

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Humanity

First Baptist Church Dandridge – Fall 2020
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Session Two: Created in God's Image

A. Introduction

1. **Summary:** Last week we introduced this study on the most basic level by discussing the fact that in the beginning, God created human beings. We didn't evolve; we are not here by some kind of chemical and biological accident; we didn't arrive on earth as aliens from another planet; God created us from the dust of the earth.
 - a. **Uniqueness:** But as magnificent as the universe is, filled with galaxies, stars, and planets; and even as beautiful as the earth is, filled with mountains, oceans, forests, and plains, with a vast array of animals and plant life, the language in Genesis reveals the humans are God's most prized earthly possession. As some have said, "We are the crown of God's creation."
 - b. **Historical:** And the first two humans, Adam and Eve, were real historical figures that eventually led to all of us as humans today. If Adam and Eve were not real people, then not only does the Bible fall apart, but the gospel is not really the gospel. So, we established that God created humans in the beginning. Adam and Eve from the dust of the ground, and we as humans today can directly trace our ancestry back to them. God created us as humans.
2. **Question:** But this leads us into the main topic that I want to discuss tonight. What does it mean to be human? What differentiates us from the rest of the animal kingdom? What makes us unique and special? Well, there are two basic items that I want us to look at tonight, and the first is our human composition – what does our human nature consist of? How are we made?

B. Human Composition

1. **Summary:** Scripture uses many terms to describe the elements of our human nature, such as body, flesh, soul, spirit, heart, mind, conscience, being, and others. There have been debates over how each of these elements exist, differ, or work together.
2. **Elements of Human Nature**
 - a. **Body:** The word "**body**" (Heb. "*basar*;" Gk: "*soma*") is used throughout the Bible to describe our physical nature as humans. Genesis 2:7 declares, "*The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*" Just as creation is material and physical, so is the body that humans possess. Our bodies consist of bones, skin, organs, nerves, hair, and other anatomical parts. These body parts were designed to function together in a way that we can think, move,

see, hear, smell, taste, eat, reproduce, and other functions that allow us to live and interact with others. The design of our bodies is an incredible work that could never have been the result of chance. The ultimate reason for our bodies is to glorify God through our worship and service (1 Cor. 6:20).

- **Created Good:** Along with everything else in creation, God created our bodies “*very good*,” which means we were originally given a perfect body to serve the Lord with. However, after Adam and Eve’s fall (which was our fall), our bodies became cursed with pain, problems, and decay, which limit our functionality, sometimes severely. The ultimate physical curse of the fall is bodily death.
 - **Flesh:** The word “*flesh*” (Gk: *sarx*) is often an alternate term for “*body*,” or as a component of our body that covers our bones and organs. However, “*flesh*” can also be used as a metaphor to describe our fallen nature or spiritual weaknesses.
 - **Resurrection:** One of the blessings of eternal redemption is that our earthly, fallen body/flesh will be transformed into a new glorified body at the final resurrection. The eternal body/flesh will be physical but glorified like Christ’s resurrected body.
- b. **Soul/Spirit:** The word “*soul*” (Heb: *nephesh*; Gk. *psuche*) is often thought of as the life inside the human body that will exist forever. Genesis 2:7 says, “*Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*” Some speak of evangelism as “saving souls.” When a person dies, the Scripture describes the “soul” as “departing,” or leaving the body (Gen. 35:18). The physical body lies lifeless because the “soul” has departed. The “soul” is also connected with the intellect, will, emotions, and spiritual life. The word “*spirit*” (Heb. *ruach*; Gk. *pneuma*) can be used in the physical sense to describe “wind” or “breath,” but in the spiritual sense it seems to be interchangeable with “soul.” However, “*spirit*” can also be used to describe a person’s attitude or emotions, or their sense for spiritual realities.
- **Psalm 103:1** – “*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*”
 - **Luke 1:46-47** – “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*”
 - **Spiritual Life:** The soul and spirit are important to our existence because these elements enable us to connect with God and have spiritual life. This is what makes humans different than animals. Animals do have intellect and emotions, but only humans have been given souls/spirits that can connect with God on a spiritual level and engage in worship and obedience and continue on eternally.

C. The Image of God (Imago Dei)

1. **Summary:** The most fundamental aspect of who we are as humans and our role in creation is the reality that God created us in his image. Not only does this distinction reveal our purpose, but it

also gives us a unique worth that is unlike anything else in creation. Such an invaluable worth should shape how we live and make decisions today.

- a. **Quote:** *“The implications of human persons created in the image of God are immense for theology, psychology, ministry, and Christian living. Ramifications of the imago embrace issues of human dignity and value, personal and social ethics, relations between the sexes, the solidarity of the human family, and racial justice.”* – Beck and Demarest

2. **The Image of God:** *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”* – **Genesis 1:26, 27** (cf. Genesis 5:1-2; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; James 3:9). The key words found in the Genesis account are “image” and “likeness,” which refer to something that is similar, but not identical; only a representation of the image it reflects (Gk. *eikon*). Therefore, theologians like Wayne Grudem have defined the “*image of God*” as “*man is like God and represents God.*” It certainly doesn’t mean that man is God, but only like God in certain ways, and only humans are given this distinction.

- a. **Morality:** Because we are a representation of God, humans are called to reflect God’s holiness and morality, and on this basis will we be held accountable for our actions. Because of God’s image placed upon us, we have an internal sense of right and wrong, which separates us from animals. Although animals may be trained to make good choices, it’s only because good or bad consequences have led them a particular way; there is no moral reasoning.

- **Romans 1:18–20** – *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”*

- b. **Spirituality:** Being made in the “image of God” means that our existence is more than physical, like God we are also spiritual. Therefore, only humans have a capacity to relate to God personally. We have the ability to know God, worship God, speak to God through prayer, understand God’s will. No other creature in the universe has the capacity. Being made in God’s image also means that we are eternal like God, in the sense that while our bodies may die, our soul/spirit continues to live on in eternity – either with God or apart from God.

- **Ecclesiastes 3:11** – *“He has put eternity into man’s heart...”*

- c. **Mental Capacity:** Like God, humans have such a sophisticated ability to reason and think logically and learn, which is much higher than any animal in creation. Only humans are given minds that can comprehend the reality of God and know him. Humans are given intellectual abilities to farm, create technology, advanced medicine, research science, and create business. One incredible aspect of being human is the ability to communicate through language, and read and write. Humans are given the ability to think about the distant future

and make important decisions. We are equipped to be creative, such as music composition, artwork, or cooking.

- d. **Emotional Capacity:** While it is true that some animals show emotion, such as affection and sadness, humans made in the image of God are given a much more complex set of emotions.
- e. **Relational Abilities:** Being made in the image of God means that we have a deep capacity for personal relationships. We are able to have personal interactions with others, express our friendship and love, communicate our feelings and desires, and enjoy community and family life. There is no coincidence that God compares our relationship to him as a marriage, since marriage is a concept he created as a result of our ability to have relationships with one another.
- f. **Dignity and Worth:** Because God wanted to create only humans “*in his image*” means that there is something unique and valuable about our lives.
 - **Gender:** Both men and woman were created in the “image of God,” meaning that while men and women are different physically and functionally, we are of the same worth and value spiritually. God does not view either men or women as more or less valuable – they are equal in dignity and worth.
 - **People:** Since humans are created in “the image of God,” meaning that human life is infinitely important and valuable, discrimination over ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, education, and other dividing factors should never be used to determine someone’s worth. Also, we should treat all humans equal, especially those with serious illnesses, handicaps, and others who have serious struggles.
 - **Life:** Because humans are created in the “image of God,” life is extremely important and valuable, which is why humans should refrain from injuring or killing other humans. “Just War” is another matter, as the idea is to save human life by liberating people from deadly forces and conditions. However, outside of self-defense or capital punishment or just war, it is never right to take the life of another human. This is why abortion is highly immoral, along with euthanasia and sex trafficking.