

The Nature of Man

Introduction

The Context of This Lesson: Previously we talked about Why Christians Should Think, the Philosophical Basis for the Existence of God, the Eight Possible Types of Gods, and The Nature and Character of God. Today we will begin a discussion of The Nature and Character of *Man*.

[A note about “man” and “mankind”: I will be using the words “man” and “mankind” in a generic sense to refer to all humans, without any implications of gender hierarchy or differing roles or value. I believe the Biblical view is that men and women are different but equal in value. I use the terms in the spirit in which I believe the Bible does, as referring to a single group that is uniquely valuable in all of creation. So no one should take offense.]

Once we understand the nature and character of man, we will have a basis to discuss the relationship between God and man, most importantly, How God Governs Man.

How God governs man will be the climax of our studies since it will include God’s governing through what the New Testament calls “the law of liberty,” and later governing man through the sacrifice of His Son. God governs mankind differently from the rest of His creation. In order for us to understand the unique way He governs us, we must talk in some detail about the nature and character of man.

First we will talk about man’s nature or his metaphysical attributes – that which he is just by being. Later we will talk about his character or his moral attributes – that which he is because of his choices.

1. Man Is Essentially a Physical Being.

- a. Unlike those deceived by eastern philosophy, we know, by revelation, that we are physical.
 - i. “Then the LORD God formed man *of dust from the ground...*” (Genesis 2:7)
- b. And that we will remain physical after the resurrection.
 - i. “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be *changed*.” (1 Corinthians 15:52)
 - ii. “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2)
 - iii. ““See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” (Luke 24:39)
- c. There is no Platonic dualism in the Bible
 - i. The physical is good.

“God saw all that He had made, and behold, *it was very good*. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31)
 - ii. “Plan B” will still involve the physical.

“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for *new heavens and a new earth*, in which righteousness dwells.”
(2 Peter 3:12-13)

iii. Jesus became flesh and was without sin.

“And the Word *became flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet *was without sin*.” (Hebrews 4:15)

iv. Jesus’ resurrected body is physical.

“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” (Luke 24:39)

v. The Devil and demons are spirit, yet they are evil.

2. Man Has a Spirit

a. There is an invisible part of us that sustains us.

b. From the beginning, even our physical beings would not have life without God bringing us to life through an invisible force—*His breath*.

“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [Literally ‘soul’].” (Genesis 2:7)

c. We must continue to depend on God to sustain our life.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6)

3. Man Is Finite

a. This may seem to be an obvious point, but for those deceived by eastern philosophy, it is not. As Christians, we know by revelation, that we are finite created beings.

b. We hear it expressed in statements like, “You already have all of the answers within you.” This is a prevalent view in modern psychology.

c. Remembering that people’s capacities are finite will help us get along better with others.

4. Man Is Personal

He has intellect, emotions, and a will.

a. In this way we are unique in all of creation.

b. Herein lies our great value.

c. Man is a moral agent.

d. It is the Bible that reveals this uniqueness—modern man has no basis for understanding man’s uniqueness, value, and moral agency.

5. Man Is in the Image of God

a. Defined:

i. We are not an exact replica of God. We must rely on the Bible to inform us as to which attributes we have in common with God.

ii. We are not like God in some ways: He is immaterial, infinite, uncreated, trinity

- iii. All of creation is like God in some ways:
 - a. It exists objectively.
 - b. It has value.
 - c. There is order and not chaos as far as you can look – macro or micro.
 - d. There is thesis and antithesis.
 - e. There are categories and hierarchy.
 - f. There is unity and diversity.
 - g. There is beauty.
- iv. Man is like God in some ways that the rest of the creation is not: The most important of which is that we are personal, moral beings, with the capacity to love.

b. We are created in the image of God.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 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)

c. We are *not* an extension of God's essence.

d. We remain in God's image after the Fall.

(We will expound on this point in the next lesson: The Value of Man.)

e. Contrasted with modern man's view of man

i. In naturalism man is in the image of the machine.

ii. And in the image of the animals.

iii. We have an *upward* reference rather than a *downward* reference.

iv. Pantheism's upward reference is actually a downward reference since it's "god" is impersonal and therefore no different from the machine of naturalism.

v. Read page 288 of *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer Volume I* (from *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*).

6. Man Is a Social Being and Has Relationships

a. with God

b. with each other

c. with creation

d. with himself

7. Man Is Male and Female

References

(New American Standard Bible)

1 Corinthians 11:11-12

¹¹However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

¹²For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Physical

Luke 24

³⁹"See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

⁴⁰And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

⁴¹While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

⁴²They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;

⁴³and He took it and ate it before them.

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

"Flesh" Defined

Colossians 2

¹¹and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

¹²having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

¹³When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Romans 7:14

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, *sold into bondage to sin*.

Romans 7:5

For while we *were in the flesh*, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

Romans 8:9

However, *you are not in the flesh* but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

Man's Spirit

Breath as the Source of Physical Life

Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [Literally "soul"].

Genesis 7:15

So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.

Genesis 25:8

Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

Spirit as the Source of Physical Life

James 2:26

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

As the Source of Spiritual Life

John, Chapter 3

³Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

⁵Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

⁶"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

⁷"Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

⁸"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit..."

¹⁶"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him shall not perish, but have *eternal life*.

John 6:63

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the *words* that I have spoken to you *are spirit and are life*."

John 6:67–69

⁶⁷So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

⁶⁸Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have *words of eternal life*.

⁶⁹"We have *believed* and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

Galatians 6:8

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

I Peter 1:23

for you have been *born again* not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, *through the living and enduring word of God*.

Man's Spirit As Distinct from the Holy Spirit

Matthew 10:28

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the *soul*; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both *soul* and body in hell.

John 3:6

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

John 4:23-24

²³"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

²⁴"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Acts 7:59

They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"

Romans 1:9

For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,

Romans 8:16

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God

1 Corinthians 14:15

So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

Galatians 6:18

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen.