

Mankind Set Apart

by Chard Berndt

What distinguishes mankind from the rest of the creation? Even the evolutionist agrees that man supercedes animals in intelligence, skill, creativity, and self-awareness. But the evolutionist makes such evaluation according to *degree*. In this view, we are thought to have “outpaced” the animals, and even our own man-like predecessors, in what could be thought of as a survival competition. According to the evolutionist we are animals, but among the more developed ones, having a spinal chord and column. And within these, we are among the ones boasting four limbs. Within these, we are fortunate to bear live young, and to walk upright. Furthermore, within these, we are the “modern” ones—*Homo sapiens*—who have emerged superior in intellect and function. All these are thought to be our advantages *by degree*.

Yet there exists a problem with thinking of us as superior by degree—as only “edging out” other creatures. By this type of comparison, we do not always come out ahead! We are not as strong as many beasts; we cannot fly as birds fly, smell or hear as well as many creatures, breathe underwater, or tolerate the extreme temperatures that many creatures thrive in. Furthermore, our bodies are not as efficient as those of cold-blooded creatures. Nor are we the fastest creatures; the pronghorn deer can run faster than a world-record sprinter, and sustain this speed not for ten seconds, but for half an hour. Such comparisons are empty, because we are not to be compared in this manner. According to God’s word, we are not different in degree, but different—period. Mankind is distinct. The Creation account speaks unmistakably on this matter, indicating that mankind possesses a mode of life—and a place among the living—unique to all else.

First, man is distinguished in that *he is created separately*: When God completed His creation of land creatures, he declared it good. The narrative then resumes with the characteristic phrase “And God said...”and goes on to speak of mankind. The same transition separates all other creative movements in God’s Creation symphony. God performs an act of creation, declares it good, and then begins another. If man was to be regarded as simply another type of animal, then such a pause would not have been necessary.

Second, man is distinguished in the *sequence* of creation. God saved the best for last. Plants were the original living things, created promptly on Day 3. After a one-day interlude to create the heavenly bodies, God continued on Day 5 creating creatures of the water and sky. On Day 6 God brought forth the land creatures, concluding with that characteristic pause in the narration. Only then did God proceed to make man, the detail of which is later given in Genesis 2:4-7. In the flow of the Creation narrative, the hierarchy is unmistakable.

Third, man is literally *one of a kind*—the only kind in this movement of the Creation symphony. All other organisms were declared to reproduce “according to kinds” alongside *other* kinds—a collection of plant kinds, a collection of aquatic kinds, and so on. But for man, no multiplicity of kinds is specified. Furthermore, there is no distinction made between ancient and modern man. In fact, the layman’s term “prehistoric man” is itself a biblical contradiction, as the Bible provides an accurate historical account back to the beginning, and a record beginning with the first man, of whom we all descended. “*Mankind*” therefore is a fitting term for the whole of humanity.

Not only are humans of a single kind, but we are a kind like no other. We see this in a fourth distinctive: man is distinguished in his very *nature*. The ensuing narrative pronounces three times that man, unlike any other creature, is created in God’s “image” (*tselem* in the Hebrew), and “likeness” (*demuwth*). Yet man is not God, for the word *tselem* comes from a root that means “to shade.” Man, rather, is a “shadow” of God. God-image is our unique heritage. Not even the angels are spoken of as possessing it! God-image is much more than the non-material soul-life (*nephesh* in the Hebrew) that creatures possess, and it is even much more than the spirit (*ruwach*). God-image is a mysterious quality, in many ways as difficult to get a handle on as God Himself. But we do know that it is about *relationship*. God created the creatures, but He *fathered* man. Indeed, the genealogy of Jesus Christ described in Luke 3:20-38 extends all the way back to Adam, who is there called “the son of God.”

We see how God fathered man in our fifth distinctive: man is distinguished in his *formation*. Whereas all other life, including other terrestrial life, is “brought forth” (*yatsa’* in the Hebrew), only man is “formed” or “shaped” (*yatsar*). Furthermore, while the Bible indicates that many creatures are animated by breath-life along with man, only man is specified as receiving this breath directly and personally from God. The Creator did not

merely speak breath-life into man, but, in close proximity, He shaped Adam and breathed life into his nostrils.

Finally, mankind is distinguished not only in being, but also in purpose. Man is distinguished from all other life in his given *role* and *responsibility*. With regard to vegetation, man is given the responsibility to cultivate and to preserve (*'abad* and *shamar* in the Hebrew), and with regard to creatures, man is to rule and maintain dominion (*radah*). Creatures of land and sky, by contrast, are given vegetation for food, but are given no ruling capacity. And vegetation itself simply provides nourishment, having no capacity to even bear responsibility. Mankind, and mankind alone, is the caretaker and primary beneficiary of all living things and of the planet itself. The popular statement, “The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth” (commonly attributed to Chief Seattle) is simply untrue and is an offense to the biblical record. What a contradiction it is that worldly philosophy both adopts such notions of man’s subservience to the world and, at the same time, attempts to substantiate man’s rise to the top of the evolutionary ladder! Only the biblical record of history reconciles both the depravities of man as well as his preeminence and splendor among the creation.

Sadly, many scientists have taken physical similarities between man and animals, and using these, overruled God’s Word regarding other, more important distinctives—ones not of degree but of separateness altogether. It must be understood that in God’s creative symphony, any similarities between man and animals are simply themes showing that the same Creator originated both. In the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2, mankind is clearly the climactic movement in the symphony, followed only by the postlude of God’s satisfaction and rest on Day 7. Moreover, it is unmistakable in the *whole* of Scripture that mankind is at center stage, the crown of the creation; any less of a distinction detracts sadly from the central beauty in God’s created universe.

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