

Essentials of Christianity (pt 19)
7/11/2010

Introduction _____

Good morning saints of God. Today we'll continue our survey of the essentials of Christianity.

We have now moved into our next field of study:

Anthropology & Hamartiology: The Doctrines of Man and Sin.

Anthropology will be our first subject: Biblical anthropology involves the creation of man, man in the "image of God," the constitutional nature of man, and man after the fall. Other areas of concern include human dignity, freedom, depravity, culture, and society.

Last week we touched on the subject of anthropology just a little by doing a brief intro on the origin of man. Today we are going to delve in a little deeper.

Let's begin by opening our Bibles to **Genesis 1:24-31**.

Before we begin reading in Genesis, I'd like us to read through a quote together.

How necessary it is to consider the doctrine of man, seeing that all the doctrines of salvation are definitely related to him. After all the disappointment and sorrow man has occasioned his Creator by his sin and disobedience, is it not a wonder that He has any good intentions toward His self marred handiwork? It was God's bountiful provision for His sinning creatures that led David to ask:

NAU Psalm 8:4 What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him?

It would have been a far darker world than it is, if God had abandoned man to outer darkness forever. Man, God's masterpiece of creation, has brought untold misery into the world, yet God has been so merciful toward him, as can be proven by the doctrine of salvation.

To understand aright what God has provided for man, it is important to have a knowledge of man's nature and need.¹

So we're going to take a good hard look at ourselves as we take a good hard look at mankind in general.

The logical place to begin is in the beginning-- **in Genesis.**

The origin of man is really a no-brainer. It does not take a degree in any of the sciences to understand where man came from, or understand what makes him tick spiritually.

It really is a shame that human sciences have muddied the water when it comes to the study of man's origin.

Here in our text, we're coming into this toward the end of the creation account--**day 6.**

NAU Genesis 1:24 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so.

¹ Herbert Lockyer, *All the Doctrines of the Bible: A Study and Analysis of Major Bible Doctrines* (Zondervan Publishing Company, 1966).

²⁵ *God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.*

Vs 26-- "Then..." The beginning of verse 26 draws a hard and fast line between this event and the preceding one.

^{NAU} *Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

²⁷ *God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

²⁸ *God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

²⁹ *Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;*

³⁰ *and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so.*

³¹ *God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

So the creation of man takes place on day 6. A clear line of separation is drawn between his creation and that of the animals.

The animals were all brought forth “*after their kind.*” An important phrase which indicates the designated created groupings of particular species of living things: plants, reptiles, mammals, fish, etc.,.

Man was created as a completely unique, altogether different order.

A more detailed account of mans creation is in the next chapter--**turn to Genesis 2:7-25.**

^{NAU} Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

¹² The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.

¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush.

¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place.

²² The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵ *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

And so there you have it! Now, where the study of anthropology takes us, goes way beyond where the biologist can take us.

Speaking of which: do you know that it is impossible for those who take up any field of science, to properly assess their field of study without a biblical world view?

They cannot understand all that they need to know without an understanding of the Designer.

Maybe I'll get into that a little more later on.

Going back to our text. Two distinct features in this narrative clue us into the uniqueness of man.

1. Gen 1:27
2. Gen 2:7

^{NAU} Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

^{NAU} Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (soul).

Man was created in God's image; and man received the breath of life-and he became a living soul.

Much *can* and *has* been said about these features from these passages. I will attempt to summarize the essential things that we need to glean from this.

Let's talk about what it means to be created in the image of God.

Out of all the creatures God made, only one creature, man, is said to be made "in the image of God." What does that mean? We may use the following definition: The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God.

When God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26), the meaning is that God plans to make a creature similar to himself. Both the Hebrew word for "image" and the Hebrew word for "likeness" refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an "image" of. The word image can also be used of something that represents something else.²

Theologians have spent much time attempting to specify one characteristic of man, or a very few, in which the image of God is primarily seen. Through out the scriptures we have ample evidence for a correct formulation for what it means that man is created in God's image.

Specific Aspects of Our Likeness to God.

Moral Aspect: We are creatures who are morally accountable before God for our actions. Corresponding to that accountability, we have an inner sense of right and wrong that sets us apart from animals. When we act according to God's moral standards, our likeness to God is reflected in behavior that is holy and righteous before him, but, by contrast, our unlikeness to God is reflected whenever we sin.

Spiritual Aspect: We have not only physical bodies but also immaterial spirits, and we can therefore act in ways that are significant in the immaterial, spiritual realm of existence. This means that we have a spiritual life that enables us to relate to God as persons, to pray and praise him, and to hear him speaking his words to us. No animal will

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Zondervan Publishing, 1994).

ever spend an hour in intercessory prayer for the salvation of a relative or a friend! Connected with this spiritual life is the fact that we have immortality; we will not cease to exist but will live forever.

Mental Aspect: We have an ability to reason and think logically and learn that sets us apart from the animal world. Animals sometimes exhibit remarkable behavior in solving mazes or working out problems in the physical world, but they certainly do not engage in abstract reasoning—there is no such thing as the "history of canine philosophy," for example, nor have any animals since creation developed at all in their understanding of ethical problems or use of philosophical concepts, etc. No group of chimpanzees will ever sit around the table arguing about the doctrine of the Trinity or the relative merits of Calvinism or Arminianism!

Relational Aspects: In addition to our unique ability to relate to God, there are other relational aspects of being in God's image. Although animals no doubt have some sense of community with each other, the depth of interpersonal harmony experienced in human marriage, in a human family when it functions according to God's principles, and in a church when a community of believers is walking in fellowship with the Lord and with each other, is much greater than the interpersonal harmony experienced by any animals. In our family relationships and in the church, we are also unique when compared to angels, who do not marry or bear children or live in the company of God's redeemed sons and daughters.

Man is like God also in his relationship to the rest of creation. Specifically, man has been given the right to rule over the creation and when Christ returns will even be given authority to sit in judgment over angels (1Cor 6:3; Gen 1:26,28; Ps 8:6-8).

Physical Aspects: Is there any sense in which our human bodies are also a part of what it means to be made in the image of God? Certainly we should not think that our physical bodies imply that God himself has a body, for "God is spirit" (John 4:24), and it is sin to think of him or to portray him in any way that would imply that he has a material or a physical body (see Ex 20:4; Ps 115:3-8; Rom 1:23).

But certainly our physical bodies are a very important part of our existence and, as transformed when Christ returns, they will continue to be part of our existence for all eternity (see 1 Cor 15:43-45,51-55). Our bodies therefore have been created by God as suitable instruments to represent in a physical way our human nature, which has been made to be like God's own nature. In fact, almost everything we do is done by means of the use of our physical bodies—our thinking, our moral judgments, our prayer and praise, our demonstrations of love and concern for each other—all are done using the physical bodies God has given us.

Therefore, if we are careful to point out that we are not saying that God has a physical body, we may say that our physical bodies in various ways reflect something of God's own character as well. Moreover, much physical movement and demonstration of God-given skill comes about through the use of our body.

Finally, our appreciation of the ways in which we are like God can be enhanced by the realization that, unlike the rest of God's creation, we have an ability to grow to become more like God throughout our lives. Our moral sense can be more highly developed through study of Scripture and prayer. Our moral behavior can reflect more and more the holiness of God (2 Cor 7:1; 1 Peter 1:16; et al.). Our spiritual life can be enriched and deepened. Our use of reason and language can become more accurate and truthful and more honoring to God. Our sense of the future can become intensified as we grow in our hope of living with God forever. Our future existence can be enriched as we lay up treasures in heaven and seek for increased heavenly reward (see Matt 6:19-21; 1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10).

Our ability to rule over the creation can be extended by faithful use of the gifts God has given us; our faithfulness to the God-given purposes for our creation as men and women can be increased as we follow biblical principles in our families; our creativity can be employed in ways that are more and more pleasing to God; our emotions can be more and more conformed to the pattern of Scripture so that we become more like David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14). Our interpersonal harmony in our families and in the church can reflect more and more the unity that exists among the persons in the Trinity.

As we consciously seek to grow into greater likeness to God in all these areas, we also demonstrate an ability that itself sets us apart from the rest of creation.³

^{NAU} Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

In discussing this important subject of man as image bearer, the Genesis account shows that this is linked to the fact that man was made a *living soul*.

Unlike the rest of the creatures that roam the earth, man **alone** is endowed with this unique characteristic.

This “soulish” aspect of man is often referred to as the **constitution of man**: what constitutes man in his essential being: **WHAT MAN IS?**

How many parts are there to man? Everyone agrees that we have physical bodies. Most people (both Christians and non-Christians) sense that they also have an immaterial part—a "soul" that will live on after their bodies die.

But here the agreement ends. Some people believe that in addition to "body" and "soul" we have a third part, a "spirit" that most directly relates to God. The view that man is made of three parts (body, soul, and spirit) is called trichotomy. This has been a common view in popular evangelical Bible teaching. According to many trichotomists, man's soul includes his intellect, his emotions, and his will. They maintain that all people have such a soul, and that the different

³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.

elements of the soul can either serve God or be yielded to sin. They argue that man's spirit is a higher faculty in man that comes alive when a person becomes a Christian (see Rom 8:10: "If Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness"). The spirit of a person then would be that part of him or her that most directly worships and prays to God (see John 4:24; Phil 3:3).

Others have said that "spirit" is not a separate part of man, but simply another term for "soul," and that both terms are used interchangeably in Scripture to talk about the immaterial part of man, the part that lives on after our bodies die. The view that man is made up of two parts (body and soul/spirit) is called dichotomy. Those who hold this view often agree that Scripture uses the word spirit more frequently when referring to our relationship to God, but such usage (they say) is not uniform, and the word soul is also used in all the ways that spirit can be used.

Outside the realm of evangelical thought we find yet another view, the idea that man cannot exist at all apart from a physical body, and therefore there can be no separate existence for any "soul" after the body dies (although this view can allow for the resurrection of the whole person at some future time). The view that man is only one element, and that his body is the person, is called monism. According to monism, the scriptural terms soul and spirit are just other expressions for the "person" himself, or for the person's "life." This view has not generally been adopted by evangelical theologians because so many scriptural texts seem clearly to affirm that our souls or spirits live on after our bodies die (see Gen 35:18; Ps 31:5; Luke 23:43,46; Acts 7:59; Phil 1:23-24; 2 Cor 5:8; Heb 12:23; Rev 6:9; 20:4; and chapter 42).

But the other two views continue to be held in the Christian world today. Although dichotomy has been held more commonly through the history of the church and is far more common among evangelical scholars today, trichotomy has also had many supporters. We can dismiss the monist view outright.

Scripture Does Speak of an Immaterial Part of Man That Can Exist Without His Body

A number of non-Christian philosophers have vigorously challenged the idea that man has any immaterial part at all such as a soul or spirit. Perhaps partially in response to such criticism, some evangelical theologians have seemed hesitant to affirm a dichotomy or trichotomy in human existence. They have instead affirmed repeatedly that the Bible views man as a unity—a fact which is true but should not be used to deny that Scripture also views man's unified nature as made up of at least two distinct elements. Of course, philosophers who assume that there is no spiritual realm beyond the reach of our sense perception, and who then go from that assumption to argue on the basis of our sense perception that there is no God, or heaven, or angels, or demons, will use similar arguments to deny the existence of a distinct soul within human beings.

The perception that we have a spirit or soul belongs to the invisible, spiritual realm, and is, even in Christians, generally only a faint, subjective perception. Therefore, our knowledge of the existence of the human soul must be primarily based on Scripture, in which God clearly testifies to the existence of this immaterial aspect of our beings. The fact that this truth about our existence cannot be clearly known apart from the testimony of Scripture should not cause us to shrink from affirming it.

Scripture is very clear that we do have a soul that is distinct from our physical bodies, which not only can function somewhat independently of our ordinary thought processes (1 Cor 14:14; Rom 8:16), but also, when we die, is able to go on consciously acting and relating to God apart from our physical bodies.

Jesus told the dying thief, "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43), even though, for both of them, their physical bodies were soon to die. When Stephen was dying, he knew he would immediately pass into the presence of the Lord, for he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Paul does not fear death, for he says, "My

desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Phil 1:23). He contrasts that with remaining in this life, which he calls "to remain in the flesh" (Phil 1:24). In fact, he says, "We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8), indicating a confidence that if he were to die physically his spirit would go into the Lord's presence and there enjoy fellowship with the Lord at once. The book of Revelation reminds us that "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne" (Rev 6:9) are in heaven and are able to cry out to God to bring justice on the earth (Rev 6:10; cf. also 20:4).

Therefore, although we must agree that, in this life, Scripture views us as a unity in which body and spirit/soul act together as one person, nonetheless, there will be a time between our death and the day Christ returns when our spirits will temporarily exist apart from our physical bodies. Unless we are raptured.

If we die before the rapture, then our bodies will later be reunited with our souls at that time.

In closing:

Our Great Dignity as Bearers of God's Image.

It would be good for us to reflect on our likeness to God more often. It will probably amaze us to realize that when the Creator of the universe wanted to create something "in his image," something more like himself than all the rest of creation, he made us. This realization will give us a profound sense of dignity and significance as we reflect on the excellence of all the rest of God's creation: the starry universe, the abundant earth, the world of plants and animals, and the angelic kingdoms are remarkable, even magnificent. But we are more like our Creator than any of these things. We are the culmination of God's infinitely wise and skillful work of creation. Even though sin has greatly marred that likeness, we nonetheless now reflect much of it and shall even more as we grow in likeness to Christ.

Yet we must remember that even fallen, sinful man has the status of being in God's image (see discussion of Gen 9:6, above). Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin, or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the status of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God's image-bearer. This has profound implications for our conduct toward others. It means that people of every race deserve equal dignity and rights. It means that elderly people, those seriously ill, the mentally retarded, and children yet unborn, deserve full protection and honor as human beings. If we ever deny our unique status in creation as God's only image-bearers, we will soon begin to depreciate the value of human life, will tend to see humans as merely a higher form of animal, and will begin to treat others as such. We will also lose much of our sense of meaning in life.⁴

⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*.