

Genesis 1:26, 27

The Meaning Of Life

Carrol and Ostlie's, \$150.00 *An Introduction to Modern Astrophysics*, The Big Orange Book, contains this answer to the question, "Why are we here?"

"We are here because, more than ten billion years ago, the universe borrowed energy from the vacuum to create vast amounts of matter and antimatter in nearly equal numbers. Most of it annihilated and filled the universe with photons. Less than one part per billion survived to form protons and neutrons, and then the hydrogen and helium that makes up most everything there is.

Some of this hydrogen and helium collapsed to make the first generation of massive stars, which produced the first batch of heavy elements in their central nuclear fires. These stars exploded and enriched the interstellar clouds that would form the next generation of stars.

Finally, about five billion years ago, one particular cloud in one particular galaxy collapsed to form our Sun and its planetary system. Life arose on the third planet, based on the hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and other elements found in the protostellar cloud.

The development of life transformed Earth's atmosphere and allowed small furry mammals to take center stage.

Primitive men and women evolved and moved out of Africa to conquer the world with their new knowledge of tools, language, and agriculture. After raising food on the land, your ancestors, your parents, and then you consumed this food and breathed the air. Your own body is a collection of the atoms that were created billions of years earlier in the interior of stars, the fraction of a fraction of a percent of normal matter that escaped annihilation in the first microsecond of the universe."

Kind of gives you that feel warm and fuzzy feeling, doesn't it?

Your primitive ancestors evolved from furry mammals that came about because life just arose on the planet by chance.

What I want us to do this morning is to compare that purely materialistic explanation of why we're here with the very different answer we find in the Bible.

There can be no doubt about the focal point of the Bible. The Bible is the story of humanity. Human beings are the crown of creation. The scriptures are the story of people in rebellion against God, but also as the object of God's special love and care.

Let's begin this morning by turning to Genesis 1

God's whole plan of creation had a kingdom as its goal. God created people to rule on earth. As the crown of creation, humanity was to have complete authority over everything on the earth.

Later on sin brought spiritual ruin to Adam and his descendants, but God's plan for mankind to rule the earth continued, and He eventually sent His only begotten Son to earth.

Actually you find the first of hundreds of prophecies about God's Son in Genesis 3 right after Adam sinned.

Although the first Adam failed God, Jesus, who is called the last Adam, didn't fail. The first Adam chose to go his own way - to walk in independence. His choice was sin and it resulted in separation from God. Because of the fall Adam and his descendants couldn't rule the earth as God had originally intended.

But the Bible tells us the last Adam will someday return to rule the earth and his descendants will rule with him.

As other prophecies were given they shed more and more light on the purpose God had for the coming of Jesus Christ.

In Isaiah 9:6,7 we read, *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The government that Isaiah was talking about was the government that God had planned in the very beginning and for which He had created Adam, but Adam

forfeited his right to rule because of sin. The world is longing for peace. According to the Bible it's not until Jesus returns to earth that the world will experience the peace that was forfeited in Eden.

Now, we're very aware of the way the world is at this time. We're often painfully aware of the effects of the fall. But what was the original state of Adam and Eve? How did they come to be on this earth and what was in the mind of God as He created them?

Both Genesis chapters 1 and 2 describe the origin of human beings. One of the main attacks of critics of the scriptures has been the fact that the Bible gives these two creation accounts.

Actually, the two creation stories compliment one another. The second one in chapter 2 expands upon the first one in chapter 1.

In chapter 1 we're told that it was God's purpose to create man and women and in chapter 2 He gives us the procedure.

I. All The Persons Of The Godhead Were Active In The Creation Of Man

Read verse 26

God began this process of creating this one who was to be the ruler of all creation by making one of the most unique statements in this entire creation narrative.

We've already seen that the Hebrew word for "God" in Genesis 1 is the word *elohim*. An *im* ending in Hebrew signifies a plural word and a plural in Hebrew refers to 3 or more.

Some people have taught that the plurality of *elohim* proves that there is a trinity made up of 3 persons. Actually the Hebrew language uses plurals many times when speaking of only one.

There are plurals of majesty and fullness.

And so the fact that *elohim* is plural is no proof in and of itself that there is any such thing as a trinity.

But now in this verse, as God prepares to create a human being, the Bible lets us know that that plural noun “God” is in a real sense plural.

God says “*Let US make man.*”

If this wasn’t a divine council, held between the members of the trinity, then the question is, who was God talking to when He said those words?

Now remember, this is the very beginning. This is day 6 of the existence of time so you don’t have a whole lot of options.

Notice 2 things. First of all, whoever God is conversing with is going to take part in this creation process. He says let “us make.” He didn’t say “hang out here and watch me make,” he said, “let us make.”

And then 2nd of all, whoever this is must be someone who’s also in the image of God because God is saying, *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.*

The most common explanation that people have come up with is that God was addressing the angels. Of course, the reason that is the most common, is because there wasn’t any body else around to address.

One of the problems with seeing this as God talking to the angels is that angels don’t create.

There are 3 instances in Genesis 1 where its specifically said that God created something. He created the heavens and the earth; matter and space. Then He created life. Life can’t merely be formed from existing materials. It must be creation. And then he created man. A human being with intellect and God conscienceness had to be created.

And so here we have God speaking to a co-creator. Angels are not creators. In fact, nowhere in the Bible do we read about God conferring with angels. God always acts independently without angelic counsel.

Not only that but nowhere in the Bible does it say that man is made in the image of angels.

So was this co-creator in whose image human beings were made?

Look with me at the New Testament book of **Colossians Chapter 1, page 1045**

Read verse 14 This shows us that the subject of these verses is Jesus.

Now look at what it says about Jesus. **Read verse 15**

He is the first born over all creation. Not the “first created” (Jesus wasn’t created), but the firstborn in the Jewish sense. The firstborn always had the preeminence.

Jesus Christ is the one who has preeminence over all creation.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. John 1:18

For... **Read verse 16**

The creator of all things is Jesus Christ.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him... John 1:10

This world and all that is in it is a creation of Jesus Christ. And it’s all been made through Him and for Him.

Now we don’t know the specifics until we read the New Testament. But when we do it’s obvious that the godhead consists of three distinct persons all of one substance, of one nature, called God.

It isn’t that there are 3 gods. There’s only one God. It isn’t that there is one person who sometimes shows himself as the Father and other times as the Son or the Spirit.

John 1:1 says *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.*

You say how could the Word be with God and be God at the same time?

I don’t know. Of course, I don’t know how God created the heavens and the earth either. I don’t know how Jesus walked on water and rose from the dead.

But I do know that if we only believed what we could logically explain using our puny little brains and our finite reasoning powers we wouldn't believe much about the Bible. The Bible is a supernatural book about a supernatural God. God, whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways, can't be explained by human logic.

Instead what we need to do is read the Bible correctly and then believe it as truth.

There is no question in my mind that when God said, *Let Us make man in Our image* that this was a divine council held between the members of the Godhead.

Now go back to Genesis 1

I. All The Persons Of The Godhead Were Active In The Creation Of Man

II. We Are A Reelection Of God's Image And God's Likeness

Read verse 27

Elohim said, "Let us (plural) make man in Our image (singular) after our likeness (singular).

Then verse 27, so *elohim* created (3rd person singular of *bara*) man in His (singular) image, in the image of God He created him

God, the 3 in 1 and 1 in 3, created man in His own image.

Now that brings us to a very important question that I don't know if we'll be able to answer completely this side of eternity, but one that strikes at the heart of the question, "Why are we here?"

That question is, "What does it mean that God created man in His own image?"

This phrase, "the image of God" is as important as anything in the Bible because people today can no longer answer the crucial question, "Who am I?"

Think about the fundamental questions that burden us. "Who am I? What is my purpose for being here? Is there any right and wrong?"

See, if we're all just here by chance then there is no answer to those questions. If "your own body is a collection of the atoms that were created billions of years earlier in the interior of stars," but you have no soul or spirit then how do you distinguish yourself from the rest of the material world you live in?

This past Tuesday afternoon I was repairing a piece of office furniture so I turned Fox News on so I could listen while I worked. It was one brutal crime after another. Finally I just turned it off.

What's going on with people?

There's a number of factors that we could point to but think about this major component. People are in turmoil because they have been taught that they are nothing more than animals. And in fact animals are nothing more than accidents that came about by some freak chance process.

As those ancient philosophers Crosby, Stills, and Nash sang in their song "Woodstock," *We are stardust, we are golden, We are ten billion year old carbon.*

This generation has no identity, no basis for right and wrong, no direction to move toward.

But through the gloom and the despair of people striving to find meaning in a seemingly meaningless world, shines the words of Genesis 1 *So God created man in His own image.*

The triune God, who is personal has created us. Here's where we have to start when we're looking for answers to why we're here and what life is about.

So then what does it really mean to say that God created man in His own image? Actually it implies several things.

1. *It means that human beings possess the attributes of personality.* To have personality, there must be knowledge, feelings (including religious feelings) and will. God has these and so do we. Animals are very different. An animal doesn't reason, it only reacts. It doesn't create, it only acts according to habit patterns. It doesn't love it's mate, it only reproduces. It doesn't worship. Fido doesn't fold his paws over his bowl and give thanks for his Iams. Personality is something that links man to God, but it doesn't link either man or God to the rest of creation.

2. *A second element that is involved in man's being created in the image of God is morality.* Now remember all of these things have been distorted and perverted through sin but to one degree or another they all exist.

People have a conscience. We discern good and evil. Atheists and materialistic evolutionists still believe in right and wrong. But, if we just all happened to be here then our lives only have meaning and purpose to the extent that we find meaning and purpose through our experiences.

If man doesn't have a soul and there's no God and no life after this one then the only thing that matters is the enjoyment that we can grab out of our few short fleeting years on earth.

Now take this to its logical end. Who's to say that Jeffrey Dahmer was wrong in doing what he did? If he enjoyed killing people then why wasn't it right for him? It may not be right for you but who's to say it wasn't right for him?

Don't hunters shoot deer and duck and rabbits for sport, not just for food?

What makes the difference? What gives human life its unique value? What determines morality? No matter how much people try to deny it we've been created in the image of God and that involves morality.

3. *The 3rd element involved in man's being made in God's image is spirituality.* We are made for communication and relationship with God who is spirit.

Although we share a body with other forms of life like plants and trees and a soul and body with animals, only we possess a spirit.

It's on the level of the spirit that man is aware of God and has a relationship with God.

This is the thing that gives us true purpose and true worth. It's more than just the fact that we're God's creation. It's the fact that we're created in His image.

God loves people in a way that He does not, and cannot, love the rest of creation.

He intimately cares for us, He identifies with us in Christ, He grieves for us. He's intervened in history to make it possible for us to become all that He intended us to be.

You can get some idea of this special relationship by studying the story of Adam and Eve.

Eve was made in the image of Adam. So then even though she was different, Adam saw himself in her and loved her as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. He loved her as his companion and corresponding member in the universe.

It's not wrong to say that people are to God as Eve was to Adam. Human beings are God's unique and valued companions. Believers are said to be the bride of Christ. The last Adam, Jesus Christ, looks into His bride and sees Himself because we are created in God's image.

4. And then there is a 4th element in the concept of the image and likeness of God that involves the physical body.

See even though God is Spirit, He designed and formed our physical bodies to enable them to function physically in ways in which He Himself can function even without a body. In the Bible we find that God can see, hear, smell, touch and speak.

Beyond that, wherever He has appeared visibly to people, God has done so in the form of a human body. So there is something about the human body which is uniquely appropriate to God's manifestation of himself.

Now, of course, God planned that in the fullness of time He would step into this world. In that day, He would prepare a human body for His Son.

And it would be made in the likeness of men, just as the first man had been made in the likeness of God.

Both in body and in spirit, Jesus Christ was the image of God. Hebrews 1:3 says Jesus *is the brightness of God's glory and the express image* (the Greek uses the word *eikon*) *of His person*. Col. 1:15 says He's *the image of the invisible God*.

I don't think it's going too far to say that God made man in the image of that body which He would himself one day assume. In this sense, at least, it is true that physically as well as spiritually that we are both made and created in the image of God.

And so in Genesis 1 we find the members of the godhead purposing to make this unique one called man.

I. All The Persons Of The Godhead Were Active In The Creation Of Man

II. We Are A Reelection Of God's Image And God's Likeness

III. We are Creations Of God, Not Chance Products Of Impersonal Forces

Turn to Genesis 2 Page 4 Here we're going to see the procedure God used in his creation. **Read 2:7**

A little boy asked his mother "Mom is it true that we come from dust and return to dust." His Mom said, "Why yes, it is." The little boy got all excited and he said "Come on then and look under my bed - someone's either coming or going!"

The Bible tells us that God used "the dust of the ground" to make to make the first human being. And yet the word used doesn't merely refer to dry earth. In the 1520's Martin Luther translated the Bible into German because the Catholic Church would only allow Latin and no one spoke Latin. He used the word *erdenkloss*, "lump of earth" and that's probably as good a translation as any.

God used the elements of the ground to mold and form, the body of Adam. Looking at a rock, or a lump of earth, and comparing it with human flesh you'd think that they were composed of totally different substances. And yet, we know the same elements that make up the earth also make up our human bodies.

Then God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. Life can only come from life. The living God is the only self-existent being, so it ultimately must come from Him.

Obviously the writer of Genesis was trying to stress the unique relationship of human life to God's life and so he tells us that God did something different that He did with animals - He breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living being or a living soul.

I Corinthians 15:45 *The first man Adam became a living being.*

It doesn't matter where you go; Old Testament, New Testament, the words of Christ, the writings of the apostles, the biblical testimony is all the same.

Adam was the first man. There was no human existence prior to Adam. Adam received his life, his consciousness, his personality directly from God. Adam was a real literal human being, the ancestor of us all, and our purpose, destiny and meaning in life are all rooted in the fact that man is a creation of God.

Well if God created man fully developed what about all the ape-men and fossils that have been found? Doesn't modern paleontology disprove the idea that man was fully developed at the first? Hasn't man evolved from lower forms of life and don't we have the proof?

I'm sure most of us here have seen drawings of ape like men. Whether in a museum or in a text book we've been shown what man supposedly was at one time. Everyone from the publishers of Time-Life books to the Smithsonian has artists renderings of ape-like men, men in transition, not quite human and not quite apes.

Remember one thing when you look at those models and drawings. Those are all people's ideas of what these creatures supposedly looked like.

There is no way in the world that anyone can tell the shape of the flesh or the extent of the hair covering by looking at a small piece of a skull or a fragment of bone.

Those pictures are artists' conceptions. You can take any modern skull with a bit of sloping forehead and draw an apelike face covered with hair to fit around it and presto-changeo you have an ape man.

You say - "Oh, there's got to be more to it than that."
Listen to some of these great scientific discoveries of the past.

1. Hesperopithecus (Nebraska Man) was discovered by Harold Cook. Hesperopithecus was a whole man built around one tooth.

America's greatest fossil expert of the day Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn wrote, "What shall we do with the Nebraska tooth? Shall we destroy it because it jars our long preconceived notion that the family of manlike apes never reached the western world? Or shall we continue our excavations, difficult and baffling as they are, in the confident hope, inspired by the admonition of Job, that if we keep speaking to the earth we shall in time hear a more audible and distinct reply?"

Eventually Osborn changed his view when it became obvious that Nebraska man was the tooth from wild pig.

Wait it gets better.

2. Eoanthropus Dawsoni (Dawson's Dawn Man) Piltdown Man

Piltdown Man was a skull found in Piltdown, Sussex in a gravel pit by a guy named Dawson. It was reported to be 500,000 years old and Piltdown man was used in science text books for 40 years.

The reason it's not used anymore is because it was finally discovered that Dawson had put the skull of a man together with the jaw of an ape, added a couple of filed down teeth colored with bicromate of potash.

Down went Pilt Down man.

3. Next is Pithecanthropus Erectus (upright ape-man) - Java Man.

Eugene Dubois was convinced he was going to find the "missing link." On the island of Java, he found a thigh-bone, which to all intents and purposes was like that of modern humans. About a year earlier in the same location he had found a large skull-cap, and later three teeth. These were not necessarily from the same individual: the skullcap and the leg-bone were about 50 feet apart.

In the end Dubois tenaciously clung to his findings even though most of his calculations were shown to be seriously flawed. "Pithecanthropus was not a man, but a gigantic genus allied to the gibbons ... I still believe, now more firmly than ever, that the Pithecanthropus of Trinil is the real "missing link."

4. More recently had the Australopithecus (Ape of the south) fossils found in South Africa. They were supposedly pre-men. Anthropologist Richard Leakey said that Australopithecus wasn't human at all. He was "a long armed, short legged, knuckle-walker." He was an extinct ape with an ape sized brain but with teeth that were somewhat human like because of his particular diet.

There's work being done in what's called the Middle Awash in Ethiopia today. It's a treasure trove of fossils. Tim White, a biologist at the University of California, Berkeley claimed to find 4.4-million-year-old hominid fossils in this same spot where "Lucy" was found in 1970.

According to National Geographic News, "In addition to the ancient hominids, the site includes fossils of more modern early-human species. There are also thousands of fossils of animals, such as monkeys, pigs, birds, rodents, and even hyenas and big cats."

This "missing links" of Darwin's day are still missing today. There have been fossils of true human beings excavated and there have been fossils of apes. What there hasn't been is fossils of anything in between and there never will be because God created man an intelligent, fully developed human being, made in the image of God.

You know what makes all this so intensely practical? Man's two greatest needs are the same today as they always have been. Everyone of us have these same two felt needs.

We want to be loved and we want a true purpose in life.

Humanity is crying out for love and for purpose.

God made man in His own image. God loves us beyond anything else in His creation because we're a reflection of Him. The cross of Christ is proof positive of God's unconditional love.

And we have purpose in life. Our purpose is to glorify and commune with God. Here we are made in the image of God and able to communicate with God.

What fools we are, when we look every other place for love and for purpose and what we need is right on the very first pages of the Bible itself. Nothing else will give your life meaning, freedom, dignity and purpose.