as God has determined, as he has appointed, as he has established. In other words, the differences aren't cultural; they aren't imaginary. There are some physical differences that are obvious to us. There are also some differences as to the relationships and roles that men and women have. We don't need to go deeply into this, however, we should see that these differences are established by God.

We don't choose to be male or female. We don't change ourselves to become male or female. If that's a thought, that's a sinful thought. It's a testimony of brokenness which only God can heal. God is the one who makes us male or female, with all of the physical, with all of the emotional, and with all of the relational differences that each one has. It's not better to be a man or a woman. Both are crowned with great dignity of bearing God's image.

However, this does not deny the important differences between men and women. God made men to be men, and he made women to be women. And when one tries to act like the other, they're denying the difference that God made. If men act like women are to act, they're disrupting the order of what God has established. And when women try to act like men are to act, they're disrupting that order.

If you wish, you can see some of these differences in the Bible itself. And so, you can note these passages and look at them later, and you'll see this very point: 1 Corinthians 11, verses 1 through 16; 1 Corinthians 14, verses 34 and 35; Ephesians 5, verses 22 through 32; 1 Timothy 2, verses 8 through 15; and 1 Timothy 3, verses 1 through 13.

And two important things to emphasize are these: first, both men and women are made after the image of God. This gives them an equal dignity and worth. There's no place for mistreating women or mistreating men. Such things are sinful.

But second, men and women are created with real differences of physical function and relational roles. You can see these in the verses just mentioned. These are not consequences of the fall. This is an important point. The differences are part of the fabric of God's creation. We see the foundation of this in Genesis 2, verses 18, and 21 through 22: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [suitable] for him...And the LORD God

caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

The man needed the woman. The woman was made to help the man. Additionally, it is worth noting that Adam needed a woman, Eve. Marriage is instituted by God at creation. The different roles, the different functions, the different physical realities are all before the fall. Marriage is a good thing. And yet notice, it's governed then by God. Marriage, if it's to be lawful, is only between one man and one woman. This is God's unique calling and provision. When this is disregarded in relationships, not only do those relationships and their families suffer, but churches suffer. Society falls apart. But where these things are lovingly and faithfully honored, relationships, families, churches, and society shine forth in the beauty of what God has established.

Well, third, and finally, *Notice that Man Was Made to Serve God*. We read that God created man “with dominion over the creatures.” We noted earlier that the word “dominion” means that one has authority. So why are we saying that man was made to serve God? Well, the reason is because of the nature of this dominion. Notice, it is “over the creatures.” God gave man authority over the rest of creation. We see this in Genesis 1, verse 26: “And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” God gave man authority over the whole earth.

Notice, he did not give man authority over himself to do whatever he wanted. He certainly did not give man authority over God. Man is under authority, that is, he is under God's authority. However, man is given authority over the rest of the earth. Which then means he is to use it rightly to God's glory. Man has a responsibility and a high calling to work and serve God with all creation.

Throughout the Bible, we should remember, authority is given in order to serve those under authority. We see this in marriage, in church, and in society. As one example, a husband has authority over his wife, as we see in Ephesians 5, verse 23: “For the husband is the head of the wife.” However, how is he to use that authority? Husbands are, as Paul writes in the same chapter, verse 25, to “love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Notice the husband's authority is to be used for his wife's good. This is exactly what Christ uses his authority for, as Paul indicates. Christ bears all authority, yet he uses it for the good of his beloved people and the glory of his Father. Well, this is how we are to use our dominion over creation. We're to use it well, to the good of others and the glory of God. Having dominion doesn't mean we should abuse animals, or treat God's creation carelessly. It means that we should oversee all things for the good of men and the glory of God. Well, this is a high privilege, and a high calling we have as God's image-bearers.

As we close, let me direct your thoughts to two things. First, consider well what great dignity God has placed, not only upon mankind in general, but upon you. You may be unknown to many in the world. You may be rich or poor. You may be well educated or not. But whatever your circumstances, you have been privileged to bear God's image. How unfortunate that many people today think and teach that men and women evolved from lesser animals. If we start believing that, it's no wonder if we start behaving like lesser animals. However, when we realize that we have been made to reflect God, that ought to lead us to carry ourselves with great dignity, and treat others with great dignity as well. Whether man or woman, boy or girl, born or unborn, sick or well, all of those different categories, that they bear the image of God, so we should honor them. You bear God's image. If that's the case, you have a calling to reflect that God whose image you bear.

So second, think clearly about the wickedness of sin, that we, who were made to bear God's image to his glory, should instead corrupt and tarnish that image to our own wicked delight, is inexcusable and damnable. We stand in need both of pardon and renewal. It is not a pardon that you or I can bring about. It's not a renewal that you or I can make happen. But praise God! He has sent Jesus Christ to pardon and renew us. In doing so, he makes all who trust in him to bear more clearly the great and glorious image of God, and all to his praise. You see, what we have corrupted, God, by his grace, restores through Jesus Christ. And so, look to Jesus Christ, and as you trust in him and are pardoned, may you, as well, know his restoring of his glorious image in you, that you may have the privilege of reflecting God more beautifully now and forever.