

Examining the Cosmos

Session 11

Reference Document 17

THE BIBLE EXPLAINS WHAT MAKES PEOPLE DIFFERENT

According to the biblical story, the only earthly creatures God endowed with the capacity to communicate with him were humans. It says people not only share the birds' and mammals' soulish characteristics but also manifest some profound differences.

The Genesis text says God created the first human male and female “in his own image” (Gen.1:27). Volumes have been written on what this expression means. Among other things, it means every individual has a spiritual dimension—an awareness of a “self” and the capacity to imagine the thoughts and feeling of other individuals. And human soulish characteristics are developed to a far greater degree than those of any other creature.

People exhibit a curiosity beyond what basic survival, reproduction, and play require. It motivates questions such as “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “What makes the universe tick?” “Why is the universe the way it is?” “Is there a God?” “Why must people suffer?” and “What will happen to me when I die?”

This spiritual nature also causes individuals to devote significant time to reflection, meditation, and worship. And according to the creation accounts in Job and Psalms, just as God created advanced birds and mammals to serve and please humans, so he created people to serve and please him. This declaration of humanity's unique spiritual qualities leads to some specific scientific predications. In particular, the introduction of humans to the chain of life should have resulted in a virtual explosion of culture. And that is exactly what anthropologists observe.

Humanity's arrival brought about the sudden and pervasive appearance of clothing, complex tools, jewelry, music, art, and religious ceremony. Discounting technological advances, these cultural capabilities show no signs of evolving. The earliest humans were as expressive with their art, music, and spirituality as humans today.

Physical anthropologists have determined that only HOMO SAPIENS SAPIENS (distinct from Neanderthals, HOMO ERECTUS, and archaic Homo sapiens) possess the brain structure to support various spiritual activities. Geneticists have demonstrated through mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosomal DNA analysis that the present human species is traceable back to one man and one woman who lived less than 100,000 years ago. Many discoveries of the past decade have scientifically confirmed what the Bible says about the origin and nature of the human species.