

Series: God & Our Culture #1506

Title: Genesis 1.27, 2.7

Dignity and Humility

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We have put the Bible (God's Word) up against biological evolution (men and women's word) concerning the origin of human life and thus far, primarily from Genesis chapter 1, we have learned that God's Word prevails. God accounts for human origin by describing His creation of man and of woman, clearly saying that we are made in the image of God. Animals are not made in God's image, only human beings are. Therefore, we did not evolve from animals. We are the pinnacle of God's creation, unique among all the living creatures God has made.

This is what the properly famous theologian John Calvin called "incomparably the highest nobility (Genesis, 111)." And what the lesser known theologian H.C. Leupold called "dignity (*Exposition of Genesis*, 74)." Calvin: "incomparably the highest nobility." Leupold: "dignity." Oh, it would be very easy for us to read Genesis 1.27 and think we are really something very special. And, *we are!* We are the prized possession of God's creation. We are made in the image of God. This is truth that we should marvel at and never forget. We are of high nobility and dignity. And we will see more on this as we proceed, for example how we differ from the animals. (Animals that are also the creation of God.).

However, this cannot be used to justify our pride, the sin that all of us possess. In order to see how God humbles us, let's contrast Genesis 1, verse 27 to the verse we come to today, Genesis 2, verse 7. I remind you that Genesis 1.27 says, "**God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**" And now Genesis 2.7, which says, "**Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**"

Knowing of our proclivity for pride, built into the second chapter of Genesis is a statement that brings us low: "**Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground...**" We are...dust! Oh yes! Dust. How about that? All of us are simultaneously made in the image of God *and* formed from the dust of the ground. I quote H.C. Leupold again, this is a "strange mixture of dignity and lowliness (74)." Indeed, man is a strange mixture of dignity and lowliness. How true.

Calvin is even stronger, when he writes about Genesis 1.27 in light of Genesis 2.7. I am quoting John Calvin, "Let foolish men now go and boast of the excellency of their nature!...The body of Adam is formed of clay and destitute of sense; to the end that no one should exult beyond measure in his flesh. He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility (111)." Unquote. Calvin. He always knows how to be direct in tearing down the pride of man. "He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility."

Yes, we are made in the image of God, *but* that should not make us prideful, because God formed us out of the dust of the ground. Let me put it to you this way: we are mere creatures, God is the Creator! We are the pinnacle of His creation, but we are still part of the creation!

With that as a way to bridge us from Genesis chapter 1 to Genesis chapter 2, I want to inform you or remind you that Genesis 1 and 2 are not two separate creations. Rather, here is what God does. He gives us an overview of His creation in Genesis 1, and in Genesis 2 the detail of how He made man and woman. Genesis 1 overview. Genesis 2 detail. Or, Genesis 1 the big picture. Genesis 2 the small picture. These are *complimentary* not *contradictory* creation narratives. If you will take time to read Genesis 1 and 2 together, you will see exactly what I mean. I point this out now because sometimes people do not understand this either out of ignorance or by intent – to fiddle with the truth of what the Bible says. But again, these are *complimentary* not *contradictory* creation narratives.

We are not completely done with Genesis 1 concerning evolution, and definitely not done with it in our series, God and Our Culture, but let's dig into Genesis 2 and verse 7 and the creation of man, that which also applies to woman. And what we will do is to take apart this verse and then put it back together, so

that we understand how it works. So, let's begin with this, "Then the Lord God formed man..." We affirm it is still *God* who forms man. God is at work here. And what does this word "formed" mean?

The Hebrew word, translated in English, as "formed" means to form or to fashion, as a potter would form or fashion his or her clay. Interestingly, the same word for formed in Genesis 2.7 is the word translated "potter" in Jeremiah chapter 18. Not for long, but just for a moment let me read to you a famous passage from Jeremiah chapter 18, verses 1-6. When I read the word "potter" that is this same word "formed" in Genesis 2. I am reading now in the Old Testament Book of Jeremiah at chapter 18, verses 1-6. **"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, '2 'Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will announce My words to you.' 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. 4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.**

5 Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, 6 'Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?' declares the Lord. 'Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.'"

The mental picture God gives us of how He forms Israel, as a potter does the clay, is very helpful when we go back to our text, Genesis 2.7, and the creation of man. Imagine that potter on the wheel, molding that wet clay just the way he wants it. This is the way God formed the first man. God uses His perfect skill, and paying careful attention, He forms man. In Genesis God forms man and in Jeremiah God forms a nation. He forms both as a potter will the clay.

I cannot help but to also read to you Psalm chapter 139, verses 14-16. The Psalmist David writes about the tender potter's care God gives to our creation. Psalm 139. **"14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; 16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in Your book were all written the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them."** (Psalm 139, verses 14-16.) Here again we learn that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God is the potter and we are the clay. And in Genesis God reveals Himself as the potter who formed the clay (Adam).

Verse 2 of Genesis 1 continues, "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground..." What does this word "dust" mean? For this we will check-in with our Dutch Bible scholar Dr. Aalders. He writes, "It means any given material or substance broken down to its basic elements or parts...The body of man is entirely built up of basic substances similar to those found in the earth (*Genesis Volume 85*)." End quote. Isn't that something? Our bodies are made up of substances similar to those found in the earth. As I said earlier, this will humble us!

Almost everyone knows, even those who ignore and reject the Bible, most everyone knows the name of the first man was Adam. But did you know that Adam's name comes from the Hebrew word meaning earth? Man was made from the dust of the ground, man was made from the earth, and therefore his name means *earth*. Adam.

We are moving right along in taking apart the pieces of Genesis 2.7 and looking into the meaning of each one. Admittedly, we are doing this with a fast pace. Of course much more can be said. And up next we do want to spend more time on this: God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." This is an essential part of Genesis and understanding how God's Word stands in sharp contrast to evolution. This is also a fascinating picture of the love of God for men and women. This again tells us how valuable we are to the Lord.

And so, let's dig in with the time we have remaining. And I just want to remind you of this. God has life in Himself and God gives life to the man and the woman. Remember John 5, verse 26. Jesus says, "The Father has life in Himself." And then here, in Genesis 2, we find God breathing life into the man whom He has made. The text says God, "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life..."

This is a beautiful picture and next time we will see what this means. I hope that you are benefiting from this study. If so, tells others and have them join us next time because God Is. ---END---