

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Humanity

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Session One: Introduction and Creation

Introduction

1. **Definition:** Anthropology comes from two Greek words: “*Anthropos*” (ἄνθρωπος) – man, humanity, humankind, or person; and the Greek suffix, “*-logia*” (λογία) – the knowledge or study of. Therefore, anthropology is the study of humanity or humankind.
2. **Two Types of Studies**
 - a. **Scientific:** In terms of natural science, anthropology is the study of human origins, behaviors, languages, cultures, and other ethnic interests. Many anthropologists also study archaeology, as a means of discovering the nature of human life from the past.
 - b. **Theological:** In terms of theology, anthropology is the study of human life as God’s creation. It answers the questions of what it means to be human, what God’s purpose is for our lives, why human life is so difficult, and how we should live as his people.
 - c. **Problem:** In general, these two studies contain some overlap, as science and theology aim to understand cultures, human behaviors, languages, and history. However, the two worldviews that come out of these studies are vastly different.
3. **Two Worldviews**
 - a. **Naturalism:** Scientific anthropology largely endorses naturalism, which is the idea that human life is the result of a natural evolutionary process, with no existential goal or purpose. Human life, along with everything else, began as a cosmic accident, we are nothing more than a glorified germ – and the only reason humans are more advanced than every other creature is because we have evolved to a higher level of intelligence. Our status gives us superiority over other animals and lifeforms, allowing us to make our own rules and goals according to what helps us enjoy life the most and advance into the future. After we reach our earthly end through death, our bodies become dust and we cease to exist. There is no goal or meaning for life, which is “*nihilism*,” the idea that life is meaningless. As some scholars have said, “*Life is a cruel joke.*”
 - b. **Creationism:** The idea that human life is the result of an intelligent Creator, who designed the universe and all lifeforms to exist for his glory. God has given human life the highest value and privilege, and desires to know us personally and for us to live according to his plan and purpose. While humans eventually suffer physical death, life continues with God in eternity for those whom he has redeemed in Christ.

- c. **Christian Worldview:** As followers of Jesus Christ, who embrace the existence of a Creator God and his personal revelation through Scripture and through his Son, we must study anthropology as a means of understanding who we are, what God desires for our lives, and how we should live in this world as we prepare for the new world to come.
4. **Main Question:** The main goal of anthropology is given to us as a question posed by the psalmist in Psalm 8:4, “*What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*”
 - a. The writer first asks, “*What is man?*” So, out of all creation, including the universe, planets, stars, earth, animals and plant life, what does it mean to be human compared to everything else in creation?
 - b. Then he asks why God is so “*mindful of him...cares for him?*” In other words, why does God care about human life so much? What makes us different? Why does God love us and have an eternal purpose for us, and what is that purpose?
 - c. **Topics:** So, in this study, there are several topics we will discuss. We will talk about creation, particularly what it means to be created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*), how humans are body and spirit, and why it’s important to treat Adam as a historical person. We will discuss God’s purpose for our lives, why he created us male and female, and God’s plan for marriage. We will look at God’s purpose for communities, governments, and other authorities and institutions. And of course, we will discuss our fallen nature and sinfulness, and God’s plan to redeem us through Christ. These topics will also lead us to discuss the controversial issues of our day, such as a divorce, homosexuality, transgenderism, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, warfare, and other critical matters. All of these topics and others will be covered in this study of Christian Anthropology.
 - d. **Transition:** First, we will begin with the beginning, and that’s creation, the basis of our Christian worldview and what sets us apart from other naturalistic worldviews.

Creation

1. Beginning

- a. **God:** The Bible literally begins with the assumption of the eternal existence of a Creator – “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*” (Gen. 1:1). Notice that Scripture makes no effort to convince us that God exists or that he had any need to be created – these realities are assumed. We are simply told that God was already in existence and he created everything else in existence. Therefore, God is presented as eternal and sovereign Creator, which is the opposite of a naturalistic worldview that proclaims that the universe came into existence on its own. (How do we know God exists? We covered many evidences and reasons in our study on Theology, which we have the past notes available).

- b. **Humanity:** After God created the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, the water and land, and the plants and animals, we understand that God saved the best for last: the creation of humanity. In fact, the structure of the creation account reaches its apex with the creation of humans. We understand this from a change in the language: “*Let there be...*” is used for the other elements of creation; and “*Let us make...*” is used when it comes to the first humans. The creation of humans is clearly special. John Hammett states, “*The creation of humans was the feature the author of Genesis selected for special emphasis.*” It has also been said that humanity is “*the crown of God’s creation.*”
 - **Genesis 1:26-27** – “*Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And led them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*” (cf. Gen. 5:1-2; 6:7; Deut. 4:32; Ps. 89:47; Eccl. 12:1; Isa. 43:7; 45:12; Mal. 2:10).

- c. **Literal Approach:** While Genesis 1-2 indicate that God created Adam and Eve as the first humans, those of theologically liberal and naturalistic persuasions teach that either these verses are metaphorical at best or mythological at worst. In other words, Adam and Eve were not created by God in the beginning, but were either the biblical writer’s poetic expression that human beings came into existence at some point in the past, or the biblical writer’s attempt to explain the origins of human life through folklore or myth. Even some “conservative” biblical scholars are seeking ways to fuse naturalistic evolution and divine creation together (theistic evolution), so that the Genesis account gains “credibility.”
 - **Scripture:** As evangelical Christians, who believe that God has sufficiently and clearly and authoritatively revealed truth in Scripture, we must affirm that Adam and Eve were literal, historical figures and the first humans, mainly because this is the message that Scripture presents as fact. The language used in Genesis 1-2 is not poetry or myth, but historical record. The Old Testament and New Testament books treat Genesis as a literal history of origins.

- **Quote:** According to Douglas Kelly, *“The books of the New Testament rely heavily on the Genesis account for both creation and the early history of the human race. It has been pointed out that some 165 passages in Genesis are either directed quoted or definitely alluded to in the New Testament. Nearly every writer of the New Testament refers somewhere to the first eleven chapters in Genesis, and nowhere is there the slightest suggestion that any of them regarded the teaching of these chapters as mythical or allegorical. Christ himself referred on at least six occasions to matters related to these early chapters of Genesis, and he understood them to be truthful and relevant accounts that provided the background of the creation and fall of humanity he came to redeem.”*
- **Gospel:** The message of the gospel, as the New Testament declares, doesn’t make theological sense if Adam and Eve were not historical figures. If Adam was not created first and fall into sin, the human race would not be cursed and there would be no need of a Savior. Therefore, Jesus would not be the “second Adam” and the Savior of mankind if the first Adam wasn’t real.

2. Purpose: Why Did God Create Humans?

- a. **Glory:** While God did not have to create humans to receive glory (see God’s independence/aseity; John 17:5, 24) the Bible teaches that humans were created for the most basic purpose of bringing glory to God.
 - **Isaiah 43:7** – *“Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”*
 - **Ephesians 1:11–12** – *“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”*
 - **1 Corinthians 10:31** – *“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*
- b. **Question:** *“What is the chief and highest end of man?”* **Answer:** *“Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever”* – **Westminster Larger Catechism**