

Gen. 1:27; 9:1-7; Matthew 5:21-22

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Introduction

In His Image (Gen. 1:27). When one reads the account of creation recorded in Genesis 1, they are reminded of the beauty and creativity of God. Each day, as God speaks, something new comes into being: light, the sky, the oceans, lights in the sky, and creatures in the sea and creatures on the land. The last of the creative acts of God is described in this way in Gen. 1:27: “So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female” (CSB). The significance of the creation of humanity is represented in the phrase “in his own image.” Nothing else described in Genesis 1 that was created bears the image of God. For centuries, people have debated what it means that humans are created in the “image of God.” For instance, scholar’s question, “is this a physical likeness?” or “is this a spiritual resemblance?” or “is a combination of the two?” While viewpoints may differ on this point, many agree at one level: the fact that humans are created in the image of God distinguishes them from any part of creation. Because of this, life is precious and valuable.

To Be Protected (Gen. 9:1-7). One of the ramifications of the fact that we are created in the image of God is highlighted in Genesis 9. In Genesis 9, we read about the covenant that God made with Noah after the flood. Two aspects of that covenant merit our attention. First, God addresses the value of life by explaining to Noah that “if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person’s life” (Gen. 9:5). The very next verse describes why this is so: “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans in his image” (Gen. (9:6). Life is sacred to God because He is the creator and giver of life! For someone to take another person’s life is serious indeed. So, in Genesis 9, just as in Gen. 1, the focus is placed on the fact that we are created in the image of God. Since life is sacred, the second prominent feature of the covenant that God made with Noah is stated: “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 9:7). God creates life; God gives life; God wanted life to be spread all over the earth.

In Action and Attitude (Matt. 5:21-22). The supreme value of life was not solely an Old Testament concept. The idea continued to be taught in the New Testament. In fact, in His first recorded sermon, recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus addressed the value of life. He said, “whoever murders will be subject to judgment” (Matt. 5:21). In addition to highlighting the seriousness of committing murder, Jesus discussed the broader meaning of this command. As He explained, our anger and our speech are also subject to judgment (Matt. 5:22). This broader understanding of the Old Testament command further affirms the value of human life. In other words, our actions as well as our attitudes are subject to judgment. This is so because God creates life.

Conclusion

In the world today, in general, value judgments seem to be out of order. Certainly, this is seen in the way life is treated. We are reminded by these Bible passages that life is sacred and special because God created us in His image.