

Foundations 101

Date: October 22, 2008

Topic: Anthropology: The Study of Humanity

Summary: The nature of humanity, complimentarianism, “soul” and “spirit” debate

Reading Assignment: *Systematic Theology, Grudem* pg. 439-489 or *Bible Doctrine, Grudem* pg. 187-209.

I. The Creation of Man

While the Scriptures make it clear that God did not need us (Acts 17:24-25; Job 41:11, Ps 50: 10-12) or the rest of creation or anything, it also says that we and the rest of creation can glorify God. Since there was a perfect love and community in the Trinity (John 17:5, 24) He did not create us because he was lonely or needy. He created all humanity “for His glory”.

“everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”
-Isaiah 43:7

So the purpose of life that all men search for is simply to live out our created design.

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
-1 Corinthians 10:31

This truth gives us perfect joy and significance. Many might think because God doesn't need us we are not important or valuable. But the Bible tells us we were created to glorify God, which indicates we are important to Him! If we are truly significant to God, the maker of all things, then what greater measure of significance could we want?

We also have the ability to find joy and fullness in life because God has shown us how to achieve it. God links our joy and abundance with our obedience to him and our glorifying him.

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
-Psalm 16:11

“¹How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! ²My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.”
-Psalm 84:1-2

“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

-Psalm 84:10

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

-John 10:10

Therefore the normal attitude of the Christian heart is rejoicing in God and in the lessons He gives us. (Rom 5:2-3; Phil 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

II. Created in the Image of God

1. What is the meaning of the “image of God”?

We know man was created in the image of God because of several passages, the main one being:

“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.”

-Genesis 1:26

When God says “let’s make man in one image after our likeness, he is saying he wants to make something similar to himself. Both the Hebrew word for “image” (tselem) and the Hebrew word for “likeness” (demut) mean “similar”. Both words refer to something similar but not identical. The best definition is that “image” and “likeness” mean a representation of something.

Theologians have spent thousands of years debating which characteristics of humanity are like God. Some say it is our intellectual ability, some say it is our power to make moral decisions, and some say it is the fact that we have dominion over the earth.

But as we have seen, the original readers of this text probably best interpreted this as being similar to God in order to represent him. Genesis 1:26 could be translated, “let us make man like us to represent us.”

So we need not to debate in what ways specifically we are like God, but rather understand that we are similar and have been designed uniquely to represent Him in the world! This is what the “image of God” tells us, then the rest of scripture helps us know God to better represent Him.

Another supporting text for this interpretation is:

“When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.”

- Genesis 5:3

Adam has a son and names him Seth, but it is described as Adam having a son in his “image” and “likeness”. This does not mean that Seth was exactly like Adam, but that he was similar and represented the family.

2. Did the “fall” destroy the image of God in us?

While the “imago dei” was distorted by sin and the fall, it was not destroyed. This is made clear in the following verse:

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”
-Genesis 9:6

God commands Noah to institute the death penalty for murder, not because it is just as bad, but because humans are “made in my image.” The New Testament also affirms this in the following verse:

“With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God.”
– James 3:9

Though we still possess the image of God, some parts of our lives are distorted and broken. It is better when studying the true “image of God” to look at Adam and Eve before the fall or the life of Christ.

3. Redemption in Christ restores the image of God in us.

Understanding that our purpose in life is to “image” forth, represent, or glorify God we can rightly comprehend why our redemption in Christ is so often described as becoming “more like” him.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”
-2 Corinthians 3:18

“and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”
-Colossians 3:10

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”
-Romans 8:29

So Jesus both saves us from our sin and begins the process of renovating us to be more like Christ, thereby better representing Him and possessing more joy and significance!

4. At Christ's return we will be fully restored.

The amazing promise of the New Testament is just as we have been like Adam in sin and death we shall now be like Christ, morally pure and eternal.

*“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”
-1 Corinthians 15:49*

*“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”
-1 John 3:2*

III. The Nature of Man- Soul and Spirit debate

Everyone agrees that humans have physical bodies. Most people (Christians & non-Christians) believe in some sense that humans have an immaterial part or “soul” that lives on after death. But this is where the agreement ends. There are 3 popular belief systems in this debate.

1. Monism

Man is one whole being and can not exist apart from his physical form. There is no “soul” or “spirit”...just body, instinct, and desire to live. This view is not generally accepted by Christians because so many texts affirm that our “soul” or “spirit” lives on after death.

2. Dichotomy

Man is essentially two parts. One, the physical body and its functions and desires. Two, the “soul” or “spirit” of man that lives on after death and makes up the spiritual or immaterial part of man. This view says that “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably throughout the Bible.

3. Trichotomy

Man is essentially three parts; body, soul, and spirit. In addition to the physical body this view believes that humans possess both a “soul” and a “spirit”. The soul would be the intellect, emotions, and will of the person. They maintain that all people have this “soul” and it can be used in service to God or yielded to sin. The spirit makes up the higher faculty of a person when he/she becomes a Christian.

*“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”
-Romans 8:10*

The spirit would be the part of man that most directly prays to or worships God (John 4:24, Phil 3:3).

While the trichotomy view was the most popular in church history, there are very few defenses of it today. We believe the biblical data best supports a dichotomy view with man having two essential parts. The one part that can be confusing is the truth that we receive the Holy Spirit when we are saved, but that is not an ambiguous part of one nature but a down payment and guarantee of our sanctification.

IV. Man as male and female

1. The use of the word “man” to refer to humanity, not just males.

With all the current debate over the genders used in the Bible, it is important to recognize that the use of gender phrasing originates with God.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

-Genesis 1:27

“¹ This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created.”

-Genesis 5:1-2

The Hebrew word for “man” is “adam” which is also where we got Adam’s name. The same term is also used in several places as a distinction from females. (Gen 2:22, Ecc 7:28). Thus God uses the male title “adam” to universally describe the human race. We should not find it objectionable or insensitive. Some say that this is simply the product of an ancient and male dominated Hebrew culture. But Gen 5:2 makes it clear that God using “man” to universally describe humanity is “good.” This also has theological implications with the main one being the idea of male headship from the beginning.

2. Male and Female were distinctly created.

The creation of man as male and female shows God’s image in three ways.

(a) Harmonious interpersonal relationships

God did not create us to be isolated individuals but rather to live in deep meaningful relationships. Interpersonal unity and harmony reaches its pinnacle when male and female come together in marriage.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

-Genesis 2:24

This is not only physical unity but spiritual and emotional unity as well. Marriage is taken very seriously by God because he uses it to show the depth and importance of his relationship to his people.

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.
²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹
“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”
³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
-Ephesians 5:23-32

Creating man as male and female also shows us God in our experiences distinct differences between male and female while simultaneously experiencing complete oneness and unity. This helps us understand the fellowship of the Trinity.

“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.”
-John 17:5

“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”
-John 17:24

Objection: If marriage is so important then what about Paul and Jesus not being married?

Jesus- the example of Jesus is unique because he is both God and man so instead of him symbolically marrying one person he actually marries the entire church and saves us (Eph 5:23-32).

Paul- Paul is not saying in 1 Cor 7:28, 36 that marriage is wrong, but rather that he has a specific calling to his mission rather than marriage. Christian ministry is seen producing “spiritual children” and Paul calls the Corinthians his “beloved children”. He does this indicating that rather than marrying a woman and having children he will spend the rest of his life married to his calling producing “spiritual children through church planting. So his calling to

singleness is directly linked to his specific mission, not an argument against marriage in general.

(b) Equality in personhood and importance

Just as the members of the Trinity are distinct but equal in importance and in their full existence, so men and women are equal in importance and personhood but distinct in their roles. He created both male and female in his image

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
-Genesis 1:27*

This shows that both men and women are equal in their dignity and worth as image bearers of God and in their ability to “image” forth or glorify God. So men and women are equally important and valuable to God and can contribute to the mission of God in equally valid ways.

If God thinks of us as equal then that settles the issue for whose judgment is higher than his. This is further evidenced as both men and women receive gifts of ministry from the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

*“¹⁷And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.”
-Acts 2: 17-18*

Paul regards men and women as valuable to the church and the mission of God saying, “for each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.” (1 Cor 12:7). This does not mean that all Christians have the same gifts or in equal power but that both men and women have equally valuable and meaningful gifts to contribute.

(c) Difference in role and authority

Just as reflected in the Trinity, while men and women are equal in value and importance they are distinct in role and authority. Though members of the Trinity are equal in power and all other attributes the Father clearly has authority that neither the Son nor the Spirit possess. The Father initiates creation and the Son carries it out while the Spirit sustains it. The Father relates to the Son in the same way a father would relate to a son. Just as God the Father has authority over God the Son, they are equal in their deity. So in marriage, the husband has authority over the wife though they are equal in personhood.

Some believe that differing roles and authority were affects of the fall therefore Satanic in origin and should be fought as so. They quote Gen 3:16 to say that submitting to male authority is a product of the curse for women. While it may feel like a curse to marriages falling apart, scripture is clear that roles and authority structure is in place for our joy and since the beginning.

Proofs

1. Adam created first (Gen 2:7; 18-25)

*“For Adam was formed first, then Eve”
-1 Timothy 2:13*

2. Eve was created as a Helper for Adam

*“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for ^{R13}him.”
-Genesis 2:18*

3. Adam named Eve

- a. Naming symbolic of having authority (Gen 2:23)

*“¹⁹ So out of the ground the Lord God formed ^{E14} every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”
-Genesis 2:19-20*

4. The Serpent came to Eve first

- a. In going to the woman first the Devil was trying to institute a role reversal that led to disobeying God (Gen 3:1).
- b. In contrast God always spoke to them by speaking to Adam first

*“and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”
-1 Timothy 2:14*

5. Curse brought distortion of roles, not new ones

- a. Man wouldn't want to protect and provide (Gen 3:18, 9)

- b. Woman would despise their headship and husband's rule (Gen 3:16)
6. Redemption restores the original and intended order (Eph 5:22-23, Titus 2:5)

“Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

-1 John 3:8