**The Image of God – Part I**

Having spent six Sundays covering a range of important topics under the heading, ‘Freed from the Law’, we’ll now turn to the topic, ‘The Image of God’ for several weeks, which we will often more fully call, ‘the image and likeness of God’. First, we will set a foundation for understanding what the Bible means – what God intended to reveal – with the words ‘image and likeness of God’. This is what God first revealed in Genesis 1:26, 27. Secondly, we will see how ‘the image and likeness of God’ is continued as a theme in the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. And thirdly, we will see how ‘the image and likeness of God’ is essential to how God carried out our salvation, and how ‘the image and likeness of God’ is the basis for everything about the unfathomable riches that we have in Christ (Ephesians 3:1-8).

Genesis chapter 1 begins with the summary statement that God created the heavens and the earth. From there, Genesis chapter 1 continues, until Genesis 1:23, to set forth the creation from the first day until the fifth day. With Genesis 1:24, the sixth day of creation is set forth with special attention to the creation of mankind – human beings. We will present Genesis 1:24-31, the sixth day of creation, in its entirety, in order to provide the context for verses 26 and 27, which lays a foundation for everything else the Bible teaches about what God intended and designed and revealed regarding ‘the image and likeness of God’ as an overarching and absolutely essential theme in the Bible, from Genesis chapter 1 to Revelation chapter 22!

Genesis 1:24-31 (NASU)

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. 25 God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

**26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** 28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." 29 Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; 30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. 31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

The image and likeness of God in mankind is observed in Genesis chapter 1 and throughout Scripture by these principles:

* What is shown of mankind in Scripture to be similar in character to God is ‘the image and likeness of God’. We will see that there are points at which God will be shown to be similar in character to mankind in both the physical and spiritual aspects of mankind.
* What is confirmed in Scripture as being unique and different in the character of God contrasts with mankind having been made in the image of God.
* Creation in ‘the image and likeness of God’ refers to the original state of creation.
* After the fall (Genesis chapter 3), the image and likeness of God remains in man, but ismarred and corrupted.
* That image and likeness of God, though marred and corrupted, remains, so respect the remaining image and likeness.
* God has purposely made both time-based and eternal outcomes of having made mankind in His image and likeness, for the salvation of mankind, and for us in the body of Christ, ***as foundational principles for our unfathomable riches in Christ***.

These will be explained in more detail, with Scriptural confirmation, in the weeks to come. There are a number of profound observations of Genesis 1:26 and 27, and the many related Bible passages, that shed light on the several aspects of how mankind was created in the image and likeness of God:

* It is a *personal* image and likeness (Genesis 1:26; 2:19-23)
* It is a *spiritual* image and likeness (Genesis 1:26; 1 Corinthians 15:45)
* It is a *moral* image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-3:24; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9-10)
* It is an *interpersonal* image and likeness (Genesis 1:26; 1 John 1:3)
* It is an *authority* image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-2:25)
* It is a *creative* image and likeness (Genesis 1:1-2:25; Exodus 25:8,9)

There is much more that will be brought to light regarding mankind having been made in the image and likeness of God, and we will bring those forward next Sunday. Meanwhile, we would do well to point out that the ways in which mankind differs from God include these:

* *God is* *not physical* (except as Jesus Christ was born later in time as a human, but remained deity), and as God voluntarily appears in physical form from time to time (to Adam and Eve, the angel of the Lord, the burning bush, etc.).
* *God is* *eternally righteous* by His very character, but man was initially created innocent.
* Mankind was created in the context of a time based universe, but *God is not subject to time*, which is basic to this creation.
* *God is infinite in His character*, but mankind is finite.

God’s purposes for doing all these things and in the ways in which God did and does them will become apparent in the weeks ahead.