
“Who Are We?”
The Doctrine of Man

Various Passages

The events of the last couple of weeks have reminded us just how fallen this world really is. Regarding the trials and tragedies of life, we often wonder: why do these things happen? And while theological truths are not always a comfort in the midst of pain, we still should be able to provide them.

It is only as we look at the events of creation and the fall of man that we have any hope of understanding what we should have been, what we are, and even what we will eventually become. The events tied to the creation and fall of man provides the answers to a lot of questions, asked and unasked. That is the doctrine we will consider this week.

And in line with the events of the fall, we must also consider the implications of sin in general by examining this doctrine next week. Together, these two doctrines explain much of the general underlying condition of a world in which otherwise apparently rational people can find justification to carry out horrifying acts of pain against one another.

Here we must consider what may be the two most important truths regarding humanity. All were created in God’s image, and God has provided the way of salvation for His created beings. God is the God of redemption. The end of the story is a redeemed man and a redeemed creation. So, while there is ugliness in the picture, there is also a wondrous beauty.

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ...”...“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Genesis 1:26; John 3:16).

As in the previous doctrinal studies, the material is drawn primarily from Through the Bible in One Year¹, and supplemented from Willmington’s Guide to the Bible².

I Introduction: God values all people, for they are created in His image, fallen though that image in them may be. It for this reason He sent His Son to the Cross, to restore that fallen image and fallen relationship with Him. Stringfellow introduces his study on man:

“ It is necessary to consider what the Bible says about man.

In the scientific world, this study would be called Anthropology. The word comes from the Greek word “anthropos” meaning “man.” Anthropology is “the science of man’s origin.” The only true source of study about the origin of man is the Bible. Therein we find the source of the creation of man, his fall and God’s wonderful provision of redemption.

¹Stringfellow, Alan B., ed., *Through the Bible in One Year*, Vol. 3, Great Truths of the Bible, Copyright © 1981 by Virgil W. Hensley, Inc., Publisher, Tulas, OK, p. 93-98.

²Willmington, H. L., *Willmington’s Guide to the Bible*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL., 1981, p. 668-681.

*This subject has become a battle ground in schools and even in some theological circles. Our purpose is not to argue the point. There is only one source of truth which is factual and accurate in every respect, and it is the Bible.”*³

II Man’s Creation: Man was, as is true of all creation, a direct work of God. In fact scripture tells us humanity is the crowning of the work of creation. This is because we are unique, being created in the Creator’s image.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’” (Genesis 1:26-28).

Here in Genesis we find the Tri-unity of God involved with all aspects of creation and we are privileged to witness an example of the communication which goes on within the God-head as our creation is discussed. And the result is a unique creation (see Genesis 2 for the specifics), made ...

III In God’s Image: ... which has significant implications. Of course this truth like many others has been significantly misused, including some who would teach our physical image is a reflection of God’s physicality. This of course is not only nonsense, but depending on how it is taught, it can be outright blasphemous. But what does it mean to be in God’s image? Augustine struggled with this same question.

“Then too I was ignorant of what in us is the principle of our existence and what is meant by the words of Scripture ‘after the image of God’—as to that I was entirely ignorant....In particular I discovered that the phrase ‘Man, created by Thee, after Thine own image’ was not understood by your spiritual children, whom you have made to be born again by grace.... Being ignorant, then, of how this image of yours could subsist, I would to have knocked at the door and asked in what sense the doctrine was to be believed....”

*The Confessions of St. Augustine (354-430 A.D.)*⁴

There are a number of aspects to this question. Let me touch on one for a moment and then we’ll move on to other aspects. There is some debate over the Dichotomy or Trichotomy of humanity. Willmington defines the question this way:

*“Is man a dichotomous (two-part) being, or is he a trichotomous (three-part) being? That is does he consist of body and soul, or does he possess body, soul, and spirit?”*⁵

This is a debate which certainly isn’t life or death and isn’t one I would fight over. Having said this, I believe there is more support for the three-part position, as even animals have both body and soul. And so in our spirit we are unique. Unger summarizes the debate this way:

³ Stringfellow, p. 93.

⁴ Day, Dr. Larry G., By Design in God’s Image, Mt. Tabor Press, Portland, OR, 1994, p. 117.

⁵ Willmington, p. 671.

*“ The two terms are often used interchangeably ... however, should and spirit as synonymous terms are not always employed interchangeably. The soul is said to be lost, for example, but not the spirit. When no technical distinctions are set forth, the Bible is dichotomous, but otherwise it is trichotomous. Theologians have pored over these distinctions ceaselessly.”*⁶

Stringfellow identifies the issue of being created in God’s image as relating to specific areas; a representation of moral capacity, and likeness related to character or spiritual resemblance.⁷ While this is true, we can be more specific discussing the aspects of our resemblance to God.

Dr. Larry Day wrote a book on a biblical view of self-esteem. In it he identifies characteristics which represent those qualities we have received from God. These are seen in God and can be seen in us. (Keep in mind, in us these qualities are fallen.) These characteristics include: Emotion, Volitional, Rationality, Communicative, Self-aware, Morally-aware, Spiritually-aware, and Creative.⁸

As you think about these qualities, you can see them manifest in God, and you can see them in mankind. This is the reason you can find creativity, reason, and even spirituality in all people, saved or not. But if you think about it, you can also see the results of the fall, for each of these characteristics falls sadly short of what God intended them to be.

IV Man, Before the Fall: As I’ve already noted, the qualities we have seen were created in us before the Fall. Marriage and the potential for relationship was also within us. We were created to be in relationship with God and each other. We were created to have impact for God.

“ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:15-25).

We were also created with responsibilities. These included procreation, (see Gen 1:28). And it was with Eve that Adam had the opportunity to experience relationship with his own kind.

⁶ Ibid, p. 671.

⁷ Stringfellow, p. 94.

⁸ Day

Adam was to be in relationship with and obedience to God. Here God provided the tree “of the knowledge of good and evil,” as a symbol and a test of Adam’s obedience to Him.

Finally, Adam had a job. He was to tend the Garden. Work was not a product of the fall, but drudgery was. Stringfellow describes the situation this way:

*“ The employment was one of joy, not one of toil. There were no thorns and thistles, no cursed ground until after the fall (Genesis 3:17-18). In Genesis 1:29 and Genesis 2:16 the Lord told them they could eat of the herbs and fruits—in other words, green vegetables and fruit. They were vegetarians in the beginning.”*⁹

Willmington makes a couple of interesting points when discussing the reasons for the creation of humanity.

*“ ... it should be strongly stated God did not make man because he was lonely! Long before he created angels or man, the Father was having blessed fellowship with his beloved Son. Man, then was created to demonstrate the glory of God and to fellowship with the God of glory.”*¹⁰

V The Fall: First there was paradise and then ...

“ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife

⁹ Stringfellow, p. 96.

¹⁰ Willmington, p. 673.

and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3).

There are a number of implications to the Fall. But first, what was involved in it? It started off with disobedience to God. And Scripture considers Adam as the primary mover in the Fall. Eve was deceived by the Satan, but Adam was knowingly disobedient.

"... sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin ..." (Romans 5:12).

Yes, Satan was the one who deceived Eve and therefore was the instrument of the Fall, (see *The Doctrine of Angels-Satan*, G. Kragen, 2000), but the responsibility was assigned to Adam. And there were immediate consequences to the Fall.

1. From being self-aware, man become self-conscious. Adam and Eve learned shame and guilt. This in turn lead to other failures.
2. With shame and guilt we see the fall of reason. And with this came the ability to self-delude. Adam and Evre believed they could hide from God.
3. This in turn lead to blame-shifting. Adam while blaming Eve was essentially blaming God for giving her to him. Eve, following the example of her husband, put the blame on the serpent.

With self-deceit, and blame shifting, there is no real repentance and therefore no forgiveness and restoration. Adam and Eve would not take responsibility for the situation but instead tried to find a way out of it.

Finally, as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve, we all fell. With the fall came a number of consequences for mankind: the curse on the earth, spiritual as well as physical death and the deterioration of all those wonderful qualities we received from. So, thus we are totally depraved, fallen in all aspects.

"For as in Adam all die," ... "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:12)

V The Hope: Of course the fall isn't the end of the story. The real point of the story is God's love and mercy, His provision for restoration. With the Fall came spiritual death, an eternity in Hell, but God had no intention of things ending this way. From the very beginning God already had a plan for restoration in place.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15).

The message to Eve was a seed that would restore the world from the damage done by the Fall. What begins in sorrow ends in rejoicing.

“So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47).

And with the acceptance of Christ we become new creations. While we don't escape the impact of the fall, we can, in dependency on the Holy Spirit, have victory over its effects.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And one day we will experience true restoration.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”...“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 3:16, 5:24).

So we come full circle, starting in Paradise, and ending up in the eternal presence of God.

*From darkness here, and weariness,
We ask not full repose,
Only be Thou at hand to bless
Our trial hour of woes;
Is not the pilgrim's toil o'er paid
By the clear rill and palmy shade?
And see we not, up earth's dark grade,
The gate of heaven unclose?*

~ Keble

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Various Passages

I Introduction:
(Genesis 1:26; John 3:16)

II Man’s Creation:
(Genesis 1:26-28)

III In God’s Image:

- A. Dichotomy
- B. Trichotomy
- C. Characteristics of Being created in God’s image.

IV Man, Before the Fall:

(Genesis 2:15-25, 3:17-18, 1:29, 2:16)

V The Fall:

(Genesis 3; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22)

The consequences of the Fall:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

V The Hope:

(Genesis 3:15; 1 Corinthians 15:45, 47; 2 Corinthians 5:17, John 3:16, 5:24)