

## Masculine and Feminine in God – Part 1 by Pastor Marty

We often read about the fall of our first parents and overlook that the curse was not the same for Adam as it was for Eve, and there was a clear reason for the difference: it had to do with the way they were created. In order to identify what was lost, we must first look at the original creation to see what they had. Of course, we have to start with the Christian orthodox assumption that man and woman were created and not evolved. As is clear from the New Testament, the gospel falls apart if we accept the ungodly premise that people evolved from something else. That idea fits a naturalist worldview, postmodern worldview, deistic worldview, and many other worldviews; however, it does not fit a biblical worldview for a very significant reason: it declares that God is a liar, which the Bible says is not possible. Lying is one thing that God, by His very nature, is not able to do. God cannot lie. Therefore, any theology, philosophy, or ideology predicated on the possibility of God lying is entirely faulty.

***Any theology, philosophy, or ideology based on God being a liar is entirely false.***

Now, assumptions can be dangerous things. Based upon my last few statements about God not being a liar, it is likely that most of you have immediately assumed that I hold to a literal 7-day account of creation, making the first few chapters of the book of Genesis entirely literal. For people who read the creation account as a literal history, any consideration otherwise is tantamount to calling God a liar and regarding His Word as fallible. From a primary assumption of the literal account of creation comes a secondary conclusion: the world is just over 6000 years old. This causes all scientific evidence as interpreted and presented to qualify as a lie. This is a common basis for most Christians

stating that an evolutionary belief essentially calls God a liar. However, that is NOT my reason. I have no problem with accepting that God could create everything in 7 literal days, and He may very well have done so. However, there are hundreds of symbolic, analogic, and parabolic passages in the Bible that are not literal but are instead meant to portray a message by addressing the imagination. Additionally, histories in the Old Testament are not always told in an objective or chronological order that we look for in our current age. Indeed, even some of our own historical texts focus more on the significance of events than on the chronological accuracy of detail.

***Historical texts may focus more on the significance of events than the chronology***

The first 3 chapters of Genesis are written in a way that can be entirely consistent with a representative reading as much as a literal one. In other words, I don't know if the 7 days of Genesis are 24-hour periods or aeons. Additionally, the wording of the 6 days reveal some interesting points. For example, all living things came about when God commanded the earth to bring them forth—which could easily be a description of evolution—except, that is, when people were created. That aspect of creation was entirely different. However, that is not even the reason that the evolution of humanity from other animals essentially makes God a liar. The primary reason that people evolving from lower forms of life is directly contrary to biblical orthodoxy is the gospel. Without a literal Adam and Even being in a literal sinless state in a literal garden of Eden with a literal tree of knowledge that was literally forbidden by God before a literal temptation resulted in a literal sin . . . if any of that is not true, the entire fabric of the gospel

unravels. We may not initially recognize how it makes the gospel incoherent and inconsistent, but Jesus and Paul very clearly did—as did all of the early Church Fathers who wrote the creeds that define orthodoxy and identify heresy.

***Without a literal Adam, Eve, and fall from grace, the entire gospel falls apart.***

Returning to the origins of life, we see that God had set the stage for the pinnacle of His creation: man and woman. God created Adam, and then from Adam, He created Eve. There is some possibility for confusion in these early verses, for the name Adam is also the same word for “man” as a species. We see this when it says in the same verse that “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27). The “him” could be a personal pronoun for the male person Adam, or it could be a relative pronoun for the species “mankind” with the masculine case relating to the fact that “mankind” was a masculine word. This becomes significant because it causes an immediate dichotomy of two common interpretations: either (1) Adam the male person was created in God’s image, which suggests that Eve was not, or (2) Mankind—made up of Adam and Eve, male and female—are made in the image of God. However, we find that both of these interpretations have problems when taken by themselves alone.

***When God created man in His image, it may have meant more than just Adam.***

There is strong support that male and female together form God’s image in this very same creation narrative. In the immediately prior verse, God says, “Let Us [plural] make “Man” [singular] in Our [plural] image [singular], according to Our [plural] likeness [singular]; and let them [plural] 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” (Gen 1:26). It is completely clear here that before the male person Adam was ever created, God had already stated that His image would be in “them” while “they” ruled over all of the earth. We also see that God has a habit of using plural and singular to describe the same object when that object is complete in being joined. The plural “Us” and “Our” have a singular “image” and “likeness” in God. Although human beings claim that “1 + 1 = 2” is absolute, God decrees that “1 + 1 = 1” is true.

***In God’s mathematics, singulars may be plurals, and one plus one may equal one.***

We see this perfectly reflected in the creation of humanity through the introduction of marriage. When male person Adam saw female person Eve, he recognized her as a part of himself and as what made him complete and whole. This is one reason marriage, the joining together of a man and a woman, is described as the most perfect symbolic representation of the salvation experience when a person is united with Christ. The man and woman are described as becoming “one flesh” in clear representation of the fact that God created “Man” in His image and created them “male and female” together. Additionally, there is clear indication that when Adam was alone, he was not complete—even with God with him in the garden. He only became complete when joined with Eve. It was then when human beings consisted of both male and female that God made it clear the two together became complete—becoming one flesh. In a sense, it may be easier to understand if we picture it as God creating “MAN” in His image and then separating “MAN” into male and female halves. God is showing that it is man and woman together that form something fully complete.

***According to God’s definition, man and woman together form a complete whole.***

These verses strongly support the position that Adam and Eve together were made in God's image. However, we run into a problem if we stop there. We cannot find the truth if our doctrines and beliefs require us to completely disregard other parts of Scripture. In the New Testament, Paul stresses that Adam was created first, and he even makes the point that the male person is the image and glory of God while the female person is the glory of the male person; this seems to suggest that Eve was not created in the image of God. Paul does make a few statements that seem to run counter to full equality between men and women, and if we discount what he says, we run into the fallacies of feminist theology—a philosophical activism that often ends up devaluing women more than it affirms them.

***Feminist theology sometimes devalues women more than it empowers them.***

Let us return to the creation story and take it at face value for the moment, including what Paul says about the male person being created in the image of God. We see that God creates Adam from the dust and breathes into him the Spirit of Life, making Adam a living being. Adam, now somehow alive by the Spirit of God, is a being in the image of God. However, this male person is both in God's image and simultaneously incomplete by himself. God brings before Adam all the animals—all those that He commanded the earth to bring forth—and Adam named them all. In the process, he noticed that there was none that completed him. At this point, we have to look deeper into what is clearly not deep: the biological differences between male and female. God had created male and female lions, tigers, bears (oh my), ostriches, beavers, camels, wolves, goats, hawks, llamas, geckos, etc. (We will save our discussion of fire-breathing dragons, dinosaurs, and unicorns for another day). As he saw the two of every kind

coming before him, each complementing the other, he recognized that there was not another like him. However, it is far too simplistic if we interpret this as only relating to biological reproduction. Depending upon the process, time, and other variables involved in God presenting the animals to him, there is no certainty that Adam even knew about reproduction at this point. All that is certain is that he saw that there was a pairing among them, and he saw no such pairing for himself.

***Man recognizes that he is incomplete when he is by himself; he needs woman.***

The fact that Adam lacked something yet was made in the image of God means that "image" here cannot mean perfection or completeness. Adam needed a companion like himself, and that lack was "not good" for him; however, it says he was in the image of God, who had no lack and in Whom there was nothing "not good" at all. (Notably, we find that even God desired to create so that He could have more objects to love). Therefore, God formed Eve to be with Adam. Significantly, God formed Eve from part of Adam and not from the dust as an entirely separate creative act. Adam was made in the image of God, part of Adam was removed and made into Eve, and when those parts come together, God calls them "one flesh"—they are complete. God clearly planned on making male and female, for he said that He would make "Man" that "they" should rule. If Eve was such a part of Adam that the two of them joining together became "one" flesh, it seems clear that neither of them were completely "one" by themselves. This strongly supports the idea that the two together form the image of God: (1) Adam was in the image of God; (2) part of Adam was removed; (3) that part of Adam was part of that image; (4) therefore, part of that image was removed. If this is true, then the following is also true: (5) the part of Adam that was removed (6) was

part of that image of God (7) that was made into Eve; (8) therefore, Eve is the other part of the image of God. Man and woman together form the full image of God. The fact that Adam was made in the image of God before Eve existed does not negate the fact that after the “separation and formation” of Eve, she was as much a part of that image as was Adam. It is thus that man and woman together and “one flesh” that they most reflect the image of God.

***It is the man and woman together that most accurately reflect the image of God.***

Of course, this does not solve all of our problems dealing with masculine and feminine. If we stopped here, it would mean that every single person on the face of the earth is incomplete unless they get married. Although a majority of the single people out there might agree with this, it is not accurate until it is understood in absolute terms. As we have seen, God describes this state of finding completion as marriage, the joining of a man and woman into “one flesh” in a permanent union. As we shall see, there are reasons that woman complements man while man complements woman. However, there is a deeper sense in which marriage is a reflection of absolute reality: we are joined to Jesus as bride to a groom. Marriage represents physically what salvation does spiritually. As each person is joined to Christ, they also become “one flesh” with Him. However, unlike the physical distinctions among human beings, He is what completes anyone and everyone. On earth, men and women are like two halves of a whole; However, Jesus is the entire whole, so He provides everything to anyone joined to Him.

***Jesus is entirely complete, so He can provide what everyone needs to be whole.***

This is the point where things start to get deep because it is necessary to recognize that there are distinct differences between

men and women that go beyond mere biology. In other words, masculine and feminine is much more eternal and absolute than male and female biology; the former relates to our souls while the latter relates to our bodies. (I certainly cannot describe this as clearly as Leanne Payne, but I will do my best). We can begin to see these differences if we go back to the creation account. As we have explained, God made man and woman complementary to each other—physically, emotionally, sexually, psychologically, socially, spiritually, etc. Once man and woman were together, they then completed each other, becoming the “one flesh” of marriage, and God positioned them in the garden of Eden with a purpose and a position to fulfill. This is where the concept of roles and positions becomes important. In order to understand what God is saying in these first few chapters of history, we must recognize that it is written as an unfolding story with different levels of focus. If we miss that, we miss what He is actually saying and doing.

***We must understand that Genesis was written by God as an unfolding history.***

An important rule of orthodox exegesis (i.e., correct interpretation of Scripture) is to recognize that God often says things that mean more than one thing at the same time. Numerous Old Testament and New Testament prophecies had one correct meaning in the context they were spoken and another correct meaning for a later time. The gospels are full of examples of this. The trouble we sometimes face is trying to figure out if somethings has one, two, or even three meanings. It is the same way when we look at the creation story. We see at the very beginning that Genesis 1:1 states that God created the heavens and the earth. We then find that Genesis 1:2-31 describes how He did it in 6 days. There are two possibilities here: in the first, Genesis 1:1 summarizes everything, and Genesis 1:2-31

expands on it. In other words, the first verse is God's "thesis statement" for the beginning of all things, and the rest of the chapter explains it. The second possibility is that Genesis 1:1 is providing background to the rest of the chapter. In other words, God is simply saying that he created the heavens and the earth, but they were still in a raw material state. He is stating in a single sentence what He did—He created everything. Both of these options are entirely possible, and they could both be correct at the same time. What we do know for sure is that Gen 1:26-30 summarizes how God created mankind while Gen 2 expands on the creation of those who are made in His image; what is first expressed in five verses is then expanded into 25 verses. The first 2 chapters of Genesis describe creation at different levels. The literary device here follows a pattern: the summary describes the significance of events while the expansion provides specific details. The same is seen in the Gospels when it describes Jesus as the Son of David and Son of God before it goes into details of His birth and genealogy. It is both the significance and the specific details that we must examine here.

***The Genesis story provides significance along with the chronological details.***

As we examine the summary in Chapter 1, we see that God created man and woman together to fulfill a certain role and position: they were made as rulers over the earth. It is important to note that the detailed account in Chapter 2 does not contradict this in any way. Without any doubt, man was created before woman, and the man was put into the garden before the woman came into being. However, it does not say that Adam was called the ruler of the earth before Eve joined him. God always intended man and woman together to fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it. (Considering that the command to rule was given before the fall, it should be understood more like pastoral

leadership than autocratic domination). They both had the same role and position in relation to their created purpose—caretakers of the earth. The first place we see any distinction is in Chapter 2 when the man is first put in the garden to cultivate it and keep it. Here, we clearly see that the man's role was one of service. This also supports the idea that the unfallen concept of ruling involved servant leadership—i.e., stewardship. It was as the man was in this position that God stated that it was not good for him to be alone; he needed a helper suitable for him. The man could not be a complete servant leader without the woman.

***The man could not be a complete servant leader without the woman beside him.***

Many people point to the word "helper" that describes Eve's relation to Adam as making her subject to him. However, the word "helper" is the same word used in many places throughout the Old Testament to describe the Holy Spirit, Who comes alongside to help us. We may be able to exert control over what the Spirit does in or through us (to our detriment), but He is clearly the authority; we must submit to Him. The Spirit, in His gentle, humble nature, loves and serves us even though He is God. The Scripture identifies God as savior, protector, and provider; He does these because He loves us—not because we have authority over Him. There is a major difference between God assisting us and calling God our assistant: the former is an act of mercy; the latter, a position of subservience. Our language often provides ambiguity in roles and positions, but if the word for "helper" is the same word used to reference the Spirit, we cannot use it to suggest Eve was subordinate to Adam. All we can honestly identify from the passage is that Adam could not do the job alone and needed someone appropriate to his nature and identity to fulfill the calling God intended for both of them.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH