

Life's Big Questions

Part 4 – What does it mean to be human (1)?

“Man is neither angel nor beast.”
- Pascal



Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-25

Understanding what it means to be human begins with understanding how we got here. The Bible makes it plain that mankind is the special creation of God. That is, according to God's Word mankind did not ascend from lower species through natural selection but was created directly by God. The two narratives cannot be reconciled. What is more, God made mankind, male and female, in his own image.

Main Idea: God made mankind in his image by direct acts of creation.

1. We are created beings.

“Let us make man in our image.” (1:26)

“Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” (2:7)

- Mankind remains entirely distinct from God. “Mankind remains infinitely lower than his Creator; he is mere creature and nothing more. From its very first page the Bible excludes the pagan theme of divinization of man and all the dreams of hidden divinity and self-creation” (Blocher, 82).

a) Created directly

- The Genesis account affirms that God created man “from the dust of the ground.” The woman was made by God through an equally direct and supernatural act of creation. This matters, in part, because it affirms the special status of mankind. Humans did not ascend from lower species through a gradual process of natural selection. Rather the man and woman were made by direct acts of God.

b) Created purposefully

- As created beings we are differentiated from our Creator. The goal of the creature is always to testify to the greatness of the Creator. God is by nature the Lord and we are by nature his servants.
- WSC – “Q: What is the chief end of man? A: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

2. We are beings in the image of God.

Being made in the image and likeness of God surely reminds us of our creaturely status and dependence upon the Creator. At the same time, however, this serves to teach us that humanity has been marked out as the choicest of God's creatures.

Of what does the image of God consist?

a) Morality

We have a moral consciousness.

b) Authority

We have dominion over the rest of creation. We are God's vice regents.

c) Responsibility

We are to work and be productive.

d) Community

We are made for community. God exists in an eternal union of Persons (Trinity). He has created his image bearers to be in community with one another.

Theology in Application:

1. Don't confuse the image with the substance.

That we are created in the image of God does not mean that we are God or are parts of God. While God has graciously made us his image bearers we are nevertheless distinct from the Creator.

2. Humanity is uniquely precious.

Mankind is not simply a higher animal. Humanity is of an entirely different sort than the animals. Only humanity bears the image of God. Only humanity was given the creation mandate. Humanity has a unique moral consciousness. Humanity was created to relate to God in a way that nothing else in all creation experiences. God has set his affections upon mankind in a way that is unique.

3. All humanity bears the image of God.

Believer and unbeliever alike bear the image of God. The worst sinner is an image bearer of God. Our worst enemies are image bearers of God. Humans in the womb and in the final stages of life bear the image of God and are therefore of great value.

4. A broken image being restored

Sin did not eradicate the image of God in humanity. But it is a damaged image. Our sin distorts the image in various ways. But just as sin has damaged the image of God so Jesus is actively restoring that same broken image as part of his redeeming work.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did God create the first man? Why does this matter?
2. Why did God created humanity?
3. What makes humans so different from the animals?
4. What are some of the ways humanity bears the image of God?
5. How should are treatment of others (our enemies, the sick, the aged, the unborn) be effected by the fact that they are image-bearers of God?