

3: What Is Man?

Who is man? Where did he come from? What is his reason for existing? Why is the world in such a mess? These are questions everyone asks at some time and they are important questions to which God's Word alone gives satisfactory answers.

Man Was Created for God's Glory

Like everything else God created, man was made for a purpose: he was made to glorify God. He was a separate and distinct creation, unique and different from the animals, with an immortal soul. This does not mean that he had the power within himself to live for ever but it does mean that in right relationship with God and by God's life giving power he was capable of it.

God made man perfect, put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it and gave him authority to rule over all of His creation.

"Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

Genesis 1:28

What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honour.
You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,
All sheep and oxen — Even the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas."

Psalms 8:4 – 8

Man Was Created in God's Image

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

When we say that man was created in the image of God we mean that aspects of God's character are reproduced in man. Some of those characteristics have been distorted by the fall; others have been lost altogether. Those which are distorted include man's ability to reason, his ability to communicate his thoughts, his creativity, his morality, and his spirituality.

Man was given God's law. That law was written on his heart but even before his fall man also needed external commands to guide him. He was commanded to labour, reproduce, rule the earth and subdue it, as well as being warned not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man was created with the ability to keep God's law yet, at the same time, he had freedom to choose not to obey it.

Man Has Fallen

By eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command. The Fall came because of their unbelief, pride and rebellion — those things are the essence of all sin — it had nothing to do with the nature of the tree.

As a result of his sin Adam lost his righteousness and holiness and became guilty before God. Never the less God allowed Adam's sin, having planned to use even that and all that followed for His own glory.

Man Is Lost

Having sinned Adam came under God's judgement. Now destined to suffer His wrath, He was cut off from fellowship with God (dead or separated). His true knowledge of the world and of God was lost (he did not have complete knowledge of these things, but the knowledge he did have was perfect). Sin affected his mind, will, emotions and even his physical body. The corruption of Adam's nature was such that from then on his preference was for evil: he became opposed to and incapable of all good. Beyond that, the effects of God's judgement extended to the world in which Adam lived.

"Cursed is the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat of it
All the days of your life.
Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.
In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return."

Genesis 3:17 – 19

Because Adam and Eve's relationship with God was such that they were representatives of the human race, their actions had implications for all their descendants. Their guilt and the effects of their sin fell upon everyone.

"Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."

Romans 5:12

When we talk about original sin we mean that everyone is born sinful, guilty and under condemnation having inherited Adam's sin. This does not mean that man is not capable of any good acts. It does mean that even his best acts are defiled by sin, that by nature he is opposed to God and His ways, his spiritual acts are motivated by self-interest and if he is not as evil as he might be it is because of God's restraining hand — God's common grace — upon him. This is what we mean when we talk about the total depravity of man's nature.

"As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.
Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit;
The poison of asps is under their lips;
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace they have not known.
There is no fear of God before their eyes.'"

Romans 3:10 – 18

Man Is Hopeless

Given the total depravity of his nature, not only is man under God's judgement and destined to suffer His wrath eternally he is also incapable of doing anything to save himself. Even if there was a way that he could set aside his guilt and restore his holiness he would be incapable of doing it. He is incapable of exercising either faith or repentance.

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world... fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

Ephesians 2:1 – 3

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.”

1 Corinthians 2:14

Man Is Free — To Sin

Man was created with and still has a free will. He chooses his own actions and is not controlled by external forces: neither by his environment nor by Satan. His choices are limited only by his desires and his abilities, or the lack of them.

Before the fall, man had the ability to choose to do good or evil. Since the fall man can still act freely but only within the range of ability that his now sinful nature allows him: he is a slave to sin.

Memory Verses

- ☺ Psalm 8:4 – 5
- ☺ Romans 3:23
- ☺ Romans 5:12
- ☺ Ephesians 2:1