

# God-Made Men

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Acts 17:26-29

In many ways, we are continuing where we left off last week with **Knowing Your Maker**. We began the message by following Paul tying together Creation and Worship – the first two chapters of Genesis lead to the first two commandments of the Law.

There are two strands running throughout the body of the message in 24-29. We dealt more broadly with God making all things and being the Lord of all things – His power, immensity, independency, purpose, and wisdom; He is Creator, Lord, God and Judge of all.

This carries us forward to the crown of God's creation – the making of man. That is what we are looking at today in verses 26-29. A faulty view of creation involves a faulty view of mankind; it has to. May the Lord help us as we stand before the mirror of His Word today.

When Pastor BJ originally preached this message in November of 2014, there were over 13 million hits in just over a week on a video taken in the Natal Intensive Care Unit of Loma Linda University Hospital.

There on Youtube, you will find a young father singing and playing songs on his guitar to his dying infant son.

Lennon James was born prematurely - taken by C-section. His 30-year old mother passed away in her sleep that night, predeceasing her son by four days.

The father remembered how she could feel her child moving to music, and was given permission to come in and play several hours each day.

Mr. Picco wrote this just after his infant son passed away:

*Dear friends, family and supporters; it is with an unbelievably heavy heart that I write this. My little fighter, Lennon James Picco went to sleep in his daddy's arms late last night. He was surrounded by family, friends, and the best doctors, nurses and hospital staff in the world. He was dressed in an outfit that Ashley bought for him, with little guitars on it, and wrapped in a blanket made by a dear friend. I am so thankful for the four unforgettable days I got to spend with him. His mommy would have been so beyond joy to see him and to hold him, touch him, bathe him, sing to him – as I have had the privilege of doing. I have been so blessed and honored to love him before he was formed, to cherish him while mommy carried him, meet him face to precious face, and hold his perfect little body while we said 'goodbye for now.' There are no words, but I wanted to keep you updated, as your love and support has meant more than anything in the world.*

If this doesn't bring tears to your eyes, nothing will!

But if man, as one philosopher put it, is an accidental connection of atoms, best understood when structured by unreasoning chance and founded on inflexible despair, why would we be moved by the death of a million newborns, much less for one? Nothing is exceptional or meaningful in an accidental world – a universe which “just happened,” the universe of a Bertand Russell.

Even the Greeks would agree that atheism is a monstrosity. Plato wrote: “All men are by nature equal, made of the same earth by the same Creator, and, however we deceive ourselves, as dear to God is the poor peasant as the mighty prince.”

Paul argues from the glory of creation to the glory of the Creator, leading to the worship of the same God. And yet we have not taken up the greatest part of His handiwork until we come to the creation of man.

In such a short span, Paul sets forth no less than four crucial points on humanity:

1. One, man's dependence upon the sovereign God – verse 25;
2. Two, man's unity and diversity – verse 26;
3. Three, man's greatest purpose – to find God – verse 27;
4. and Four, man's uniqueness – he is the offspring of God, children of God, dealing with the image of God.

As we think about this passage, let two things strike true and deep in your hearts and minds:

**First**, be assured that this is what man needs to hear. It is right for us to ask this question – ‘if I were in this darkness, this ignorance of God, like the Athenians, how would I want someone to speak to me about my lostness? What would get through to me?’ Well, we cannot be guided by our own thoughts and wishes – we are sin-loving, God-resisting men. But here the Holy Spirit, who knows man better than any, has set this forth as what should be taught, what should be insisted upon: that God is God, He is especially the Creator of all, and the Creator of Man; and unless we are His worshippers, we are facing a Coming Judgment.

**Secondly**, know this that everyone who comes to the Lord Jesus for salvation, in some way, shape or form, comes to embrace these foundational truths; truths which are non-negotiable, crucial to right religion. We must come to believe that God made all things, made man in the world, made man for Himself, that man has fallen into horrible, God-denying, God-forgetting sinfulness; that man is lost but God is near and calls us to repent, in order to be those who know God, who trust God, who have Him for their God, who love God, serve God, worship God, and live with God forever.

With this in mind, come and consider with me four points ...

1. We find first of all not only a correction but a reversal on what the Greeks thought – **God makes man and not the other way around** – verses 24-25. Man is, solely, because God gave! God gives life, breath, and all things. Man is the perfect debtor, the perfect dependent on God. Everything about us relies on Him. Our very life – how long we live, where our lives are spent, and how they are spent; our very breath, that which God breathed into man at the beginning, you don't even think how, on average, you breath **78.8 billion** times ever ten years! All the things we enjoy – this world around us – given to us, given for us – and demonstrates the glory of our Maker. Man stands out as the greatest pointer to God. AW Tozer was right when he said: “I know I take a chance of being misunderstood and perhaps misjudged when I state that man was more like God than any other creature ever created. Because of the nature of man's creation, there is nothing in the universe so much like God as the human soul.” We certainly can see how from one angle, man is very frailty and small. Compared to the universe, what a speck we are! One writer has this amusing thing to say: “Our father was Adam, our grandfather was dust, and our great-grandfather - was nothing!” (William Jenkyn) Yet, at the same time, as we will see later, man is closer to God than the rest of creation. And that is where we see the great significance of getting this right!

2. Now this is expanded in the next verse, verse 26, with God's Lordship over man's history. We can call this point: **God made Man in His Unity and Diversity** – read verse 26. Man's creation is from one man and woman, tying us all together as one race. See how this verse gives no place to racism. Man is not made from the animals, as evolution teaches. If that is true, then racism is justified. In fact, evolution is behind much of the racism and genocide of the last 100 years. Man's spread all over this world – his wherever and whenever – with all his differences, is a matter of God's direction,

and no other. National boundaries are in God's hands. If we had time, we could turn back and read some of Daniel who spoke of the empires of Greece and of Rome. This verse, this message would really stand out for the Athenians, who thought they sprung or grew directly from the ground and had not migrated to Greece like others. Paul says "No – it was my God who guided your habitation and your habits, your wins and losses!" Francis Schaeffer said: "Man is not a chance configuration of atoms in the slipstream of meaningless, chance history. No, man, in the image of God, has a purpose – to be in relationship to the God who is there." "We are not autonomous czars over slime; we are vice-regents over a divine creation," says RC Sproul. The Greeks loved their heritage, their place, but this brings us to...

3. Our third point: **God Made Man for Himself**. Man is not an end in himself, but man's chief end is what? That's right! Paul is teaching the first catechism answer here. Made for God, made for His glory and the enjoyment of Him – read 27-28a. Man's environment is not his be-all or end-all, but He dwells in God. Man's search for God had proved a disaster. Look at all the man-made gods on the one hand, and no knowledge of the true God on the other! The Greek mind was as full of vanity as his heart was empty of verity! One writer says: "We are here for God's designs, not our own." Do you see yourself that way, as you look in the mirror? How many of us live as though we are simply here just for ourselves? That even when we are seeking to do something to help others, we really have ourselves clearly in sight! Can you point to something, anything, where you can say – "I do this, not for myself, but for the Lord who made me?"
4. Now, 4thly, **God Made Man Like Himself**: Man is unique because of his kinship with God – man is the "imago Dei", the image or

likeness of God. Here is a poem by a man named Aratus. He is actually ascribing this to Zeus, that we are all children of Zeus. Now that is not what Paul is agreeing with, but with the recognition of man's dignity, being close to God. Nothing else in all the world could be called his offspring – all is his creation, yes, but man only is called children of God. Luke's genealogy takes us back to Adam who was a son of God. Man is Godlike, reflecting his attributes. Man is close to God and God is close to man. Language, for instance, is a part of this, as we are able to know and communicate with God and one another. Love is a part of this, in the true self commitment and desire to be at one with God and others. Man's inventiveness is included here. Professor John Carrick observes:

“Now compare and contrast man again with the animal world at this point. ...Cows never ever build a civilization! They are fearfully and wonderfully made. I love beef; I love milk; I am grateful for the leather. But they are not rational creatures. They have no creativity. It is the same bovine stupidity year after year! One theologian spoke of ‘the changeless beehive’. The beehive never ever changes. It is always the same. But with man there is this inventiveness, this capacity to advance and to grow, and to produce a civilization. There is, you see, a God-likeness, this God-relatedness about man.”  
p. 334-335.

Someone has said, “The yearning of man's heart is homesickness for God.” We will see this next week – man is not finding God but is still seeking; does not worship God but is still religious. And God is here, says our passage. Spurgeon summarizes this well for us:

*WHEN man disobeyed his God he died spiritually, and that death consisted in the separation of his soul from God. From that moment man began to think that God was far away, and this has since been his religion in all ages. Either he has said, “There is no God”; or he has believed the visible creation to be God, which is much the same as having no God. Or else he*

*has thought God to be some far-away, mysterious Being, who takes no note of man. Even after obtaining a better conception of God, he has thought him hard to find and hard to be prayed to. Because his own heart is far from God, he imagines God's heart is far from him. But it is not so. The living God is not far from any one of us; for "In him we live, and move, and have our being."*

Well here we must stop, but not without drawing out a few applications.

1. See here man's littleness and greatness over all creation, at the same time. He is little – contrast man to the great stars and suns of the universe, and we are nothings, a speck on a speck! But because man is made in the image of God, even the smallest of the human race, even the unborn, is worth far more than all the world put together!
2. Second, behold man's need as so simple and yet so profound. A little child can understand the message today, even with all of the big words: Children, who made you? God! What else did God make? All things! Why did God make you and all things? For His own glory! You see. And yet how immensely profound is the glory of God!
3. Third, man's dignity is seen nowhere so greatly as in the incarnation. God did not become an animal, a plant, a mineral, nor even an angel; God became Man! As verse 31 says, the Man whom God has appointed!
4. Lastly, know that man's true destiny is wrapped up in the salvation by the Father, through the Son. Do not be satisfied with anything else or anything less. An old Puritan observed that you cannot fit a circle into a triangle; that is, the whole world cannot satisfy your heart, as your heart is fit only for the triune God; He alone can satisfy. And there is nothing greater, nothing better, nothing so thrilling, as being a child of God, beloved of God, called to dwell with Him forever! "Behold, what manner of love

the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God – and we are!” (1 John 3:1)

Amen