

# GENDER REBELLION

According to Scripture, when God created human beings, He created them “male and female” and blessed their marital union (Genesis 1:26–28; 2:20–25). Later, the other inspired authors of Scripture interpreted this twofold act of creation and blessing to entail moral norms such as the mutual cultivation of intimacy between husband and wife and the prohibition of sexual immorality and divorce (c.f., Matthew 19:4–9; Mark 10:5–12; 1 Corinthians 7:12–20; Hebrews 13:4). The prophet *Moses*, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and the *Apostles* (particularly the *Apostle Paul*) are united in common witness to the goodness of humanity’s biological complementarity and the moral norms that should govern male-female sexual behavior.

In our today’s anti-christ culture, we’ve witnessed the steady erosion of biblical moral norms governing sexual behavior. As these norms regarding, among others, nonmarital sexual intercourse, homosexual activity, marital fidelity, procreation, and divorce have given way in the broader culture to more permissive understandings, new, more fundamental challenges have emerged to the very notion of biological complementarianism itself. This “transgender moment,” as it has been called—in which a person can select a gender identity at variance with their biological sex—requires a biblical and theological appraisal.

How, then, should Christians respond to this almost universally accepted *gender rebellion*?

## IN LIGHT OF THE ‘BODY’

At the heart of the transgender experience is *gender rebellion*, an internal sense of gender at odds with one’s birth sex. In *gender rebellion* a preference for one’s internal sense of gender as representing one’s true self over against one’s body. In other words, if someone with male genitalia has an internal *sense* or *feeling* of being female, then he should be properly understood as *she*. The way God made his body is either denied or understood as having no authority in the issue. However, a biblical theology of the body, argues for the essentiality of the fixed biological gender in determining our identity. The scriptural witness of the sanctity of the body remains regardless of the shifting cultural understanding of gender.

A biblical theology of the body necessarily involves three central Christian doctrines—the creation of humanity, the incarnation of Jesus, and the resurrection of believers. Through these doctrines the scriptural witness about the human body can be fully appreciated.

Genesis 1:26–31 is the record of God creating, blessing, and commanding humanity as male and female. Humans are created in the “image of God” as male and female. The “image of God” refers at least to the role of humanity over creation as representatives of the authority of God. God’s blessing of humanity, like God’s other blessings throughout Genesis, pertains to continuance, which in this case, means procreation. If humanity is meant to represent God over the earth, then human beings must fill the earth. Hence, God’s first command to humanity is to be fruitful and multiply. Creation as male and female makes human fruitfulness, and by extension the calling to act as God’s image, possible.

In all of this, the bodily aspect of maleness and femaleness is paramount. To be female and male makes possible the ability to reproduce sexually. Even after the fall of humanity, reproductive ability remains credited to God who created humans as male and female (Genesis 4:1), as does humanity’s ongoing status as creations in God’s image (Genesis 5:1–3; 9:6). God’s creation of humanity as male and female is, at least, because God intends for humans to reproduce.

At most, God’s intention for humanity to be female and male may be related to human incompleteness apart from a sexually differentiated other. Genesis 2:18–25 describes the initial relationship between woman and man with God’s recognition that “it is not good for the man to be alone.” The “building” of woman from man leads man to recognize himself as male just as he recognizes her as female. Until verse 23, the Hebrew for “man” is *adam*, related to the Hebrew word for ground, *adamah*. “Man” is formed from the dust of the earth in Genesis 2:7 and is named in relationship to the ground. After the creation of woman, *ishshah*, man is identified for the first time as “*ish*,” for woman, *ishshah*, came out of man, *ish*. Man as male remains incomplete without his biologically sexual other, without whom neither she nor he could be known or know themselves as female and male. As many theologians since at least Karl Barth have noted, God may intend humanity to be in His image as male and female together because it makes humans necessarily relational beings who, not finding completeness apart from each other, also realize their incompleteness apart from God. Our gendered bodies serve as testimonies to our responsibility to live as God’s image and to our incompleteness in ourselves individually.

The biblical recognition of two distinct human sexes, female and male, from the creation of humanity as male and female in Genesis 1:26–27, is affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:4 and Mark 10:6. The Old Testament also narrates the role that sin plays in corrupting human nature, beginning in Genesis 3. The New Testament affirms this corruption of humanity even to the extent of affecting sexual desires (Romans 1:18–32). There is not one aspect of being human or the human experience that is unaffected by the fallen state of man and *personal sin*, including, but not limited to reason, spirituality, self-identity, and the relations between all aspects of humanity. The relationship with the Creator and the

rest of creation, including other human beings, is also affected by human sinfulness. Salvation, found in Christ, includes both a deliverance and healing of the effects of sin. Thus, there is no aspect of being human or the human experience should be left unaffected by God's redemption through the atoning work of Christ.

The human body receives no greater honor than in the doctrine of the Incarnation. That the Word of God would become flesh and dwell among humanity (John 1:14) shows that the human body as created by God can embody the presence of God. Jesus was born, lived, and died a fully human life as God in the flesh, yet without sin. His resurrection was a bodily resurrection as a human being, the first-fruits of all those whom God will raise (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

Jesus lived with all the experience of a human body and all the differentiation a human body possesses in comparison with other human bodies. Jesus grew to a certain height with specific features that made Him identifiable to all who knew Him. He was born with an ancestry that marked Him as Jewish within Israel and the greater Roman world. He had a sexual makeup that identified Him as male. Even the scars on His body, which helped identify Him as the Risen Lord to His followers, remain part of His bodily life after the Resurrection. Jesus experienced all the limitations of a human body, including sleep, hunger, sweat, and pain. While not everything about the body of Jesus is described (His height, weight, complexion, hair color, eye color, etc.), what is described reveals Jesus as a fully embodied human with all that goes with a body, from a genetic heritage to daily hunger.

Jesus remained a fully embodied human being after His resurrection. Jesus is the only concrete example of a final human resurrection. If Jesus rose from the dead with a body that was identifiable, not only as human but as Jesus still bearing the scars of the Crucifixion, then all bodies will be redeemed in the resurrection and still be identifiable. The body then will be continuous with the body now, though made different by the resurrecting power of God.

The full extent of the redemption of fallen humanity, and thus true human identity, is understood in light of the resurrection of the body. The most significant teachings on the resurrection of the body in the New Testament come from the resurrection accounts of the Gospels and 1 Corinthians 15. Both sources highlight the continuity and discontinuity between human bodies before and after the resurrection, but embodiment itself is assured. In Luke 24 and John 20, Jesus must prove that His resurrection is neither the resuscitation of a corpse nor the apparition of a spirit. Jesus shows He is not an apparition by offering His body to be touched by the disciples and by eating in front of them; His scars prove that He is the same Jesus who was crucified (Luke 24:37–43, John 20:20–27). Proof of His

resurrection depends on His continued embodiment, which in turn becomes the guarantee of our physical resurrection. Jesus is no less incarnate as the Risen Lord.

According to many commentators, Paul explains the doctrine of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 because some within the Corinthian church were denigrating the body to the point of denying the truth or necessity of the Resurrection. He defends the teaching in light of the proven resurrection of Jesus (vv.1–11), which guarantees the future resurrection of humans (vv.12–34). In the last half of the chapter, Paul describes the resurrection through comparison with the body's present expression. Resurrected bodies will be continuous with present bodies like a plant is continuous with the seed from which it springs. While the former bodies are perishable, weak, and "dusty," the resurrected bodies will be imperishable, powerful, and "spiritual." It is the "flesh and blood" of the current bodies that cannot inherit the kingdom of God, but God will grant glorified bodies that can. The difference between the natural and glorified bodies is a difference of mortality, not a difference of embodiment.

The doctrine of the resurrection establishes the continuation of the human body as the intention of God in the salvation of humanity. The God who created humans as whole beings (comprised of body and an immaterial nature) intends for life in the age to come to be as whole beings. Redemption is not complete until bodies are raised to life. While this does not mean that there is no experience of God between physical death and resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:6–8), it does mean that wholeness is not expressed without bodies. The Bible presents human beings as whole unities, as bodies of dust initially enlivened by the breath of God (Genesis 2:7) who will one day become bodies of glory vitalized by the Spirit of God. No account of heaven that makes the final resurrection anticlimactic can be considered a Christian view of the afterlife.

True human identity is what is being realized in relationship with Christ, body and an immaterial nature, which will culminate in the Resurrection. No account of humanity that asserts the interior life as the true self over against the body is a biblical understanding of humanity. The true self is a whole being, redeemed and restored through the work of Christ to a glorious resurrection that reflects God's final intention for embodied humanity. That resurrection involves the whole body, because gendered bodies were part of God's good creation and not a result of the Fall, because humanness will not be less as redeemed than it was as fallen, and because the assumption from the Gospels' accounts is that *Jesus* was still recognized as a whole being after His resurrection.

However, at the root of both the sexual immorality as well as the rampant gender confusion is *Humanism*. As fallen human beings, we can never know our purpose from an ego-centric perspective, apart from God, we must interpret reality from a Christ-centric

posture, looking to God's Word which teaches us *why* we are only male and female. Let's go back to creation...

## MALE AND FEMALE, HE CREATED THEM

*"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." Genesis 1:26-28*

In considering *gender rebellion*, there are three striking points that come to mind when reading *Genesis 1:26-28*. One is that God created *human beings*. The second is that God created us in *His image*. The third is that God created us *male and female*...

### God Created Human Beings

Let's take the first truth: *Human beings have been created by God*. I think this begs for an explanation. *Why* did he create us? When you make something, you have a reason for making it. But does the world as we know it give an adequate answer to that question? "Only in Christ can the purpose of creation be achieved."

The Old Testament speaks of man bringing the world under his dominion. It speaks of being created to show forth God's glory (Isa 43:7). It speaks of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. But what do we see? We see a world in rebellion against the Creator. We see the Jewish Scriptures coming to an end with the story of creation utterly unfinished and the hope of glory still to come. So, just believing that God created human beings the way the Jewish Scriptures teach that he did begs for the rest of the story to be told, namely, *Christianity*. Only in Christ can the purpose of creation be achieved.

### God Created Us in His Image

Or take the second truth for example: *God created us in his image*. Surely this must have something to do with why we are here. His purpose in making us must have something wonderful to do with the fact that we are not frogs, or lizards, or birds, or even monkeys. We are human beings in the image of God, we alone and no other animal.

But what a mess we have made of this awesome dignity. Are we like God? Well, yes and no. Yes, we are like God, even sinful and unbelieving there is a likeness. We know this because

in [Genesis 9:6](#) God said to Noah, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.” In other words, even in a world where sin abounds (with the likes of murder), human beings are still in the image of God. They may not be killed like mice and mosquitoes. You forfeit your life if you murder a human being (see [James 3:9](#)).

But are we the image God made us to be? Is not the image marred sometimes almost beyond recognition? Do you feel that you are like God in the way you should be? So, here again, the belief that we were created in God’s image begs for a completion — in this case, a redemption, a transformation, a kind of re-creation. And that is exactly what Christianity brings: By grace are you saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works . . . Put on the new nature created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph 2:8-10;4:24)

God created us in his image, but we have marred it almost beyond recognition, and Jesus is the answer. He comes by faith, he forgives, he cleanses, and he begins a reclamation project called sanctification that will end in the glory that God intended for human beings in the first place. Therefore, since we know that we were created in the image of God, our sin and corruption begs for an answer. And *Jesus is the answer*.

## God Created Us Male and Female

The third truth in these verses is that *God created us male and female*. And this too points to Christianity and begs for the completion of Christ. How? In at least two ways. One comes from the mystery of marriage. The other comes from the historical ugliness of male-female relationships in sin.

## The Mystery of Marriage

Take the mystery of marriage. In Genesis 2:24, right after the account of how woman was created, Moses (the writer of Genesis) says, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” Now when the apostle Paul quotes this verse in Ephesians 5:31, he says, “*This is a great mystery, and I say it refers to Christ and the church*.” And, with that as his clue, he unfolds the meaning of marriage: It’s a symbol of Christ’s love for the church represented in the husband’s loving headship toward his wife; and it’s a symbol of the church’s glad submission to Christ represented in the wife’s relation to her husband. He calls Genesis 2:24 a “mystery” because God did not reveal clearly all his purposes for the marriage of male and female in Genesis. There were hints and pointers in the Old Testament that marriage was like the relation of God and his people. But only when Christ came did the

mystery of marriage get spelled out in detail. It is meant to be a portrait of Christ's covenant with his people, his commitment to the church.

Do you see, then, how God's creating man as male and female, and then ordaining marriage as the relationship in which a male leaves mother and father and cleaves to his wife in covenant commitment — how this act of creation and this ordinance of marriage beg for the revelation of Christ and his church? They beg for Christianity as the revelation of the mystery.

“Christianity completes our comprehension of the marriage covenant.”

This is a very foreign thought to most people, even most Christians, because marriage is a secular institution as well as a Christian one. You find it in all cultures, not just in Christian societies. So we are not prone to think of all the non-Christian marriages that we know as mysterious symbols of Christ's relation to the church. But they are, and our very existence as male and female in marriage cries out for Christ to make himself known in his relation to the church. Christianity completes our comprehension of the marriage covenant.

Let me paint a picture for you here and give it a twist that you may not have thought of before. Christ is coming again to this earth. Even as you saw him go, he will come again, the angels said. So imagine that day with me. The heavens are opened, the trumpet sounds, and the Son of Man appears on the clouds with power and great glory and with tens of thousands of holy angels shining like the sun. He sends them out to gather his elect from the four winds and raises from the dead those who died in Christ. He gives them new and glorious bodies like his own, and transforms the rest of us in the twinkling of an eye to be fit for glory.

The age-long preparation of the bride of Christ (the church!) is finally complete and he takes her arm, as it were, and leads her to the table. The marriage supper of the Lamb has come. He stands at the head of the table and a great silence falls over the millions of saints. And he says, “This, my beloved, was the meaning of marriage. This is what it all pointed toward. This is why I created you male and female and ordained the covenant of marriage. Henceforth there will be no more marriage and giving in marriage, for the final reality has come and the shadow can pass away” (see Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34-36).

Now, recall what we are doing: We are trying to see that the third truth, God created us in his image as male and female, points to Christianity as its completion. And I said it does this in two ways. The first was by the mystery of marriage. The creation of human beings as male and female provides the necessary framework in creation for the ordinance of marriage. You could not have marriage without male and female. And the meaning of marriage is not known in its essence or fullness until we see it as a parable of Christ's relationship to the church.

So, creation as male and female points to marriage and marriage points to Christ and the church. And therefore the belief that God created us in his image as male and female is not complete without Christianity — without Christ and his saving work for the church.

## **The Historical Ugliness of Male-Female Relationships**

Now I said that there was another way that the creation of male and female in God's image points to Christianity as the necessary completion, namely, from its distortion in the historical ugliness of male-female relationships. Let me try to explain.

When sin entered the world, the effect on our relationship as male and female was devastating. God comes to Adam after he had eaten the forbidden fruit and asks what has happened. Adam says in [Genesis 3:12](#), "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree and I ate." In other words, it is her fault (or yours for giving her to me!), so if somebody must die for eating the fruit, it better be her!

There you have the beginning of all domestic violence, all wife abuse, all rape, all sexual slurs, all the ways of belittling woman whom God created in his own image.

Genesis 3:16 pronounces a curse on fallen man and woman like this: To the woman, God says, "*I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*" In other words, the result of sin and the curse of our age is conflict between the sexes. This verse is not a description of the way things should be. This is a description of the cursed way things are going to be while sin reigns. Dominating men and devious women. This is not the meaning of male and female in God's image. It is the ugliness of sin.

Now how does this ugliness point to Christianity? It points to Christianity because it begs for the healing that Christianity brings to the relationship between men and women. If God created us in his image *as male and female*, that implies equality of personhood, equality of dignity, mutual respect, harmony, complementarity, a unified destiny. But where is all this in the history of the world? It's in the healing that Jesus brings.

## **Two Observations About the Healing Jesus Brings**

There is so much to say here. But let me just mention two things.

### **1. The Destiny of Being Created Male and Female**

In 1 Peter 3:7, Peter says that a Christian husband and wife are “fellow heirs of the grace of life.” What does this mean? It means that in Christ men and women recover what was meant by being created male and female in God’s image. It means that together as male and female they are to image-forth the glory of God and together as fellow-heirs they are to inherit the glory of God.

Creation as male and female in God’s image (when you see it alongside sin) begs for the completion of the healing that comes with the transforming work of Christ and the inheritance he purchased for sinners. Christ recovers from sin the reality that male and female are fellow-heirs of the grace of life.

## 2. The Meaning of Singleness as Male and Female

The other thing to mention about the way Christ turns things around and overcomes the ugliness of our warfare and fulfills the destiny of being created male and female in the image of God is found in 1 Corinthians 7. There Paul says something almost unbelievably radical for that day:

*“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I...But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn...He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife...And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”*

*1 Cor 7:8a-9, 32, 35*

Christ recovers from sin the reality that male and female are fellow-heirs of the grace of life. Do you see what this implies? It implies that the healing that Jesus brings to male and female created in God’s image is not dependent on marriage. In fact, Paul’s experience as a single man (and the model of Jesus as a single man) taught him that there is a kind of single-minded devotion to the Lord possible to the single man or woman that is not usually the portion of married saints.

Another way to say it is this: Marriage is a temporary institution for this age until the resurrection of the dead. The essence of its meaning and purpose is to represent Christ’s relation to the church. But when the reality comes, the representation as we know it will be laid aside. And there will be neither marriage nor giving in marriage in the age to come. And those who have been single and devoted to the Lord will sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb as full fellow-heirs of the grace of life. And according to their devotion to the Lord and their sacrifices they will be rewarded with affections and relationships and joys beyond all imagination.

## In His Image

So let me sum up what we have seen.

1. *God created human beings.* And as the Old Testament closes, this awesome fact demands the rest of the story, Christianity, to make sense out of what God was up to. His purposes in creation are incomplete without the work of Christ.
2. God created us *in his image*. But we have marred the image so badly it is scarcely recognizable. Therefore, this truth begs for the completion of Christianity because what Jesus does is reclaim what has been lost. It is called a “new creation in Christ.” The image is restored in righteousness and holiness.
3. God created us in his *image as male and female*. And this too begs for completion in the truth of Christianity. No one can fully grasp what it means to be male and female in marriage until they see that marriage is meant to portray Christ and the church. And no one can know the true destiny of being created male and female in God’s image until they know that male and female are fellow heirs of the grace of life. And finally no one can fully understand the meaning of singleness as male and female in God’s image until they learn from Christ that in the age to come there will be no marriage, and therefore the glorious destiny of being male and female in God’s image is not dependent on marriage, but on devotion to the Lord. Therefore dwell on these truths: God created you; he created you in his image; and he created you male or female that you might be utterly and radically and uniquely devoted to the Lord.

In conclusion, the assertion there are other *valid genders* besides male and female, let alone these genders are fluid based on sentiment, is grossly unscriptural and a clear manifestation of rebellion.