



TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

April 2022

TELL ME ABOUT MANKIND'S SPECIAL PLACE IN GOD'S CREATION

Like every form of vegetation, every fish, every mountain, and every sea, humans were created by the God of heaven. And, just as those living and non-living things noted above will not be in existence forever, so the bodies of humans are temporary, too.

So, mankind does have some things in common with other portions of our world. There is, however, a line drawn in the sand, so to speak, between men and non-human beings, as well as non-human things. The Bible makes it plain that mankind is unique, holding a special place in God's creation. In what ways?

The Psalmist said, “*When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? . . . and You have crowned him with glory and honor*” (Psalm 8:3-5). The Lord has crowned humans with glory and honor, setting us apart from the rest of His creation.

It also is written, “*You have made him (man, rdc) to have dominion over the works of Your hands: You have put all things under his feet*” (Psalm 8:6). That reminds us of what God Himself said in the beginning to the man and woman whom He created: “. . . *have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth*” (Genesis 1:28). Thus, we see that mankind is lower than the Creator, but above the animals.

In all of God's creation, only humans are made in the image of God. Before Jehovah created the first man and woman, He said something that He did not say about the sun, trees, or goats: “*Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness' . . . So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them*” (Genesis 1:26,27). In the book of James, we learn that one of the reasons it is wrong to curse our fellow man is we all “*have been made in the similitude of God*” (James 3:9).

If you are looking for a Bible explanation of what it means to be made “in the image of God,” I do not think you will find it. There are, however, some things which distinguish humans from the critters and beasts of the world. Just as the God of heaven is eternal

(Psalm 90:2), so humans have an eternal aspect — we have a soul that will live forever (Matthew 10:28; 25:46). Animals do not.

While we know that our intellect cannot compare to God's because “*His understanding is infinite*” (Psalm 147:5), yet man's mental capacities are superior to that of all other living things. Yes, it is possible for a chimpanzee to ride in a space ship to outer space, but he is not capable of designing it like humans can. With our unique minds, God calls on us to understand His revealed will (Ephesians 5:17), something that animals cannot do.

One of God's traits is His holiness (Revelation 4:8). The Creator calls on humans to be holy, too (1 Peter 1:15). He has no such expectation for animals. It is possible to train some animals to act in a certain way, but animals have no concept of morality: they have no ability to identify and discern between what is right and wrong. Humans, however, do have a concept of morality, and God calls on us to abhor what is evil and cleave to that which is good (Romans 12:9).

Something else unique about humanity is our responsibility to serve the Lord. Each of us is expected to “*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (Hebrews 12:28). What about how we treat our fellow man? The Lord calls on humans to treat one another like we would want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). There certainly is no such expectation for animals. Each human will be held accountable for his behavior, as one day we all will be judged by the Lord (Acts 17:30,31). In contrast, there will be no judgment day for puppy dogs and kitty cats.

Every man and woman has the opportunity to experience the joy of salvation from sin which is offered to us by the love, mercy, and grace of God (Ephesians 2:4,5). Saved people are called “children of God” (1 John 3:1), and we are depicted as “married to” the Lord (Romans 7:4). Salvation, child-of-God status, and spiritual marriage to Him are unique to mankind. How blessed we are!

We did not ask to come into this world. Yet, here we are. Let us recognize our special place and use all that we have to glorify and serve our amazing Creator.

-- Roger D. Campbell

A WIFE'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

By our human way of thinking, things that are lower on a list are usually considered to be of lesser value. And while we might often list items in order of importance, not every list is always from the greatest to the least. For instance, God gave us His divine order for headship: God, Christ, man, woman (1 Corinthians 11:3). However, this does not mean that women have no value.

Just as God is clear about this order for headship, He is also very clear about this: for a man to have a wife is a wonderful thing. The writer of Proverbs would say, "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord*" (Proverbs 18:22). And again, "*Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies*" (Proverbs 31:10).

The order that God gives us in 1 Corinthians 11:3 simply reminds us that we all have a role. It is appointed by God and it is important. Thus it would be beneficial for us to consider what God has told us about the role and responsibilities of wives.

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, both Paul and Peter use similar words to assert that wives are to be in **submission** or **subjection** to their husbands. Paul very plainly wrote to those in Ephesus, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:22). And to the Christians in Colossae he would say, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord*" (Colossians 3:18). The apostle Peter would write, "*Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands . . .*" (1 Peter 3:1).

We sometimes run into a problem with this idea. Not because God and His word are wrong, but because this does not match what many people in the world today would have you believe is right and proper. Many believe that to submit to someone is degrading and should be discouraged. We can quickly note three reasons submission is beneficial.

First, God in His infinite wisdom knew that this was the best way for marriages to succeed. It is almost impossible for an entity to have two heads and be successful. Someone must take the lead. The wife should be her husband's biggest supporter, his greatest helper, and best partner. This does not imply a demotion or oppression.

Secondly, when wives submit to their husbands, they are also able to imitate Christ. Just as Jesus submitted His will to the Father (Matthew 26:39,42), wives also show how they voluntarily follow the leadership of their husbands.

In the third place, for the wife, submission is a part of her service to Christ. Paul gives the measurement by which she can be sure she is meeting

the standard when he says she should submit "*as to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:22). There is not a time frame or a limit to how far her submission should reach. If she is going to serve Christ and follow Him with all of her being, then that is how she should submit to her husband.

A wife might inquire if this submission is only in spiritual matters or financial or physical. And Paul would give the exact parameters she should follow when he says: "*in everything*" (Ephesians 5:24). This is not to say that the husband should be domineering or hold sway over every minute detail of her life. But the wife should not pick and choose certain areas that she prefers to be submissive and others that she does not.

There are a few other responsibilities not directly related to submitting that we can note at this juncture. There are some other Bible passages that touch briefly on some attitudes that wives should strive to have. Wives are to **respect** their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). This does not come from a place of fear, but is shown through her words and actions, in public and in private.

Wives, as they age and mature, are able to **teach** younger women how to do many things, including how to "*love their husbands*" and to be "*obedient to their own husbands*" (Titus 2:4, 5). Paul would even remind them that these things ought to be done so that "*the word of God may not be blasphemed*" (Titus 2:5). Or, in other words, that the word of God may not be spoken against.

Wives are to **love** their husbands and children (Titus 2:4). It is not required that a woman have children; she may remain a wife only and not become a mother. However, there is still an opportunity to show love. This is not just the emotional love that we feel between men and women in our earthly relationships. But it is the biblical love that we see manifested in God, which includes emotion, but also discipline and self-sacrifice.

All of these things are a natural result when the husband and the wife are **united** in one flesh. This was always God's desire and instruction from the first marriage between Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:24).

The husband has a role and important responsibilities. The wife has a role and important responsibilities. Both are of importance and value, for God designed marriage to work this way in beautiful unity. May both partners strive to understand their part in marriage and to always follow His divine will "*till death do us part.*"

-- Joel Danley

Imitating Jesus' Use of Scriptures

Jesus is the perfect example for all humanity. All humans would do well to follow Jesus' example in behavior (1 Peter 2:21-23) and attitude (Philippians 2:5). No one should seek to imitate Jesus more than His followers. One of the specific ways Christians should imitate Jesus is the way He used Scripture.

Jesus used Scripture to point men to the Christ. Since He is the Christ, Jesus used the Scriptures to point men to Himself. In John 5:39, Jesus says, *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."* In John 5 alone, Jesus cited testimony from no less than four witnesses—including Old Testament Scripture—to prove He was the prophesied Messiah. When pointing others to Jesus and showing He is the Savior, His example in using Scripture to do so is worthy of imitation. *"For he [Apollos, ccd] vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ"* (Acts 18:28).

Jesus used Scripture to resist temptation. Jesus was tempted as a human, and He resisted each time without sinning (Hebrews 4:15). Matthew 4:1-11 records what is often referred to as "the temptation of Jesus." Although it was not the only occasion Jesus faced temptation, it surely was one of the most severe. Jesus met each temptation with, *"It is written . . ."* (Matthew 4:4,7,10). When tempted, God's people need to imitate Jesus' use of Scripture to resist such. *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You"* (Psalm 119:11).

Jesus used Scripture to answer spiritual questions. Three examples are considered here. Jesus used Scripture to answer questions related to salvation. When a Jewish man asked Jesus how to have eternal life (Luke 10:25), Jesus answered with Scripture—*"What is written in the law?"* (Luke 10:26). Jesus also used Scripture to answer a question about God's marriage law (Matthew 19:1-9). Jesus later used Scripture to answer a question of whether there is life after death (Luke 20:27-38), using Exodus 3:6 to show there will indeed be a resurrection of the dead and life after death. When dealing with questions of a spiritual nature, we should imitate Jesus' example and use Scripture to answer them. *"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation . . ."* (2 Timothy 3:15).

As we seek to point others to Jesus, to resist temptation, and to answer spiritual questions correctly, let us follow Jesus' example in using Scripture to do so. There truly is no better example.

-- Chad Dollahite

Galatians 3:16-25 – The Seed, the Law, and the Faith

This section of the book of Galatians deals with three different aspects of God's eternal plan to save humans through Jesus. In chronological order, here is what transpired: (1) God made a promise to Abraham, (2) He later gave Israel the law of Moses, and (3) finally the Christ and gospel came.

Did the promise to Abraham, law of Moses and gospel contradict one another or in some manner set aside the value of the other parts of God's plan? Not at all. The all-wise God knew what He was doing. When seen properly, the seed promise, the law, and the gospel are in harmony one with another.

According to Galatians 3:8, *"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'"* Simply put, Jehovah gave the good news to Abraham that through him, all nations would be blessed. The Lord later told him, *"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed"* (Genesis 22:18). We do not have to speculate about the fulfillment of that promise, as we read in Galatians 3:16, *"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds, as of man, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ."* Jesus was the promised Seed!

What about the law of Moses? It was a temporary system of teaching for Israel, *"added because of transgressions till the Seed should come"* (3:19). The law acted as a tutor/schoolmaster to bring the Jews to the Christ (3:24): *"Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."* Justification via the law of Moses was not possible, and a Christian who attempts to be justified by it has *"fallen from grace"* (5:4).

What about the faith? Not simply faith, but "the" faith. *"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed"* (3:23). "The faith" was revealed "afterward." "The faith" is the gospel system of faith, which Paul at one point tried to destroy, then later preached after he was converted (1:23). Abraham had personal faith (3:9), as did Noah, Enoch, and Abel before him. However, it is through "the" faith of the gospel that God saves men today. God via Jesus and His gospel justifies Jews and Gentiles alike (3:9).

We recognize the importance of the promise to Abraham about a coming Seed, as well as the role of the law of Moses. Now, though, folks are made children of God by obeying the faith (3:26-29).

-- Roger D. Campbell

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH IN ROME

According to a Bible concordance which I consulted, “Rome” is mentioned for the first time in the Scriptures in Acts 2 (the day of Pentecost). In total, we read about Rome in three books of the New Testament: Acts, Romans, and Second Timothy.

There may have been a lot of interesting activities going on in the society of ancient Rome, but none were as important as the work and lives of the Christians who lived there. The apostle Paul penned a letter to them in about A.D. 57, saying, “*To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*” (Romans 1:7). We will use the words of that epistle to make some observations about the church in Rome.

On a personal note, the faith of the brethren in Rome was well-known. “*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world*” (Romans 1:8). Without trying to impress people, it is a great thing when Christians have a faith that is recognized by others. Paul reminded the Romans saints that “*the just shall live by faith*” (1:17), we are “*justified by faith*” (5:1), God-pleasing faith is manifested as “*obedience to the faith*” (1:5), and the Lord expects all of us to “*walk in the steps*” of Abraham’s faith (4:12).

The members of the church in Rome had gone from being slaves to being free people, then back to slavery again. Prior to their conversion to the Christ, they were slaves of sin. They were set free from sin’s guilt when they obeyed the gospel. Once they were in Jesus, they were slaves again: slaves of righteousness. The Holy Spirit said it this way: “*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*” (6:17,18). Let us not forget to whom we belong!

As the saints in Rome faced sufferings, tribulation, distress, persecution, and other unpleasant experiences in life (Romans 8:18,35), they needed to recall and be grateful for just how blessed they were. In the Christ, they no longer were condemned (8:1). The sufferings of earthly life are “*not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (8:18). They had a saving hope (8:24). With God on their side, no one could stand successfully against them (8:31). And, regardless of the challenges they might face in life, “*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us*” (8:37). Rather than complain and feel sorry for ourselves, let us thank God for blessing us so much!

In some countries, there are distinct advantages for those who live in the capital city. Though there

may have been some blessings attached with being a resident of first-century Rome, those followers of Jesus who lived in that immoral filth pot must not allow themselves to become conformed to the world. They were instructed: “. . . *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . .*” (12:1,2). As we live in a world filled with darkness, we must not be lovers or imitators of it.

The Christians in Rome were duty-bound to “*be subject to the governing authorities*” of the Roman Empire (Romans 13:1), yet their highest obligation was to the Lord of heaven and earth. Their God was not Caesar, but the Creator, Who alone is “*the God of patience and comfort*” (15:5), “*the God of hope*” (15:13), and “*the God of peace*” (15:33).

The sisters and brothers in Rome, rather than focusing on their own rights and desires, needed to care about what was best for the church. As citizens in God’s kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy (14:17), they were charged: “*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another*” (14:19). Every local church of the Christ is blessed when its members make spiritual edification a top priority.

To preserve its stability and spiritual well-being, the church in Rome needed to note and avoid divisive disciples and doctrinal departures (Romans 16:17,18). The Bible’s language is: “*Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*”

At least some of the saints in Rome were part of a congregation in the house of Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:3-5). “House churches” were the norm in the first century. Assembling in the home of a Christian family promotes personal interaction with other saints, giving brethren the chance to build one another up and have a sense of being a close-knit family. Not to mention the potential for great singing!

The last chapter of Romans includes numerous greetings from Paul and others to the brethren in Rome. Over thirty Christians are named. Which of them were unimportant? None! Which had the hope of heaven and a role to play in the church? Every single one! We look forward to meeting them one day.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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