

Genesis 1:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And 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 fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Analysis

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the ... This verse is part of the creation account that establishes God's sovereign power and purposeful design. The structured pattern of the seven days reveals divine order, intentionality, and progressive development from formless void to a world prepared for human habitation.

The recurring phrases "And God said," "and it was so," "And God saw that it was good" create a liturgical rhythm emphasizing:

1. creation by divine decree
2. immediate fulfillment of God's word,
3. divine evaluation of creation's goodness.

This pattern refutes both polytheistic chaos-and-conflict creation myths and modern materialistic chance-based origins.

Each stage builds toward the climax of human creation in God's image. The theological themes include divine transcendence and immanence, purposeful design, creation's inherent goodness, and humanity's unique role as God's image-bearers and stewards. The creation account provides the foundation for

understanding work and rest (Sabbath), male and female relationships (marriage), human dominion (stewardship), and moral accountability to the Creator. These opening chapters establish the worldview framework for all subsequent biblical revelation.

Historical Context

Genesis 1 stands in stark contrast to ancient Near Eastern creation accounts like the Babylonian Enuma Elish, Egyptian creation myths, and Ugaritic texts. While these portrayed creation resulting from conflicts between deities or sexual generation of gods, Genesis presents a sovereign monotheistic God who creates effortlessly by divine decree. This would have been revolutionary to ancient readers accustomed to polytheistic cosmogonies.

The Hebrew text's literary structure (seven days, recurring formulas) suggests careful composition as theological proclamation rather than primitive mythology. Archaeological discoveries of creation tablets from Mesopotamia (2000-1500 BCE) reveal that Genesis addresses similar questions but provides radically different answers about the nature of God, humanity, and the cosmos. The absence of theogony (origin of gods) and theomachy (conflict between gods) distinguishes Genesis from its ancient Near Eastern context.

For Israelites emerging from Egyptian bondage or later facing Babylonian captivity, this truth that Yahweh created everything would have been profoundly liberating and countercultural. The gods of Egypt and Babylon were mere creations, not creators. Genesis 1 establishes that Israel's God alone is supreme, rendering pagan deities powerless and their worship futile.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does understanding this verse shape our doctrine of humanity, sin, or salvation?
2. How should this truth about Sabbath Rest shape our daily decisions and priorities?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

קֹדְמוֹתָנֶה	בְּצָלָם	נוּ	אֲדֹם	נָשָׁה	הִי	אֱמֹר
said	And God	Let us make	man	in our image	after our likeness	
H559	H430	H6213	H120	H6754	H1823	
וְיִרְדֶּה	בְּדִין	תְּ	בְּיִם	בְּנִי	וְרַבְעָה	הַשְׁמָן
and let them have dominion	over the fish	of the sea	and over the fowl	of the air		
H7287	H1710	H3220	H5775	H8064		
וְבָבְהַמָּה	וְבָכָל	בְּאָרֶץ	וְבָכָל			
and over the cattle	H3605	and over all the earth	H3605			
H929		H776				
בְּרַבְעָה	עַל	בְּרַמְתִּשׁ	בְּאָרֶץ			
and over every creeping thing	H7431	that creepeth	H5921	and over all the earth		
		H7430		H776		

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:10 (Parallel theme): And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Ephesians 4:24 (References God): And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Genesis 3:22 (References God): And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Psalms 100:3 (References God): Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Genesis 5:1 (References God): This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

2 Corinthians 3:18 (Parallel theme): But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

James 3:9 (References God): Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

Isaiah 64:8 (Parallel theme): But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Colossians 1:15 (References God): Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

1 Corinthians 11:7 (References God): For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.