

MAN - HIS NATURE, ROLE, AND DESTINY

1) **MAN WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD** - This is more than an academic truth. Consider some of the implications:

- a) **He is above the animal world** - There is a huge step in Genesis chapter one **between verse 25 and 26** - "And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. [26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let 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."

Notice that man is a totally *fresh and new creation*. He does not emerge out of the animal order. His creation is both *specific* and *instantaneous*. The text simply doesn't paint a picture of some sort of gradual transformation from lower forms of life.

- b) **Man has a unique relation to God** - He enjoys a special status in creation - **see Psalm 8:3-8** - "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, [4] what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? [5] Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. [6] You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, [7] all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, [8] the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas." He is granted dominion over the rest of creation (Genesis 1:26). This was God's plan for man right from the start.

- c) **Man was created for fellowship with God** - God was at the heart Adam's life. God placed man in the garden. God commanded man as to what he should and should not do. God brought the animals to man for naming. God took woman from man's side and brought her to him. God walked in the cool of the day and communicated with man. **At the heart of the creation account is a closeness of fellowship with God not shared by the rest of the created world.**

- d) **Man was created both a MATERIAL and a SPIRITUAL being** - Like the animals, he was made with a physical body. He shared the same environment and physical traits (eating, drinking, sleeping, reproducing, etc.). The body will one day die and return to the dust - **Psalm 103:13-16** - "As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. [14] For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. [15] As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; [16] for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." These verses do *not* teach that man is no different from the animals. They *do* teach that, prior to the resurrection, our bodies die and return to dust just as all living things do. While the body dies (**to be raised when Jesus comes again - 1 Corinthians 15:44**) the spirit lives on - **Luke 23:46** - "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last."

- e) **More on the nature of a human being** - There are two prominent views on the Scriptural teaching on the *make-up of a human being*:

- i) **Three main components** (Trichotomist) - This view holds that man is divided up into three separate parts - *body, soul and spirit*. The *BODY* is the physical part. The *SOUL* is that part of man which thinks, feels emotionally, wills, etc. The *SPIRIT* is the heart of the inner man that has the capacity to relate directly to God. Verses cited to support this view are usually:

Hebrews 4:12 - "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

1 Thessalonians 5:23 - "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- ii) **Two main components** (Dichotomist) - This view holds that man is more a whole unit made up of the *visible body* and the *invisible inner spirit*. Texts cited usually include:

1 Corinthians 7:34 - "...and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband."

2 Corinthians 7:1 - "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."

This view holds that the terms "*inner man*", "*mind*", "*soul*", "*conscience*", "*spirit*", and "*heart*" are all different expressions of the same inner spiritual life.

It certainly is true that these terms are frequently overlapping in the Bible. For example, Jesus says to **"love the Lord with all your heart"**. The writer of Proverbs says **"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."** In Romans 10:9, Paul talks about **"believing with the heart"**. Then Jesus tells us we are to love God **"with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."** Clearly, the Bible doesn't intend to use the word **"heart"** in a single, limited way.

- 2) **MAN WAS CREATED FOR FREEDOM TO LOVE AND SERVE GOD** - He was free to enjoy **unhindered fellowship with God**. There was no evil, sin or estrangement. He was free to **work with gladness and productivity**. There were no thorns or thistles. No blight or decay. This will be renewed in the final kingdom (see Romans 8:21). Man was also free to **eat of the tree of life**. It was put in the very center of the garden and no restrictions were put on it (see **Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17**). Somehow, this tree was tied in with man's chance at immortality (Genesis 3:22). Interestingly, it reappears in **Revelation 22:2**.
- 3) **MAN LOST THE PARTICULAR FREEDOM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH HIS SIN** - The freedom given by the Creator was a **structured freedom**. It was **freedom to follow God and thus fulfill maximum purpose**. Paul paints the vast difference between this and man's **present fallen state** - **Romans 7:19** - **"For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing."**

Ironically, all of the things man pursues in the name of freedom **only serve to put him in deeper bondage**. Freedom, that today is loosely defined as **"doing my own thing"**, only leads to deeper self-destruction and self-deceit.