

# What Is Man?

## A Theological Survey Of Anthropology

In his origin, man is a created being. Genesis 1-3 makes very clear that it was God who created mankind in His own image and thus formed an eternal connection between Creator and created being. In reference to being made in the image of God, Louis Berkhof writes, and rightfully so, "The words image and likeness are used synonymously and interchangeably, and therefore do not refer to two different things."<sup>i</sup> The image of God, he teaches, includes man's state of holiness, man's intellect, emotion, and will, man's spirituality, man's immortality, and man's dominion over creation. This image was damaged in the fall and will not be fully restored until eternity (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

As a created being, man is dependent upon his Creator for both life and information. It was God who, in Genesis 2:7, formed Adam from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. It was God who formed Eve, in Genesis 2:22, from Adam's rib. Furthermore, God, in His grace and plan, provided Adam and Eve with everything they needed to know in order to live life in a godly way. He instructed them about the Garden of Eden and told them what they were to do. He also told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, lest they die. Thus, man was created as a dependant being. Man must interpret life through what his Creator has revealed. He was created to worship and serve God alone. Man's downfall is that he chose to follow an interpretation other than the one which God provided, i.e. Satan's, in the Garden (Genesis 3:1-7).

In his essence, man is a unity of physical and spiritual, of material and immaterial. In Matthew 15:17-20, Jesus contrasts the relationship between the behavior of the outer man and the motives of the inner man. Jesus said "Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated? But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man." The physical and spiritual natures of man are not completely independent of each other. Rather, they are unified in purpose.

In his physical nature, man is made up of a body, organs, blood, nerves, chemicals, and tissue. God has created man to be able to carry on bodily functions.

Man can be tired or energized, hungry or full, healthy or sick. Man's body is also capable of serving the Lord or being used for selfish purposes. For example, the Apostle Paul taught that man's body can be used to glorify God (1 Corinthians 6:20). Man can also dedicate his body to the Lord (Romans 12:1-2). On the other side of the issue, man can present his body as an instrument of evil doing as well (Romans 6:13).

In his spiritual nature, Scripture designates man as soul (James 5:20), spirit (Job 32:18), heart (Matthew 15:18), flesh (Romans 8:8), conscience (Romans 2:15), and mind (Philippians 2:2). These designations are describing different functions of man, not different parts. However, the immaterial nature of man is overwhelmingly designated as the heart. The physical behavior of man is driven by the thoughts and motives of the heart. In Luke 6:43-45, Jesus taught "For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

In terms of man's spiritual standing, man can be either regenerate or unregenerate. John 3:36 teaches "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Man can either be living in relationship and fellowship with God, possessing new life, a new nature, and justification (Romans 5:1, Ephesians 4:24), or he can be living in total depravity, completely wrapped up in himself, and fulfilling only the lusts of the flesh (Ephesians 2:1-3). In his eternal standing, man will spend eternity in either heaven or hell. In either case, man will receive a new, eternal body (1 Corinthians 15:51). In heaven, man will be free of the weaknesses of a sin cursed body, of a sin nature, as well as of sinful actions. In hell, the lake of fire, man will be tormented for eternity (Revelation 20:11-15).

<sup>i</sup> Berkhof, Louis. Systematic Theology. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI, 1996. Pgs 203-204

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