

# **Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 6, Image of God, Garden Trees Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 6, Image of God, Garden Trees, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt covers several aspects of Old Testament studies, focusing on Genesis. He clarifies the distinction between genealogy and chronology, emphasizing that biblical genealogies are not precise timelines. The lecture then explores the multifaceted meaning of the "image of God" in humanity, considering spiritual, relational, and physical dimensions, and its implications for human behavior and destiny. Finally, Hildebrandt examines the symbolic meaning of the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, discussing their significance within the broader narrative of creation and the fall.

**2. 10 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 6 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Introduction → Old Testament Literature).**



**Hildebrandt\_OTLit\_  
Session06.mp3**

### 3. Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 6, Image of God, Garden Trees

#### Old Testament Literature Study Guide: Genesis 1-3 & the Image of God

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 complete sentences.

1. Why does the lecturer argue that the age of the earth should not be a test of orthodoxy?
2. Explain the difference between genealogy and chronology, as presented in the lecture.
3. Describe the "Fiat-Fulfillment" pattern found in Genesis 1.
4. How does the lecturer explain the Parallel Day Scheme in Genesis 1?
5. According to the lecture, what does it mean for humans to be created in God's image?
6. Name and briefly explain two of the four aspects of the Image of God in humankind described in the lecture.
7. How does the lecture address the problem of the "us" in the phrase "let us make man in our image?"
8. What is meant by the assertion that human beings are "vice-regents" over creation?
9. According to the lecture, what do the Hebrew words tselem and demut imply about the image of God in humankind?
10. How does the lecturer use the examples of the Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil to discuss choice?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The lecturer argues that the age of the earth shouldn't be a test of orthodoxy because the Bible does not specify how old the earth is. Therefore, any claims about age are conjecture and cannot be definitively asserted as biblical truth. Churches should not split over this issue as it is an opinion, not a matter of established doctrine.

2. Genealogy refers to the lineage of individuals, such as the father-son relationships listed in the Bible, but chronology has to do with linear time. Genealogies are not meant to provide a timeline; they establish familial connections but can have gaps. You cannot add up generations to determine the age of the Earth.
3. The Fiat-Fulfillment pattern in Genesis 1 involves God's spoken word ("And God said") which initiates a command, and then the subsequent fulfillment of that command (e.g., "Let there be light," followed by "and there was light"), and then God evaluating that act ("and He saw that it was good."). This pattern repeats for each day of creation.
4. The Parallel Day Scheme in Genesis 1 pairs days of creation. Day 1, the creation of light, is parallel to day 4, the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. Day 2, the separation of waters, parallels day 5, the creation of fish and birds. Day 3, the creation of dry land, parallels day 6, the creation of land animals and humans.
5. Being made in God's image means that humans possess qualities that reflect God, distinguishing them from the rest of creation. The lecturer suggests this includes spiritual, moral, relational, and dominion-focused qualities. It also includes physical likeness.
6. Two aspects of the Image of God are spiritual and moral qualities and relationality. Spiritual and moral qualities refer to humanity's capacity for righteousness, wickedness, holiness, and knowledge. The relational aspect highlights that humans are created for relationships, and the "us" in "let us make man in our image" implies that we are shaped by community.
7. The "us" in "let us make man in our image" can be explained several ways. First, the plural of majesty where the "us" is a king referring to himself. Second, the idea of a heavenly court where God is addressing the angels. And third, the plurality of the Trinity. The lecturer favors the "heavenly court" explanation, suggesting it shows God addressing his host of angels.
8. Human beings, as vice-regents, rule on earth on behalf of God, the ultimate sovereign. This means that God gives humans authority to care for creation. As such, they are representatives of His rule.
9. The Hebrew words *tselem* (image) and *demut* (likeness) are primarily physical terms, not moral ones. This suggests that humans physically resemble God in some way, just as statues resembled the Assyrian kings. This could be understood as a physical resemblance to the pre-incarnate Jesus.

10. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil relate to human free choice. Humans were free to eat from the Tree of Life, implying they could live in right relationship with God forever. God did not force humanity to love Him, but gave them the choice to choose.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the literary patterns (Fiat-Fulfillment and Parallel Days) in Genesis 1. How do these patterns contribute to our understanding of the creation account?
2. Explore the different interpretations of the "us" in Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in our image"). Evaluate the lecturer's arguments and propose which interpretation seems most compelling, and why?
3. Analyze the four aspects of the Image of God (spiritual-moral, relational, dominion/rule, and physical likeness). How do these aspects overlap, and how do they contribute to our understanding of what it means to be human?
4. Explain how the concept of humanity as "vice-regents" of creation shapes a Christian understanding of environmental responsibility and care for the earth.
5. Assess the lecturer's treatment of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, paying particular attention to his treatment of choice, love, and the role of Satan.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Amoral:** Lacking a sense of right or wrong; not operating in the realm of morality.

**Chronology:** The arrangement of events in time; a linear timeline.

**Conjecture:** An opinion or conclusion formed on the basis of incomplete information; speculation.

**Demut:** The Hebrew word for "likeness," often used in conjunction with tselem to describe the image of God in humanity.

**Dominion/Rule:** The authority or power to govern; in the context of the image of God, humanity's role as stewards of creation.

**Fiat-Fulfillment Pattern:** A literary pattern in Genesis 1 where God's spoken command (fiat) is followed by its accomplishment or realization (fulfillment).

**Genealogy:** A record of descent from an ancestor; a family history; a lineage.

**Image of God:** The concept that human beings are created to reflect God in certain ways; often understood as having spiritual, moral, relational, and dominion aspects.

**Immoral:** Not conforming to accepted standards of morality; wrong, unethical.

**Orthodoxy:** The accepted or traditional belief; adherence to established doctrine.

**Parallel Day Scheme:** A structural pattern in Genesis 1 where days of creation are paired: Days 1 & 4, 2 & 5, and 3 & 6.

**Plural of Majesty:** A grammatical construct where a plural form is used to express a singular concept when referring to something of great importance.

**Relational:** The capacity to form connections with others; an aspect of the Image of God reflecting the “us-ness” of creation.

**Sovereign:** Having supreme power or authority; a ruler.

**Spiritual/Moral Qualities:** Refers to humans' capacity for righteousness, wickedness, holiness, unholiness, and knowledge; an aspect of the Image of God.

**Tselem:** The Hebrew word for "image," often used in conjunction with demut to describe the image of God in humanity.

**Vice-Regent:** A person appointed to rule in place of a monarch; in the context of Genesis, humans rule on Earth as representatives of God.

## 4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt:

### **Briefing Document: Analysis of Dr. Hildebrandt's Lecture on Genesis**

#### **Introduction:**

This document summarizes key themes and concepts presented by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt in his lecture on Genesis. Hildebrandt explores the interpretation of Genesis, cautioning against rigid, literalist readings, and emphasizing the importance of understanding the literary patterns, historical context, and theological implications of the text. The lecture covers the age of the earth, genealogies, the creation account, and the nature of humanity as made in God's image.

#### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

##### **1. The Age of the Earth is Not a Test of Orthodoxy:**

- Hildebrandt stresses that the Bible does not explicitly state the earth's age. "There is no verse anywhere in the Bible that says exactly how old the earth is."
- He argues that the age of the earth should not be a point of division or a "test of orthodoxy," as different interpretations are possible without contradicting core Christian beliefs.
- He cautions against placing too much weight on personal conjecture, as it could be wrong: "So you have got to back off and realize: can your own conjectures be wrong? I say, your conjectures can be wrong."
- The age of the earth is a minor point compared to major theological truths: "My point is major on the majors, minor on the minors. The age of the earth is a minor point; don't major on that..."

##### **1. Science and the Bible:**

- Hildebrandt cautions against "pushing science into and grabbing science out of the Bible."
- He cites the example of the "four corners of the earth" in Isaiah 11:12 to highlight that biblical descriptions are often poetic and not meant to be scientific: "This is a poetic description, it's not meant to be taken as a scientific description."

- His overarching point is to prioritize the theological and spiritual message over literal interpretations, avoiding literal interpretations that might contradict scientific findings.

#### 1. **Genealogy is Not Chronology:**

- Genealogies are not intended to provide a precise timeline for events, therefore, the age of the earth can not be determined by adding up the ages in the Bible's genealogies. "Are genealogies meant to give us chronology?" Hildebrandt says, "Chronology and genealogy are two different things."
- He points out that genealogies often skip names, using Matthew 1 as an example where three names are dropped to create a pattern of fourteen generations: "How did Mathew make it come out to be fourteen, fourteen, and fourteen? Guess what, he did it by dropping three of the names."
- The word "father" can mean "ancestor" so the lineage can skip over many generations.

#### 1. **Literary Patterns in Genesis 1:**

- Hildebrandt highlights the "Fiat-Fulfillment" pattern in the creation account: "And God said" (announcement), "let there be..." (command), and then "there was..." (fulfillment). This pattern is followed by God's evaluation, "and he saw that it was good," and the end of the day marker, "and there was evening and there was morning."
- He also identifies a "Parallel Day" structure, where days 1-3 parallel days 4-6: Light and light bearers, waters above/below and birds/fish, and dry land and land animals/humans.
- Days 1-3 are days of "forming" and 4-6 are days of "filling," referencing Genesis 1:2 - "the earth was formless and empty" and so God forms that which was formless and fills that which was empty.

#### 1. **The Image of God in Man:**

- Hildebrandt emphasizes that humans are unique in being created "in the image of God," as seen in Genesis 1:26-27: "Let us make man in our image and in our likeness...So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him, male and female he created them."
- He explores four aspects of the image of God:

- **Spiritual and Moral Qualities:** Humans have the capacity for knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, unlike animals, and are therefore moral agents. "Human beings are made spiritually and morally like God: we can know, we can be righteous or unrighteous, we can be holy, and we can be unholy."
- **Relational:** The phrase "Let us make man in our image" points to a relational aspect of God that humans also share; humans are created for relationship with God and with each other and come from a "we" to an "us." The "us" shapes the "I".
- This "us" may refer to a plurality of majesty, a heavenly court, or the trinity, though Hildebrandt prefers the concept of the "heavenly court." "So the 'us' is of the heavenly court, does that make sense? 'Let us make man in our image,' that God is talking in the heavenly court."
- The "us" shapes us: "Does your culture shape who you are? Does your family background shape who you are?"
- **Dominion and Rule:** Humans are made to rule over the earth as God's "vice-regents". "God puts humankind on earth to do what? To rule. Do we rule in place of God? Are we like, the term I want is 'vice-regents.'" He adds, "Has God given some of his rule over for us to administer?"
- **Physical Resemblance:** Hildebrandt controversially proposes that humans physically resemble God, using the Hebrew words *tselem* and *demut* to suggest a physical similarity and ties this to Jesus having a human form from eternity. "What I'm going to try to suggest is we actually look like God physically." He says these terms are physical, not moral. He also suggests that Jesus, being the image of God, took human form in that image. "Is it possible that Jesus was in a human body or like a human body before the creation and that we were made in the image of Christ..."

#### 1. Implications of the Image of God:

- The image of God gives humans inherent dignity and worth. "People are still made in the image of God but its marred and there are implications." This should affect how we treat one another.
- The image of God is marred after the fall, but not lost. "Did we lose the image of God? James tells us—no, but the image may be marred." This makes the goal of becoming more like God a hope for the future.



- The hope of Christ's return purifies us as we try to live in accordance with His image. "The image of God in us will be renewed and we will be made right, we will be purified in his sight when Jesus comes back."
- It challenges individuals to see the image of God even in those they dislike or disagree with. "Can you see the image of God in other people? Can you see the image of God in people you dislike? Are they made in the image of God?"
- It urges believers to treat all individuals with honor and respect, as a way of honoring God Himself. "treat all people with honor and dignity."

#### 1. **The Tree of Life and The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:**

- Hildebrandt proposes that the tree of life is a symbol of a right relationship with God. He suggests it could represent a sacrament: "I wonder if the tree of life stands for right life and right relationship with God and that it is taken as a sacrament."
- He explains that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test of free will and that God did not force humankind to love Him, but gave them a choice. "Did God make us so that we had to love him or did God give us a choice? God gave us a choice."
- Hildebrandt notes the "serpent speaks the truth" in that, by eating of the tree, the eyes of Adam and Eve are opened and they become like God knowing good and evil. He warns that Satan often embeds evil in truth, so it must be carefully examined. "What I'm saying is be careful. Is Satan an angel of light or is he Darth Vader that's always evil? Is Satan an angel of light?"

#### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Hildebrandt's lecture provides a nuanced and thought-provoking approach to interpreting Genesis. He urges careful reading, an understanding of literary structure, and a focus on the major theological and ethical themes. By cautioning against rigid literalism, he invites his listeners to consider the implications of the text for human dignity, the relationship between science and faith, and the nature of God. The idea of humans being made in the image of God remains a central theme.

## 5. FAQs on Hildebrandt, Old Testament Literature, Session 6, Image of God, Garden Trees, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Okay, here's an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source material:

### Frequently Asked Questions about Genesis and the Image of God

1. **Does the Bible specify the age of the earth, and should that be a major point of contention among Christians?**
2. No, the Bible does not state explicitly how old the earth is. Therefore, the age of the earth should not be a test of orthodoxy or a reason to divide churches. It's a matter of conjecture and individual interpretation, as there is no "Thus saith the Lord" on the topic. Opinions on this matter are varied and can even change as understanding evolves. It's crucial to "major on the majors" and treat differing opinions with grace rather than making it a central issue of faith.
3. **Why is it problematic to use genealogies in the Bible to determine chronology, like the age of the Earth or when certain events happened?**
4. Genealogies in the Bible, such as those found in Genesis and Matthew, are not necessarily meant to be precise chronological records. They often contain gaps and omissions. For example, the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 skips names to create a pattern of three sets of fourteen generations. The term "father" can also refer to "ancestor," indicating that there may be multiple generations of people that are not listed. Therefore, using these genealogies to calculate exact timelines is unreliable. Genealogies are for establishing lineage, not precise chronologies.
5. **What is the "Fiat-Fulfillment Pattern" in Genesis 1, and how does it help understand the creation account?**
6. The "Fiat-Fulfillment Pattern" is a literary structure in Genesis 1 where each day of creation follows a specific pattern. First, God announces his intent with "And God said." Then, he issues a command like "Let there be light," "Let there be a firmament," etc. Following this, the command is fulfilled, and God evaluates his work, stating that "it was good." Each day concludes with "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day," and so on. This pattern highlights the structured and purposeful nature of God's creative acts.

7. **What is the "Parallel Day Scheme" of creation, and how does it help to structure Genesis 1?**
8. The "Parallel Day Scheme" is a way to organize the days of creation in pairs: Days 1 and 4, 2 and 5, 3 and 6 correspond to each other with Day 7 being the Sabbath. Day one, the creation of light, corresponds to day four, the creation of light bearers (sun, moon, and stars). Day two, the separation of waters, corresponds to day five, the creation of fish and birds that inhabit water and sky. Day three, the creation of dry land, corresponds to day six, the creation of land animals and humans. This pattern of correspondence shows that God both forms and then fills the earth, establishing parallel creations that work together.
9. **According to Genesis, what does it mean for humans to be made in the image of God, and why is this important?**

Being made in the image of God, according to Genesis, means that humans possess several distinct qualities that set them apart from the rest of creation. These include spiritual and moral capacities (such as the ability to know right from wrong and to seek holiness), a relational aspect (humans are designed for relationship with God and with each other), a capacity for dominion and rule over the earth, and possibly a physical resemblance to God (as seen in Jesus' human form). This image is not lost when humans sin, although it may be marred, it shapes how humans should treat each other and the environment.

1. **How are the spiritual/moral, relational, and ruling aspects of the image of God expressed in humans?**
2. The spiritual/moral aspect of the image of God is shown in our capacity for knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, as well as our ability to make moral judgments. The relational aspect is reflected in God's "us" when creating humans, indicating that humans are built for relationships within a community and with God. The ruling aspect entails humans acting as God's vice-regents, tasked to care for and rule the earth on his behalf. This includes managing the environment responsibly, not in a destructive or dominant way. The idea of physical resemblance, while debated, suggests a similarity with God's form as revealed through Christ.

**3. What is the significance of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden?**

4. The Tree of Life is understood as representing right life and a right relationship with God, and taking from it can be taken as a sacrament. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil symbolizes moral agency and the ability to choose. God did not want to force humans to love or obey him, so they had a choice. The consumption of fruit from the tree resulted in the human race gaining experience with evil as well as knowledge. The choice to eat from it, against God's command, was a rejection of God and his way.

**5. Why does the serpent's deception in Genesis 3 seem to include elements of truth, and how does this relate to Satan's broader tactics?**

6. The serpent, representing Satan, uses truths to deceive. When the serpent tells Adam and Eve that eating from the tree will "open their eyes" and make them "like God," these claims are, to some extent, accurate. God confirms they have gained the knowledge of good and evil in Gen. 3:22. This illustrates that Satan often mixes truth with lies to make his deceptions more persuasive. Satan isn't just an evil entity but is capable of appearing as an "angel of light," making his lies even more dangerous because they are embedded within and alongside elements of truth, making it difficult to discern what is good or bad.