

International Sunday School Lesson

JULY 14, 1963

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IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Memory Selection: "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou has made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor." (Psalms 8:4-5.) Lesson Text: Genesis 1 and 2. In our lesson today, we endeavor to find in the creation stories an indication of God's purpose for men and the responsibility this places upon them.

We saw in our last lesson how the accounts of creation recorded in Genesis probably represent the early efforts of the Hebrews to understand their origin. There is a danger in calling them "early," for we have an unfortunate tendency to attach lesser significance to that which is humble in beginning. We should never make the mistake of reproaching a religion merely because it lacks the full majesty of later maturity. Only when religion remains childish is reproach a proper attitude. Reading again these two chapters in Genesis, we cannot help but be impressed and inspired by the lofty idea of man and his relationship with God. These early Hebrew scholars captured one of the fundamental truths of our faith. We are made for God — our very being yearns for fellowship with him. The writers insist that this has been a central aspect of human existence from the beginning of man. The story in chapter 1 shows man as the climax of creative activity. First the heavens and the

earth, then light and darkness, the firmament and the waters, the dry land and the sea together with vegetation, the lights in the heavens, fish and birds, cattle and "creeping things," and at the end of the sixth day "male and female he (God) created them." Note how both sexes appear on the same day, and God's blessing is promised for their multiplication and their dominion over the lesser elements of creation. Chapter 2 presents a contrasting picture. "In the day" that God made the heavens and earth he is described as having created man (but not woman at this time). And this account adds that man was formed "of the dust from the ground" — an element that is missing from the first story. This second account also places the creation of lesser forms of life — plant and animal — after man. The appearance of the woman, a helper for man, concludes the story. And though the two stories vary at some points, the compiler of Genesis did not hesitate to use

them both. For the important "religious" values are the same in each. God has created the world; man is the handiwork of God. Whatever the words used — "breath of life," "living being," "image of God" — all convey this great thought. Scholars have long pondered whether the events in these chapters are actual history in the sense that we use that word ordinarily. Many question this and designate these early chapters as being legend, myth, or folklore. None of these terms is meant to imply that the stories have no religious truth. Actually, their value is beyond question, whatever the historical setting may have been. Thus, we would be quite in order in interpreting these narratives as depicting man in general (all of mankind), not a particular man. This helps us understand how the translation THE MAN stands as representative for us all. We can see our origin in him, a common heritage shared by all men, regardless of nation, race or creed. The writer of Genesis tells us that God "created man in his own image" (1:27). The second chapter states it slightly differently; "God . . . breathed into his (man's) nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (2:7). It would be difficult for our origin to be more closely related to God than these two accounts indicate. But what does it mean to be made "in the image of God?" Man is not complete without a body, but we should never allow our understanding of man's nature to rest in such a shallow def-

inition. The phrase "the image of God" implies that man has qualities of a much higher nature than mere physical existence. "Likeness" or "image" also includes spiritual powers, and it is here that the insight of Genesis is most valuable — power of thought, of speech, of communication with others, or self-transcendence — even of spirit itself. We are living beings, and the very BREATH of God is in us. The Spirit of God not only gives life, but it also gives meaning to that life, because it is somehow similar to that of the Creator. This is what the image of God implies at the beginning of Genesis. The writer of Genesis 2 combines both elements in his account — dust of the earth and the breath, or spirit, of God. And we are indebted to him for this ancient but still accurate portrayal of nature. And recognizing these qualities of our existence, we cannot respond appropriately in anything less than a spiritual manner. These words are easily written, and just as easily read; they are more difficult to live. But as Christians, can we do less?

A DAIRY QUEEN AND TWO PRINCESSES



The daughters of Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Buckner of Mars Hill show their father's top producing cow. From left to right: Janie Buckner, Number 25, and Janet Buckner. Pictured above is the top producing cow on official test in Madison County this year. She is Number 25 in the dairy herd of Mr. J. E. Buckner of Mars Hill. Mr. Buckner's herd is on the Dairy Herd Improvement Record system which means that these records are official. A normal lactation for a dairy cow consists of 305 days, two times a day milking. Number 25, in 305 days, produced 20,250 pounds of 3.4% butter fat. She has about 30 days of production to go before she will be dried off; which means she will have produced well over 23,000 pounds of milk. Number 25 is a five-year-old, who weighs in excess of 1,500 pounds. This is the kind of cow that every dairyman hopes to have in his dairy. We hope that future years will see many more of her kind in Madison County.

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LOOK around your dining room table. Nearly everything you see — in fact, almost everything on the family shopping list (meat, chicken, eggs, butter, milk, vegetables, and many other items) — will be favorably affected when the "Minimum Freight Rates" bills now before Congress are passed. Why? Because many freight rates are now higher than they need be. They can — and will — be reduced when railroads have freedom to lower rates.

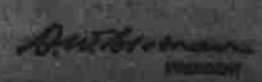
Lower freight charges mean lower prices for you, the consumer. But what happens today when railroads try to lower their freight charges? On freight that moves in large volume, our requests to lower our rates are almost invariably opposed by barge or truck interests — sometimes both. This results in long, costly regulatory delay and, too often, our request is turned down cold. This keeps all freight charges artificially high and costs you money.

Excessive regulation — a throwback to the days when railroads had no competition — is responsible. It was needed then. It is ridiculous now. This is

recognized by the "Minimum Freight Rates" bills and it will be corrected when the bills are passed.

Let's get one thing straight. The proposed legislation will not let railroads raise their prices one penny on anything without Interstate Commerce Commission approval. It will permit railroads to lower prices on agricultural products and bulk commodities such as salt, sugar, coal, grain, and many others. Lower freight costs on these important family budget items will put money in your pocket.

American consumers will save billions of dollars each year when the "Minimum Freight Rates" bills, as they are now written, become law. Every day of delay is costing you money. Write Congress today. Ask your Senators to vote for S. 1061. Ask your Congressman to vote for H.R. 4700. Do it now!



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