

What Is Man?

LESSON
ONE

IN THE BEGINNING



THIRD MILLENNIUM

MINISTRIES

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What Is Man?

Lesson One

In the Beginning

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever come into a conversation in the middle? Or arrived at a performance after it already started? Or maybe you showed up late to a sporting event? Well, if you have, you understand that when we miss the beginning of something, it can be very confusing. When we don't know how the story starts, we have trouble understanding why certain details are important, who the heroes and the villains are, and what the whole point of the story is. Something similar is true when we consider the human race. Knowing how we got here, how our circumstances came to be, and what we're supposed to be doing is a huge help when it comes to understanding and managing the details of our lives.

This is the first lesson in our series, *What Is Man?*, and we've entitled it, "In the Beginning." In this lesson, we'll explore what human beings were like when God first created us, and placed us in the Garden of Eden. The title of this series — *What Is Man?* — should be familiar to most Christians, since it appears several times in Scripture. For example, Psalm 8:4 says:

What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:4).

Every time biblical characters or authors asked, "What is man?" they were wondering about the nature of humanity. They wanted to know things like: who we are in relation to God, what our role on earth is, and what sort of moral capacities we have. To put it in formal theological terms, they were asking questions about anthropology. The word "anthropology" comes from two Greek roots: *anthropos* meaning "man" or "human being"; and *logos*, meaning, "study." So, "anthropology" is:

The study of humanity

Or in the case of theology:

The doctrine of humanity

In secular studies, "anthropology" focuses on things like the society, culture, biology and development of human beings. But theological anthropology is much narrower. Louis Berkhof, who lived from 1873 to 1957, defined it this way in part 2, chapter 1 of his work *Systematic Theology*:

Theological Anthropology is concerned only with what the Bible says respecting man and the relation in which he stands and should stand to God.

In other words, when it comes to theology, anthropology is the study of humanity in *itself* and in its *relationship* to God.

Our lesson on what human beings were like in the beginning will divide into three parts. First, we'll look at the creation of humanity. Second, we'll describe the composition of our beings. And third, we'll look at humanity's initial covenant relationship with God. Let's begin with the creation of humanity.

CREATION

In the ancient Near East, where Moses wrote the book of Genesis, creation stories were extremely significant. In cultures outside the Bible, creation stories typically explained what the world was supposed to be like in its ideal state. They described how the gods had originally intended the world to work, and assigned various roles to its creatures. And Scripture uses creation accounts in similar ways.

Of course, in the cultures around ancient Israel, the creation stories were lies. They attributed the works of creation to false gods. And they used their invented stories to promote improper social and political structures, and to twist the relationships between humanity and other creatures.

By contrast, the Bible relates the true story of creation in order to explain how humanity was actually designed to function within the world. This is why many other parts of the Bible appeal to the creation accounts to prove how the world is supposed to work and what role human beings are morally obligated to play. Theologians often refer to these obligations as “creation ordinances” because they are:

Moral requirements established by God's works of creation

The idea is that God's works are perfect, and therefore, they're the standard for our own behavior.

Sometimes creation ordinances are explicit, such as God's command to “be fruitful and multiply” in Genesis 1:28. But others are implicit, such as our obligation to keep the Sabbath holy. The creation accounts don't say explicitly that human beings should rest every seventh day. But in the Ten Commandments, in Exodus 20:11, Moses clarified that God's pattern of working six days and resting on the seventh obligated human beings to do the same. So, as we think about the significance and role of humanity, it's both natural and helpful to start with our creation.

We'll explore the creation of humanity in three steps. First, we'll summarize the biblical accounts of creation. Second, we'll consider the historicity of Adam and Eve. And third, we'll look at their superiority among God's creatures. Let's look first at the biblical accounts.

BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS

The book of Genesis contains two accounts of creation. One is in Genesis 1:1–2:3, and the other is in Genesis 2:4–25. Together these accounts give us a general picture of how and why God created us.

The creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2, I think, are really complements to each other in that they look at the same reality — they look at the first human culture that is made by God in which the only occupants at this time are two human beings — it looks at their culture from two different aspects... Really, we have the creation narrative of chapter 1, and it speaks about the whole process, but we have kind of a window into day 6 of the creation of human life in chapter 2, beginning in chapter 2, and it's really going to talk more about their relationship to one another. And so we're getting a kind of a different film shot of the same picture in both of those, and we need to be able to read that and not look for contradiction necessarily, but I think we're seeing really complement and enrichment happening.

— Dr. Mark Saucy

In the first creation account, in Genesis 1:2, we're told that the creation was originally "formless and empty." Then, in the rest of the chapter, we're told that God spent six days forming and filling the universe.

During the first three days, he dealt with the fact that it was formless by giving shape to its various realms. On the first day, he separated the dark from the light. On the second day, he formed the sky and atmosphere to separate the waters above from the waters below. On the third day, he separated the dry land from the seas.

During the next three days, he dealt with the fact that creation was empty. On the fourth day, he filled the light and the darkness with heavenly bodies, like the sun and stars. On the fifth day, he put birds in the sky and sea creatures in the oceans. On the sixth day, he filled the dry land with all sorts of animals. And he created human beings to rule over the entire creation on his behalf. As we read in Genesis 1:27-28:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).

At this point in the biblical account, humanity was clearly distinguished from the rest of creation. Human beings were created in God's image, and given authority over his other creatures. We'll talk about this in more depth later. So for now, we simply want to point out that not only was humanity *part* of creation; it was also its pinnacle.

The second creation account, in Genesis 2:4-25, contains more details related to God's work on the sixth day, when he created the land animals and humanity. Here,

we're told that God formed the animals by molding them from the dust of the earth. And he made the first man, Adam, in largely the same way, also molding his body from the dust of the earth. But, it's interesting to note that only Adam is said to have received his breath by God breathing it into him.

Next, the animals were paraded before Adam, so that he could try to find a suitable helper — one that would assist in him with the tasks God had assigned him. During this process, he named the animals, demonstrating his authority over them. Not surprisingly, none of them turned out to be a suitable helper.

So, in order to give Adam the helper he needed, God created the first woman, Eve, to be Adam's wife. But rather than creating her from the dust of the earth, God created Eve from Adam's rib. This made Eve unique among all the creatures God had made. As Adam said in Genesis 2:23:

She shall be called “woman,” for she was taken out of man (Genesis 2:23).

The act of naming demonstrated Adam's authority over his wife. But the name he gave her — *ishshah* in Hebrew, which we translate “woman” sounded like Adam's own name — *ish*, which we translate “man.”

The equivalence of these names implied that while Eve was under Adam's authority in their marriage, she was equal to him in the tasks God had assigned them as a race. Both were created in God's image. Both were to fill and subdue the earth. And both were given authority to rule over creation on God's behalf.

With these biblical accounts of humanity's creation in mind, let's turn to the historicity, or historical authenticity, of Adam and Eve.

HISTORICITY

In recent years, many theologians have treated the biblical accounts of humanity's creation as metaphors or allegories, rather than as factual history. But Scripture itself has a very different perspective. According to many other passages in the Bible, Adam and Eve were real people. At the time of their creation, they were the only human beings on the planet. But they went on to produce real offspring, who eventually multiplied into the human race, as we know it today.

Of course Adam and Eve were historical people. That's how the Bible has recorded it, and we believe in the Bible because it's inspired by God. As we understand this world and history, we can use archeology, historical documents, and all sorts of accounts passed down by various traditions, but the most firm basis on which we prove Adam and Eve to be historical figures is that we believe what the Bible has told us.

— Rev. Xiaojun Fang, translation

In order to show the historicity of Adam and Eve, we'll look at three strands of biblical testimony. First we'll consider the broader context of Genesis itself. Second, we'll examine the Old Testament books beyond Genesis. And third, we'll look at the New Testament. Let's begin with the broader context of Genesis itself.

Genesis

The record of Adam and his immediate family in Genesis 2–4 gives every appearance of an account intended to describe actual history. Some literary genres tend to be highly figurative and metaphoric, like poetry and parables. Others tend to be very straightforward, such as historical narrative. Most of the book of Genesis is unarguably historical narrative, such as the early patriarchal histories found in chapters 11–37, and the history of the later patriarchs, like Joseph, found in chapters 37–50. And the literature of Genesis 2–4 matches these other passages very closely. In fact, Genesis 2 is introduced by the same literary marker that introduces many other historical accounts throughout the book. Listen to the formulaic words Moses wrote in Genesis 2:4:

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created (Genesis 2:4).

The phrase “this is the account” — *elleh toledoth*, in Hebrew — can be literally translated “these are the generations.” This same phrase introduces lists and accounts of human generations throughout Genesis. It introduces the descendants of Adam in 5:1, Noah in 6:9, Shem in 11:10, Terah in 11:27, Ishmael in 25:12, Isaac in 25:19, Esau in 36:1, 9; and Jacob in 37:2.

Moreover, Genesis gives biographical details about Adam's life. For instance, we're told Eve became pregnant, and we're told the names of three of their children: Cain, Abel and Seth. We're also told how long Adam lived, that he was 130 years old when Seth was born, and that he died when he was 930. This life span is much longer than human beings live today, but it's still obviously presented as historical data.

So, in light of the narrative literary form of these chapters, the generational formula that introduces them, and the details of Adam's life, we can be certain that Moses intended Genesis 2–4 to be read as history. In other words, he intended his readers to believe that Adam and Eve were real, historical people.

Now that we've seen the historicity of Adam and Eve in Genesis, let's turn our attention to other books of the Old Testament.

Old Testament

Eve isn't mentioned by name anywhere else in the Old Testament. But Adam is mentioned twice. And in both places, he's presented as a historical figure. The genealogy beginning in 1 Chronicles 1:1 lists him as the historical father of Seth. This genealogy traces the generations from Adam to the time surrounding Israel and Judah's return from

the Babylonian exile, near the end of the sixth century B.C. For the returning exiles, an accurate, historical genealogy was important because it helped them establish their proper roles and inheritances in the Promised Land. A genealogy based in myth wouldn't have accomplished this purpose, and therefore, wouldn't have been persuasive to the Chronicler's original audience.

The other mention of Adam appears in Hosea. This verse compares the sins of the historical people of Israel to the sin of Adam. Listen to Hosea 6:7:

Like Adam, they have broken the covenant — they were unfaithful to me there (Hosea 6:7).

Some interpreters believe this is a reference to a city called Adam, mentioned in Joshua 3:16. But there is no reference in Joshua to that city sinning. So, it would be odd for it to be used in Hosea as a byword — especially when the sin of our first father was so well-known and had such terrible repercussions for humanity. Others might suggest that Adam need not be a historical figure in order for this comparison to work. But as we'll see in the New Testament, the covenant with Adam is only significant if it was historical.

Now that we've explored the historicity of Adam and Eve in Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament, let's turn our attention to the New Testament.

New Testament

The New Testament speaks of Adam several times, and the New Testament authors frequently attached a great deal of theological significance to his history. For instance, in Romans 5:12-21, Paul insisted that Adam's sin is the reason human beings die. Further, he taught that Jesus saves his faithful people from the curse we suffer in Adam. Similar statements can be seen in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45. So, if Adam wasn't a historical figure, then from what does Jesus save us? If no historical Adam existed to sin against God, then we would have no need for a historical Jesus to die on the cross.

Paul also confirmed Adam's historicity in 1 Timothy 2:13, 14 where he said that Adam was created before Eve, and that Eve sinned before Adam. Likewise, Jude 14 treats Adam's genealogies as reliable when it counts Enoch as the seventh generation from Adam. And in fact, there isn't a single place in either the Old or the New Testament that suggests that Adam *wasn't* a real historical figure.

I think to reject the historicity of Adam and Eve has huge implications for what we believe that Jesus Christ came to do. So, if Adam and Eve were simple myths or a story that was made up — there was no real historical Adam and Eve — it would seem really foolish of God to come and die for a myth that never actually existed, and I think, by default, we'll be undermining also the historicity of Jesus Christ, because when you read the apostle Paul, for example, he always likes to use the metaphor that all died in Adam, but the new Adam, who is

Jesus Christ, gives us life. So, if Adam never really existed, should I trust the new Adam?

— Rev. Vuyani Sindo

Now that we've looked at humanity's creation by summarizing the biblical accounts and defending the historicity of Adam and Eve, let's turn our attention to the superiority of humanity.

SUPERIORITY

As we mentioned earlier, the Bible clearly teaches that Adam and Eve were created to be superior to the rest of God's earthly creatures. There may be hints of this in the fact that Genesis 1:27 lists humanity's creation on the sixth day as a separate act from the creation of the animals, as a sort of culmination of creation. And in fact, it's only after the creation of humanity that, in Genesis 1:31, the narrative switches from calling creation simply "good" to calling it "very good." There may also be hints of humanity's superiority in Genesis 2:7 where only Adam is explicitly said to have had his life breathed into him by God.

But the real proof of Adam and Eve's superiority over the rest of creation is found in the fact that God created them *in his image* and appointed them to rule over creation on his behalf. Listen again to Genesis 1:27-28:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).

This same idea is stated in places like Genesis 9:2 and Psalm 8:6-8.

God created humanity to reflect his glory and his attributes in ways that other creatures couldn't. In a later lesson, we'll explore the concept of the image of God in great detail. But for now, it will suffice to say that to be God's image is to be like a picture of God. In the ancient Near East, kings would erect images of themselves around their kingdoms in order to remind their citizens of the benevolence and greatness of the king. In a similar way, human beings are likenesses of God. Our very existence points to God's power and goodness. And because no other earthly creature is God's image, no other creature carries this much honor or so much inherent dignity.

Beyond this, God appointed our first parents to rule over every other creature he had made. So, humanity isn't just inherently superior; we've also been given a superior role. It's *our* job to administer God's rule over the earth. God has delegated the administration of his creation to *us*, and not to any of the animals. And we see confirmation of this idea in Genesis 2:20, where Adam exercised authority over the

animals by naming them, and where no animal was found that could help him carry out his appointed task.

Later, the Scriptures confirm humanity's superiority by putting us almost on the level of the angels in the present, and superior to the angels in the future. As we read in Psalm 8:5:

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5).

One of the great things about Psalm 8 is it kind of echoes what goes on in Genesis 1:26-28. On the one hand, there's many things in the Bible that tell us about how great God is, about how vast the universe is, and even verses that tell us, the universe is great; you are a small thing compared to the universe. But, both Genesis 1:26 and 28, Psalm 8, they tell us about the distinction of humans being given a particular position in God's world, well, really in God's cosmos, as those who are created in his image. Now, the language "being created in his image" isn't specifically there in Psalm 8, but there's language about being created "a little lower than the angels" but also "crowned with glory," and then certainly restating the language about humans being given the dominion over creation — dominion as in good stewardship of the creation — this is what is repeated in Psalm 8. So, Psalm 8 helps us to see, or reminds us that, when God created us, he created us with great significance and purpose.

— Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

Unfortunately, many people today have tried to destroy the distinction between humanity and animals. For example, many believe that the human species is an accident of evolution. For them, the difference between human beings and animals is primarily historical, explained by a few bits of DNA. And while this view may still recognize that human beings are mentally superior to the animals, it denies the fundamental dignity we have as God's image, and undermines our authority as creation's rightful rulers.

Evangelicals have responded to these claims in many different ways. On one end of the spectrum, some of us believe that God created the world in six solar days. And many believe that Adam and Eve may have been created as few as six thousand years ago. On the other end of the spectrum, some of us believe that creation took much longer, and that Adam and Eve were created tens of thousands of years ago, if not more. But, regardless of which view we take, we should all agree that humanity was created to be superior to the rest of creation in both dignity and authority.

So far, our study of what humanity was like in the beginning has focused on the creation of our first parents. Now let's turn our attention to the composition of our beings.

COMPOSITION

When we speak of our “composition,” we have in mind the different parts that make up a human being. Scripture uses a wide variety of language to describe our constituent parts. It talks about our bodies, flesh, hearts, minds, spirits, souls, and many other things. But throughout the centuries, theologians have generally agreed that all those parts can be summarized in terms of two things: a physical part, usually called our “body”; and an immaterial part, typically called our “soul” or “spirit.”

Most evangelical theologians agree that human beings consist of the physical body and the immaterial soul, and that these parts are unified in one person. But Scripture’s teaching on these points is complicated by the diverse vocabulary it uses to describe us, especially when it comes to our immaterial souls. Even so, when the Bible summarizes our human nature in terms of the physical and the immaterial, it very frequently uses a single term for our physical part, and another single term for our immaterial part. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 7:1, Paul wrote:

Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In this verse, Paul indicated that our human nature can be summarized in terms of two parts: the physical body and the immaterial spirit. And we find similar constructions throughout Scripture, including: Romans 8:10; 1 Corinthians 7:34; Colossians 2:5; James 2:26; and 1 Peter 4:6.

The Bible teaches that humans consist of both a material part called the body and an immaterial part called soul, spirit, heart, a variety of terms like that. And both of these parts of human nature are essential and will be part of our initial nature in creation and will eventually be a part of our nature in the resurrection, so we don’t eventually become only a soul or only a spirit. Eventually the body will be resurrected. So, both of these are parts of human nature that have both a present and a future significance.

— Dr. John Hammett

In line with these understandings, our discussion of our human composition will divide into two parts. First, we’ll see that each human being has a physical body. And second, we’ll address the fact that we also have an immaterial soul. Let’s turn first to our physical body.

PHYSICAL BODY

Scripture uses a number of terms to refer to the physical or material aspects of our human nature. Most frequently, it uses the word “body” to say that human beings are made of real, physical substance.

As Jesus said of our human nature in Matthew 10:28:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).

In this verse, Jesus used the term body to refer to our physical qualities in distinction from our soul, or immaterial qualities.

Besides using the term “body,” the Bible also speaks of our physical qualities as “flesh,” in places like Colossians 1:24; “flesh and blood,” in 1 Corinthians 15:50 and Hebrews 2:14; and “flesh and bone” in Genesis 2:23. And the term “strength” refers to our physical capacities in Deuteronomy 6:5, and Mark 12:30.

Obviously, the body consists of many different parts. At times, the body is referred to collectively as the sum of its parts, as in the term “members” in Romans 7:23. But the Bible also identifies many parts on their own, like hands, arms, feet, eyes, and so on. But while we could create a very long list of every body part that Scripture mentions, it would serve little purpose. Following Scripture’s lead, theologians have been content to understand each of these parts as belonging to the larger whole we identify as our physical body.

Now, it’s important to recognize that our physical bodies aren’t just temporary; they’re necessary aspects of our existence, and important parts of our human nature. Our bodies begin when we’re conceived, and they remain with us throughout our earthly lives. And even though our physical bodies are separated from our immaterial souls at death, they continue to be part of us. This is one reason that Scripture often speaks of the dead as existing in their graves, and identifies dead bodies as the same people they were in life. We see this with regard to Jehoiada, who was said to be buried with the kings in the City of David in 2 Chronicles 24:15, 16. And in Acts 13:36, Peter spoke of David being buried with his fathers. Jesus’ friend Lazarus was also said to be personally in his tomb in John 11:17. And Jesus himself was said to lie in the grave before his resurrection in Acts 13:29, 30.

Furthermore, in the general resurrection at the end of the age, the body of every person that has ever died will be raised to face God’s judgment. At that time, our souls and bodies will be reunited, and they will never be separated again. The redeemed will rise to new life in the new heavens and new earth. But the wicked will rise to condemnation and everlasting bodily torment. Listen to Jesus’ words in John 5:28-29:

A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear [the Son of Man’s] voice and come out — those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned (John 5:28-29).

With this understanding of our physical body in mind, let’s address a second aspect of our composition: our immaterial soul.

IMMATERIAL SOUL

As with the body, Scripture uses a variety of terms to refer to the immaterial aspects of our human nature. One of the most common terms is “soul,” which often translates the Hebrew word *nephesh* or the Greek word *psuché*. These words generally refer to the entirety of humanity’s immaterial nature, but they sometimes refer to an entire human being, including the physical body. For example, Genesis 2:7 tells us that when God breathed the breath of life into Adam, Adam became a “living soul,” or *nephesh*. In this instance, it means he became a living, breathing human being. And in John 15:13, Jesus used the word *psuché* to refer to our bodily lives when he explained that the greatest love is to lay down our *lives* — *psuché* — for our friends.

Another of the most common terms for our immaterial parts is “spirit,” which typically translates the Hebrew *ruach* or the Greek word *pneuma*. Both terms often refer to the entire immaterial aspect of human nature, and in this sense, they’re relatively synonymous with the words for soul. However, “spirit” can also refer to a variety of other things, such as “breath,” “wind,” or even an attitude or demeanor, as in the phrase “spirit of timidity” in 2 Timothy 1:7.

Besides these terms, Scripture has many words for various aspects of our immaterial being. For instance, “mind” commonly identifies the seat of our moral, intellectual, and rational thought, as in Romans 7:23. And “heart” sometimes identifies our inner lives, or the immaterial source of our thoughts, will, feelings and emotions, as in 1 Samuel 16:7, and 2 Timothy 2:22. Even the Hebrew term *me’eh* normally translated bowels, womb or inward parts, refers to our immaterial being in places like Psalm 40:8.

And of course, the Bible also has many other terms for various parts of our immaterial being, including our conscience, desires, reason, thoughts, mind, and a wide variety of emotions. In general, as with our bodies, theologians have understood all these parts as belonging to the larger whole we identify as our immaterial soul or spirit.

We have descriptions in the Bible about how the human being is described with a soul and mind and the heart and spirit, and some of these terms are synonymous, they’re overlapping, but they do have different functions. So, the heart is a metaphor of the spiritual core and the center of the person. Mind can be part of the heart, will can be part of the heart, emotions are in the heart. So, the heart thinks, the heart chooses, the heart believes, the heart feels. Spirit and soul are also sort of overlapping. So, the heart would be like the center of the spirit and the center of the soul, but there is not quite interchangeable use between spirit and soul. They’re similar. From what I can tell, “spirit” is used for the immaterial part of the human being; and then angels are spirits, God is a spirit. So, it’s non-physical entity. “Soul” is used to refer to the whole being including the spirit and the body. And so, even when somebody’s died, they can be called a soul, but they’re usually not called a spirit after death. So, it’s an overlapping usage. I don’t think it’s indicating that spirit is one part and soul is a different part. It’s just different ways of talking about

the same deep spiritual reality that a human being is, and the point to be that there's more to us than the body and there's complexity even though it's a spiritual, invisible, non-physical kind of thing. So, it's a little complicated.

— Dr. John McKinley

With this basic introduction to our immaterial soul in mind, there are three related ideas that deserve closer attention: the origin of our souls, the immortality of our souls, and an alternate view of our immaterial composition known as “trichotomy.” Let's begin with the origin of the soul.

Origin

There are several views regarding the origin of the human soul. Some theologians — called “creationists” — believe that God creates an individual soul for each human being when the person is conceived. This view draws support from passages like Zechariah 12:1, which says that God forms the spirit of man within him. Creationists also cite passages like Isaiah 42:5, and Hebrews 12:9, which indicate that God is the creator of our souls.

Other theologians, called “traducianists,” believe that human beings inherit their souls directly from their parents. In this view, the souls of our parents beget our souls in much the same way that their bodies beget our bodies. Traducianism is often used to explain why people are born with sinful souls, since it's hard to explain why God would create a soul that was already sinful. Traducianists rely on passages like Romans 5:12, which implies that we inherited our sinfulness from Adam through ordinary or natural generation, and Hebrews 7:9, 10 which teaches that Levi was seminally present in his ancestor Abraham.

We can be certain that our souls come from God. But how that happens isn't quite clear. So in these lessons, we won't take a firm position on either side of the argument.

A lot of people expect the Bible to tell us about the origin of our soul and how it came and how it was made. The Bible doesn't clarify these questions, but it tells us that man is not just a physical body; he does have a non-physical part. Man has a body, a spirit and a soul. The Bible says that when God created man, he blew into him and he became a living spirit. That's the spiritual part. The Bible does not tell us how it came, but that it's present, and that we need to take care of it. This part of man is not satisfied by bread or normal physical things. Augustine explained it this way: We have a need to have Jesus in our life to fulfill us in both the physical and spiritual lives.

— Dr. Riad Kassis, translation

Having spoken of the origin of our immaterial soul, let's briefly address its immortality.

Immortality

The Bible teaches that our souls continue to exist after our bodies die. While our bodies lie in their graves, the souls of the wicked suffer temporary punishment in hell, and believers enjoy temporary blessings in heaven. This occurs in what theologians call the "intermediate state," or the time between our lives on earth now and the general resurrection when Christ returns. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:8:

We ... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Paul's point was that the immaterial aspect of our human nature survives death. And if we're believers, our soul goes to be with the Lord. Scripture speaks in similar ways in Luke 23:43; Acts 7:59; Philippians 1:23, 24; and Revelation 6:9.

Something similar is true for unbelieving souls. But instead of enjoying the Lord's presence in heaven, they suffer in hell. As Jesus taught in Luke 12:4-5:

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more... Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell (Luke 12:4-5).

Although hell is a place of death, it's important to recognize that death in Scripture isn't a matter of ceasing to exist. Rather, it's a matter of falling under God's condemnation. So, from the perspective of punishment and blessings, the souls in hell are dead. But from the perspective of existence, those souls continue forever.

After the intermediate state of temporary punishment and blessing, our souls will be reunited with our bodies in the general resurrection. At that time, we'll go to our final, permanent destinations. The wicked will suffer bodily and spiritually in hell. But as believers, when our resurrected bodies are united to our immortal souls, we'll live bodily and spiritually with Christ in the new heavens and the new earth forever.

Now that we've considered humanity's immaterial soul in terms of its origin and immortality, we should mention the doctrine of trichotomy.

Trichotomy

As Christians, we know that human beings aren't merely *physical* creatures. After all, Scripture talks about our immaterial souls in a wide variety of ways. The most common view among evangelical theologians and scholars is the one we've already described, which is called "dichotomy," or the bipartite view. This is the doctrine that says human beings are composed of *two* fundamental parts: body and soul.

Even so, not all evangelical theologians believe that our composition is best described in terms of a physical body and an immaterial soul. Some theologians instead affirm the doctrine of “trichotomy” or the tripartite view. This view says human beings consist of *three* parts: body, soul and spirit. Trichotomy primarily appeals to a small number of verses that distinguish between the human soul and spirit. For instance, Hebrews 4:12 says:

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit (Hebrews 4:12).

Trichotomists argue that this verse presents the soul and spirit as distinct immaterial parts of human beings. Similar arguments are made from 1 Corinthians 15:44, and 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Based on verses like these, trichotomists argue that the spirit and soul are not the same thing. Our soul is typically identified with our lower immaterial functions, such as those that animate our body, and create our desires and appetites. By contrast, our spirit is associated with our higher immaterial functions, including those that connect us to God.

But whether we affirm dichotomy or trichotomy, we should acknowledge that many evangelicals hold the other view in good conscience. And we should emphasize that both dichotomists and trichotomists agree that human beings are partly physical and partly immaterial.

Bipartite and tripartite views of the human being have been discussed for a long time, and both have some exegetical authority... So, we shall not war over that, and it's not significant enough a question to hold one as orthodox and the other as heterodox.

— Dr. Ramesh Richard

The composition of our beings tells us that both our bodies and our souls are important. Sometimes we can be so focused on spirituality that we fail to care for our own physical needs, or for the physical needs of those around us. Or, more often, we emphasize the importance of physical life on earth to the point that we fail to give proper attention to our spiritual development. But our composition as body-soul beings encourages us to recognize the importance — and the interrelatedness — of both. If we're truly spiritually minded, then we'll honor God with our bodies in the physical world, and we'll care for the physical needs of others. And if we truly seek to use our bodies to glorify God and do his work, it will produce spiritual growth in our hearts and souls.

So far in our lesson on what human beings were like in the beginning, we've looked at the creation of humanity and the composition of our beings. Now let's turn to our last major topic: humanity's initial covenant relationship with God.

COVENANT

When God created Adam and Eve, he didn't just set them free on the earth and let them run wild. He created them for a purpose: to build his earthly kingdom. He gifted them with the abilities and the help they needed to accomplish the task. He set rules requiring them to be loyal and to work diligently. He explained the blessings they'd receive if they obeyed him, and the punishments they'd endure if they didn't. In theological terms, we can say that God established a covenant relationship between himself and humanity.

Throughout the history of the Old and New Testaments, God entered into formal relationships with his people. The terms of these formalized relationships were often written down in what Scripture calls "covenants," translated from the Hebrew word *berîth* and the Greek word *diatheke*. These covenantal relationships resembled ancient international covenants, especially treaties between great emperors or "suzerains" and the vassal kingdoms that served them.

These ancient treaties shared three features: the suzerain's benevolence toward his vassal, the loyalty the suzerain required of his vassal, and the consequences that would result from the vassal's loyalty or disloyalty. And these treaties, or covenants, continued throughout the generations, so that the successors of the vassals would continue to serve the successors of the suzerains. In a similar fashion, God's covenants record his benevolence toward his people, explain the requirements of the loyalty they owe him, and describe the consequences for loyalty or disloyalty to those requirements.

Now, in the record of humanity's creation, in Genesis 1–3, the Hebrew doesn't use the term *berîth*. And the Septuagint, the early Greek translation of the Old Testament, doesn't use the word *diatheke* there, either. As a result, some theologians deny that the relationship between God and Adam can rightly be called a covenant. Even so, Scripture strongly suggests that God made a covenant with Adam, and with the rest of humanity through Adam.

For one thing, God's relationship with Adam contained all the normal covenant elements. God was clearly a sovereign, superior king over Adam. And, as we saw earlier in Genesis 1:28, God appointed humanity as his vassal or servant kings and instructed them to rule over creation on his behalf.

Additionally, God's relationship with Adam included God's benevolence, the requirement of Adam's loyalty, and the consequences for Adam's obedience or disobedience. We'll look at these covenant elements more closely in a moment. So, for now we'll simply point out that the presence of these elements demonstrates the existence of a covenant relationship.

For another thing, God's covenant relationship with Adam is assumed later in Genesis in the account of Noah. In Genesis 6:18, God told Noah:

I will establish my covenant with you (Genesis 6:18).

Here, the word "establish" translates the Hebrew verb *qum*. This is the normal word for confirming an *existing* covenant. The normal verb for creating a new covenant is *karath*.

So, when God said that he would “establish” his covenant with Noah, he meant that he would confirm with Noah a covenant relationship that already existed. And God’s relationship with Adam is the only relationship in Genesis that would appear to be in view here. This interpretation is confirmed by Hosea’s reference to Adam’s covenant. You’ll recall that Hosea 6:7 says:

Like Adam, they have broken the covenant — they were unfaithful to me there (Hosea 6:7).

Beyond this, Jeremiah 33:20, 25 refer to a covenant that binds creation itself. This covenant appears to have been made during the creation week, and so it would naturally include Adam and Eve as God’s vassals.

Another proof that God made a covenant with Adam is that God’s relationship with Adam paralleled God’s relationship with Christ. Paul wrote about this extensively in Romans 5:12-19. And God’s relationship with Christ was a covenant. This fact appears repeatedly throughout Hebrews 7–13. And Jesus himself mentioned it at the Last Supper. In Luke 22:20, Jesus told his disciples:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20).

Admittedly, as we said before, Moses didn’t use the word *berîth* to describe God’s relationship with Adam. But regardless of what we call it, we can be confident that the arrangement between God and Adam shared all the characteristics of a covenant. And historically, theologians have tended to agree. For instance, theologians have often referred to the relationship between God and Adam as the “Adamic covenant,” because Adam was the head over his people, and the first human administrator of the covenant. They’ve also referred to it as the “covenant of life,” because it would have resulted in everlasting life if Adam hadn’t broken it. They’ve called it the “covenant of creation,” because it was made during the creation week and carries implications for the entire created order. And they’ve called it the “covenant of works,” because it promised life on the condition of humanity’s works of obedience.

“Covenant of works” refers to an administration in the early chapters of Genesis in which God came to Adam and told him in Genesis 2 not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that he ate of it he would surely die. The covenant of works held out to Adam life and death. If Adam disobeyed God then death would be the result. Had Adam obeyed God, continued in obedience to God, which he didn’t, then confirmed life would have been the result. And Adam was a representative person, as Paul teaches in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15. And what that means is that when Adam obeyed or disobeyed, and in this case he disobeyed, he did so as the representative of his posterity, so that when he sinned, and death

came into the world, his sin was reckoned to his posterity and so death to them.

— Dr. Guy Waters

We'll consider God's covenant with Adam in terms of the three primary features of covenants we mentioned earlier. First, we'll look at God's divine benevolence toward humanity. Second, we'll examine the human loyalty God required from Adam and his race. And third, we'll consider the consequences for humanity's obedience and disobedience. Let's begin with God's divine benevolence.

DIVINE BENEVOLENCE

God's benevolence is the goodness and kindness he expresses toward his creatures, like the good things he did for Adam and Eve in Genesis 1, 2. For example, God created Adam and Eve in his image, and elevated them to a position of authority over the rest of creation. David wrote of this benevolence in the familiar words of Psalm 8:4-6:

What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet (Psalm 8:4-6).

When David asked, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" he was acknowledging that humanity didn't deserve the kind of attention we'd received from God. And David was particularly impressed by God's benevolence in giving Adam and Eve, and their descendants, authority over creation.

Another way God expressed benevolence in his initial covenant with humanity was by providing shelter and sustenance. In particular, as we learn in Genesis 2:8, he allowed Adam and Eve to live in the Garden of Eden, and he also supplied them with all the food they needed. In Genesis 1:29, God told Adam:

I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food (Genesis 1:29).

God's covenant benevolence was on full display after Adam fell into sin. In Genesis 2:17, God had warned Adam that humanity would die if they transgressed his law by eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But when they ate it, they didn't die — at least not physically. Instead, God provided a way for them to be redeemed, and poured out saving grace on them. And he continued to show that grace to generation after generation of his people, to everyone that repented of sin and turned to God for salvation.

In Genesis 1 and 2, God created everything for the sake of mankind; not just for Adam and Eve, but for all of their descendants. [Indeed], after the Fall, all of mankind continues to enjoy that initial creation. What’s even more amazing is that when [our] Lord Jesus Christ walked the earth, many of the things he announced, preached on, and used as examples are [also] in Genesis 1 and 2, [such as] the stars he saw [in the sky] that also led the wise men to worship him. And when he preached in the fields, he especially mentioned the birds that neither sow nor reap. All of these became excellent preaching parables. This also leads us to think that when the Lord comes again in the future, the glorious light that will appear in the new heavens and the new earth was already recorded wonderfully in Genesis, [because] God created it in the beginning. I believe that one of the reasons God created these things in the beginning was to serve this very special purpose.

— Rev. Peter Liu, translation

With this understanding of God’s divine benevolence in mind, let’s turn to the human loyalty his covenant requires.

HUMAN LOYALTY

To demonstrate God’s requirement of human loyalty, theologians have often pointed to Genesis 2:17, where God commanded Adam not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And while it’s true that this was part of the loyalty God required, his commandments went well beyond this one point of prohibition.

Theologians have different ways of describing these obligations, but many say that Adam received the full moral law from God, which was later summarized in the Ten Commandments. For example, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, completed in 1647, describes Adam’s obligations this way in chapter 19, sections 1 and 2:

God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience ... This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments.

In this lesson, we’ll limit our investigation to two types of human loyalty God required. First, God placed priestly obligations on Adam and Eve. And second, he gave them royal obligations over the rest of creation. Let’s look first at humanity’s priestly obligations.

Priestly Obligations

Adam’s priestly role in the Garden of Eden is apparent both because the Garden served as an earthly sanctuary, and because Adam and Eve did the work of priests. As a sanctuary, the Garden was the precursor to the tabernacle and later the temple. In fact, the furnishings and decorations of the tabernacle lead many theologians to conclude that it was intended as a replica of the Garden of Eden. The tabernacle’s lampstand resembled the Garden’s tree of life. The cherubim that decorated the curtains of the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant recalled the cherubim that guarded the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24.

And just as the Garden of Eden was a precursor of the tabernacle and temple, Adam and Eve were precursors of the priests that ministered in those sacred buildings. For example, God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. According to Leviticus 16, God later manifested his presence only to his high priest, and only in the most holy place of the tabernacle and temple. The tasks Adam was assigned in the Garden also point to his priestly work, because they’re described with the same technical language as the work of the priests in the tabernacle. In Genesis 2:15, we read:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it (Genesis 2:15).

The Hebrew verbs *avad*, meaning “work,” and *shamar*, here translated “take care,” are both rather common and can mean many things. But together they form a technical phrase describing priestly work. For example, in Numbers 3:8, we read:

[The Levites] are to take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle (Numbers 3:8).

In the creation account, Adam and Eve are created in God’s image not only to rule and subdue, but also to represent. They are supposed to, just like the priestly role in Israel — the priests were representations or go-betweens, mediums, between God and mankind — so Adam and Eve are made to do the exact same thing. They are to rule, to serve, to obey, and thus represent God on earth, which is the exact same thing that, when you move throughout the patriarchs, when you move into the nation of Israel and the Torah, when you move into the New Testament and the Great Commission or the Spirit coming upon us in Acts 1:8 to go be witnesses, all that is rooted in Adam and Eve’s creation as image-bearers and being made in the likeness of God, not only to rule like him, but also to show what he is like, which is the primary role of a priest.

— Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer

God's covenant with Adam was, and still is, binding on all humanity. So, humanity is still responsible to God for fulfilling the moral obligations that flow from these priestly duties. For example, we're all called to serve God and worship him, to cultivate and guard the creation, and to turn the whole world into a sanctuary that's fitting for God's presence. And in the church, God has given us additional obligations, such as rendering sacrifices of praise and obedience to him, and proclaiming his goodness to the world. As Peter told the church in 1 Peter 2:5, 9:

You ... are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices ... [Y]ou are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

Having explored human loyalty in terms of Adam and Eve's priestly obligations, let's discuss their royal obligations.

Royal Obligations

As we saw earlier in this lesson, God appointed Adam and Eve to rule over creation on his behalf. And he commanded them to increase the human race in order to spread its rule over the whole earth. This was humanity's royal obligation. Listen again to God's command to humanity in Genesis 1:28:

Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (Genesis 1:28).

So, one of the most common ways of understanding what "image" and "likeness" language means in Genesis 1 is that God created us to be his representatives and to stand in as his rulers in creation. And we draw that from the broader cultural context when Moses was writing, where "image" and "likeness" was often used to describe pharaohs and kings, and so to say that pharaoh is made in "god's image" is to say that he is God's representative ruler in that particular context... I think it's really important to notice that God doesn't place Adam and Eve in the Garden in Genesis 2 and then tell them to just lay in the grass and count the clouds and, I don't know, watch the sheep nearby. Right? He gives them a task and a purpose in the Garden, right? He places them there to tend and keep the Garden so that this vocation of working with creation, to help tend and shape and mold creation so that it becomes the kind of creation that God wants it to be, a

creation, really, in which all of creation flourishes. That's part of what it means to be human. That's how God has created us is to exercise this representative function in this creation that God has placed us.

— Dr. Marc Cortez

The great King of heaven ordained humanity as his royal vassals to expand his kingdom beyond the initial borders of their dwelling in the Garden of Eden. His goal was for them to multiply, to spread out, and to care for the whole earth in the same way they cared for the Garden. Ultimately, humanity was to turn the *entire* planet into God's earthly sanctuary as an extension of his heavenly kingdom. And this is still our obligation today. In the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:10, Jesus taught us to pray:

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

It's always been humanity's task to help God extend his heavenly kingdom to earth. Jesus' instructions for our prayers reflect that. And this task falls especially on his faithful people in the church. We ought to view each of our vocations as aspects of the dominion that God has given us over the earth. And we ought to use our skills and our resources to care for and govern his creation. Whether we're in our homes, at our jobs, in the church, or anywhere else, we're called to represent and to serve our great King in everything we do.

Now that we've looked at God's divine benevolence in his covenant with Adam, and at the requirement of human loyalty, let's consider the consequences of humanity's obedience and disobedience.

CONSEQUENCES

God's covenant with Adam promised blessings for humanity if they showed him loyalty, and curses if they showed him disloyalty. And as we've mentioned, the consequence for disobedience was death. In Genesis 2:17, God told Adam:

You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:17).

Now, ancient Hebrew legal texts normally stated the maximum penalty that *could* be imposed, rather than mandatory penalties that *had* to be applied. But whether God's words in Genesis 2:17 meant the maximum penalty or the mandatory penalty for disobedience, humanity's disloyalty to God's covenant carried dire consequences. Clearly, our first parents were deserving of death.

One consequence of Adam and Eve's sin was that they fell under God's condemnation, suffering the type of judicial death we mentioned earlier. And Paul's teaching about spiritual life and death in Romans 8:10 indicates that they died spiritually,

and condemned all their natural descendants to the same fate. Further, as we read in Genesis 3:22-24, God cast them from his presence in the Garden of Eden. And because of their sin, creation itself was put in bondage to corruption.

What the effect of Adam's sin was, is fundamentally to open the door for evil. Their sin let evil into the world, and as a result of that, everything is infected by evil, everything is undermined by evil, and in particular, the purposes of God are derailed by evil. So, it affects humanity, our bodies, our minds. It affects the very fabric of creation so that it is subject, as Romans 8 says, to frustration, longing for its own restoration. And of course, relationally, it affects our relationships with one another as humans, but most significantly, our relationship with God... And so, evil becomes the problem that needs to be solved. And while it just took one act of disobedience to open the door for evil, it's a little bit like unscrambling an egg. It's a big job to undermine evil, which has seeped in so deeply into the created order. That's why the act of Adam and Eve's sin takes just a few lines in the Bible, but the act of undoing it takes well over a thousand pages.

— Dr. Tim Foster

Despite all the terrible consequences of humanity's sin, God didn't kill our first parents outright; he left them physically alive. And more than this, God extended benevolence to them in their new state of sin. For instance, he implicitly restored them to spiritual life, as evidenced by his assumption that they would raise their children in faith, and by Eve's expressions of faith in Genesis 4:1, 25. Beyond this, God promised to send a redeemer to rescue them from *all* the consequences of their sin. This promise appears in God's curse against the serpent, who had tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. Listen to God's words to the serpent in Genesis 3:15:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).

The Redeemer would ultimately be Christ, who would keep the covenant perfectly, earn God's covenant blessings, and graciously share his blessings with those he redeemed.

Now, the history of Adam and Eve in Genesis doesn't explicitly describe all the blessings of the Adamic covenant. But Genesis 1:22, 28 implies that multiplying and ruling over the earth were themselves blessings of obedience. This idea is confirmed by later Scriptures that point to the blessing of progeny, such as Deuteronomy 7:14, and the blessing of rule over the earth, such as 2 Timothy 2:12.

Further, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden in Genesis 3:22-24 was intended, at least in part, to prevent their access to the Tree of Life. If they had remained obedient, they would have been able to eat its fruit, allowing them to live forever in God's fellowship and immediate presence. So, we can conclude that everlasting life

would also have been a blessing of their obedience. And this conclusion is strengthened by Romans 5:12-19, which teaches that Jesus obtained life for us by succeeding where Adam had failed.

Moreover, because Adam was the covenant head of the human race, the consequences of his loyalty and disloyalty were matters of life and death for all humanity. Tragically, Adam and Eve were disloyal to God, so that they and all their ordinary or natural descendants were subjected to sin, corruption and death. But God's divine benevolence still held sway, and provided a way of escape through his promised redeemer Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on what human beings were like in the beginning, we've looked at the creation of humanity in terms of the biblical accounts and their historicity, and the superiority of humanity over the rest of creation. We've also described our composition as beings with physical bodies and immaterial souls. And we've considered humanity's initial covenant relationship with God in terms of his divine benevolence, the human loyalty he requires, and the consequences of obedience and disobedience.

It's astounding to think about the dignity and honor God invested in humanity at creation. Obviously, sin has caused tremendous problems for us. But knowing God's design for human beings is a critical first step towards understanding his plans for overcoming that sin, and for restoring humanity and the rest of creation to its intended glory.

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What Is Man?

LESSON
ONE

In the Beginning
Faculty Forum



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What Is Man?

Lesson One: In the Beginning

Faculty Forum

With

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Question 1:

Were Adam and Eve historical people?

Dr. Richard Phillips

When we answer the question, “Were Adam and Eve historical people?” the first thing we have to know is where we’re going to get our information from. And what we have is, we have, science produces a version of history, and the Bible, by revelation, produces a version of history. And so we’re living in a time when science is telling us — by scientific method, which has its place — that there is no Adam and Eve historically; evolution really does not permit the Adam and Eve of the Bible in any way. But for the Christian we have the written testimony of the perfect God, who not only was there but who created it. And so, for us, we have to take the testimony of the Bible, when it speaks definitively, as a true answer by which we will compare other answers. Now, by that standard, the Bible teaches that Adam and Eve were historical people. The Lord Jesus, when he was answering a question about divorce, he spoke back with reference to the Genesis account of Adam and Eve, treating them as historical people. The apostle Paul, in Romans 5, treats Adam as a historical person. His actions resulted in a certain outcome as a historical person. Now one thing we have to watch, we’re living in a time now where many scholars are trying to be biblical while avoiding the wrath of the society, and one thing you’ll hear is “Adam and Eve were historical people, but maybe that’s possible under evolution.” Well, you can have a historical Adam and Eve under evolution, but you can’t have the biblical Adam and Eve under evolution. So people will say — and evangelical writers are saying — Well, maybe Adam and Eve were... Adam was one of the many historical people. God just chose him and made him the one he was going to deal with representatively. Or maybe he was the head of a tribal confederation. Well, Genesis 2:7 says very plainly that God created him by an act of special creation. And the way that he did that is essential: the care and the love, the face-to-face covenant relationship built into the creation of, the design of that particular creature, God breathing his own life into him. If we give up the *biblical* historical Adam and Eve,

we lose everything because you lose Genesis 3; you lose the Fall, apart from which the redeeming work of Christ means nothing. We lose the authority of the Bible. We lose the dignity of man as made in the image of God. We lose the basis for true unity in the human race. It's hard to be living in a time when believing in God's revealed Word, where it so clearly speaks, is receiving the kind of scorn it receives in culture. But Christians have been through this many times before. We humbly and meekly take our stand upon the Word of God. Jesus, Paul, the New Testament, certainly the Old Testament account itself, if Genesis 2 and 3 is not an account of actual history, well then by those same standards, what about John 6? What about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? You know, that's just as ludicrous by the standards of science as is the creation of Adam and Eve. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." And the Bible teaches the biblical historical Adam and Eve, not just some other historical Adam and Eve. And it's absolutely essential to the Christian faith and witness. If we lose Adam and Eve, we're merely giving up the grand narrative of the Bible. But that's quite a lot.

Rev. Vermon Pierre

Were Adam and Eve historical people? Well, if we're going to take seriously what Jesus says about the beginning of creation, and if we take seriously what Paul says about the beginning of creation, yes, absolutely they are historical people. Paul speaks of Adam in Romans 5, and the assumption is that there was a real person named Adam through whom sin came and affected the whole world, affected the whole planet, affected humanity. Jesus, in Matthew 19, speaking about divorce, speaks of man and woman being created and the two becoming one flesh. He's quoting from Genesis, and he's quoting in a way that assumes that, yes, there was a real man and woman created, and the first marriage was formed there. And so, we have to believe that Adam and Eve are historical people based on what the Bible says about Adam and Eve.

Dr. Philip Ryken

People sometimes wonder whether Adam and Eve were real people. After all, the names Adam and Eve simply mean "the man" and "the woman," so that seems very general. It could really apply to anyone. But I think it's clear from many, many things in Scripture that Adam and Eve were real people in a real past, real historical human beings who actually lived in this world. I think we could show that from Genesis, from the fact that they speak to one another, that they bear children, that they do real things in the world. And also from the fact that when you look at the biblical genealogies that say this person gave birth to that person and that person gave birth to the next person, and whether we're looking at those genealogies in the Old Testament or the New Testament, Adam and Eve are included in those genealogies right alongside lots of people that there's absolutely no doubt that they are real historical people. I also think it's significant the way that, in the New Testament, Jesus and also Paul refer to Adam and Eve, and they speak of them as individuals whose actions and whose presence have a real impact on what's happening in the world today, particularly the apostle Paul when he talks about sin in the world and when he talks about the plan of salvation, Adam is as real to him as Jesus is. And so, I think we get

a lot of confirmation, even apart from the opening chapters of Scripture, that Adam and Eve were real people.

Question 2:

What are some theological implications of denying the historicity of Adam and Eve?

Dr. David VanDrunen

The historic Christian doctrine that God created Adam and Eve in his image and that this Adam was a real historical person who fell into sin, it's come under great attack recently, of course, for an important reason, from modern science and the claim of the evolutionary origins of the human race. But there certainly have been many within the church who have called into question the idea of Adam's historicity and whether we really *need* to have this doctrine in order to maintain orthodox Christian faith. I believe that there are a number of unfortunate implications of rejecting the historical character of Adam. One of them is simply the implications for our view of Scripture. Scripture does affirm and treat Adam as a historical man in a number of places, not only in the opening chapters of Genesis but refers back to him many other times throughout the Scriptures. But there are also some very significant implications for our doctrine of sin. Historically, in Protestant theology we have confessed that we are sinners "in Adam," that God did not make us sinners, that we are not just sinners by nature originally, but that God made us upright and that we became sinners because of a free act of the first man. And that this idea, that we are actually sinners because of our own fall, is really a crucial idea in many respects. If we give that up, what are we saying about God? Are we saying that God actually created us sinners by nature? Can we uphold our traditional doctrine of original sin, the idea that we are condemned in Adam, not just for our own personal sins? But perhaps the most troubling implication of rejecting the idea of a historical Adam is what it does to our doctrine of salvation. I think we see this especially by considering Romans 5. In Romans 5, Paul undertakes this extensive analogy between Adam and Christ, who is the last Adam, and he says that, just as Adam, the one man, fell, and through his one act brought sin and death and condemnation into the world, so also through Christ, the one man, through his obedience, through his act of righteousness, has brought life and resurrection and justification to this world. And if you follow Paul's logic, he's saying that just as the one man brought sin, so the one man brought life and salvation. If we don't think we need a real Adam in order have our doctrine of sin, then it really calls into question whether we really need a real Savior, a real historical Savior, in order to be redeemed from our sin.

Dr. John Hammett

I think there's some very grave theological implications for rejecting the historicity of Adam and Eve. First of all, it has implications for our view of Scripture. Scripture clearly teaches Adam and Eve as historic individuals. We have not just Genesis 1 and 2, we have the genealogies where Adam is mentioned there. We have Paul

mentioning Adam and Eve together in 1 Timothy 2, even the order in which they sinned. So, if we reject their historicity we have problems with our view of Scripture — it's erroneous there — and then soteriologically, in terms of salvation. Paul seems to connect the first Adam and the last Adam in Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15, as having important consequences for all of humanity. If Adam is not a historic individual, I'm not sure how those parallels work out there. And then third, in terms of our doctrine of the Fall, if we have no historic Adam and Eve, we have no place for sin to begin. Are we to think that God made us with a bent to sin with a corrupt nature? Unless there's some original creation of historic individuals that were unfallen, who then fell, we would have to suppose that God created us sinful with a corrupt nature, and that would not make sense at all. So, I think rejecting the historicity of Adam and Eve leads to very, very grave consequences for other areas of our theology.

Dr. Ken Keathley

When it comes to the subject of the historicity of Adam and Eve, I cannot think of a more contentious item within evangelical theology today among both theologians and biblical scholars. You have the very obvious problem that it appears that Jesus and the apostles believed in the historicity of Adam and Eve. So, right up front, what one believes about the historicity of Adam and Eve will affect, or will have implications for what one believes about the nature of inspiration and the Bible, because if Adam was not a historical person, but Jesus and Paul thought he was and then said so — and we have it recorded in Scripture — what do we do with that? And so, there are very profound theological implications for the nature of Scripture that has to be dealt with on that issue... Concerning the historicity of Adam and Eve and how it affects our salvation, one has to think about the grand narrative of salvation; you have creation, fall, redemption and consummation. If the Fall is not a historical event, not an actual event, well then what does that do to our salvation that we believe is an actual thing happening to us? So, there are soteriological implications to what we believe about the historicity of Adam and Eve... And then, whenever we talk about the historicity of Adam and Eve and how it relates to our understanding of anthropology, if Adam and Eve are not at the head waters of the human race, then what does that do to our understanding of the unity of the human race and the way that God dealt with humanity in a corporate sense in Adam and then deals with us in a corporate sense in Christ. So, it profoundly affects, has profound theological implications for one's view of anthropology. And then the historicity of Adam and Eve affects how we understand the nature of sin and the nature of just the human condition. If there isn't a historical Adam, then there isn't a historical Fall. And above all else, the doctrine of the Fall is an optimistic doctrine, because if God created the world as it is the way we see it, red in tooth and claw, and with human beings inclined to moral evil, okay, if this is the way it really is, then what does that say about our sense that, well, this is not the way it ought to be? Well, maybe it is, you know? And so, if you don't hold to the historicity of the Fall, you're left with some pretty tough conclusions, or tough options. One, you could say, "Okay, we're going to have to be stoics, suck it up and this is just the way it is and learn to deal with it." Well, if you're going to do that you might as well be a materialist and an atheist, and I think that does indicate why many head that way. Or we can be quasi-Gnostics in which we understand salvation to be

deliverance from this world, and the only thing one can really hope for is for one's soul to be delivered from this physical creation. Both of those don't fit with the biblical narrative.

Question 3:

What does Psalm 8 teach us about humanity's place in creation?

Dr. Ramesh Richard

Psalm 8 is one of four creation Psalms... Between verses 3 and 7 there's an entire doctrine of man — sometimes we call it anthropology, or a long way to say a very simple thing — where God says that we are a little lower than God himself, little lower than the heavenly realm; we're at a little higher than the earthly realm. So, we're not in this great line continuum where, somehow, because of time or accident or chance, we evolved. We are actually a little lower than the heavenly realm. So, by rank we are very, very dignified. Then also by rule, he gave us, he delegates to us rule. That means we're not intrinsically in authority, but as delegated authority that we use in order to harness nature but not to harass it. And then there's a representation, which is really, in my opinion, the full-blown doctrine of the image of God... So, this Psalm is just unbelievable. It is against evolutionism. It is also against technicism, where we think by technology we can handle all human situations. It is also against what I am going to call a "godless humanism" where, without reference to God, we can find meaning to the human situation. Someone said you have to carry both the dignity and the humility of man constantly. So, when we are prone to be proud, we will be humble because we're number two, or when we're prone to be so self-defaced, we know that we have dignity. So, mankind is not divinity, but we certainly have dignity because of God's role and rank and representation that he's endowed toward us as creatures, this unique creature called man.

Dr. Ken Keathley

Psalm 8 is one of those fascinating passages of Scripture that speak of the role that God gave humans in the economy of his plan for the ages. It says that he made us a little lower than God or a little lower than the angels, depending on which translation you use, and it speaks of the role that we have either as ambassador or as steward over all that God has created, because it says that he has given us this place and he's also given us a task that we are to have dominion over his creation. And so, it speaks of the uniqueness of humanity among all of creation.

Dr. David VanDrunen

Psalm 8 is a wonderful psalm. It's one of the most familiar ones to most Christians. And one of the remarkable things it says is, it talks about us as human beings, and it remarks about this great dignity that God has given to us. It begins by talking about how great the Lord is, how majestic *his* name is in all the earth and all the wonderful things he's done. And then it reflects on the fact that God has exalted us, and it expresses almost a disbelief that God could exalt us as human beings in light of how

all-surpassingly majestic he is. I think when we read Psalm 8 it drives us back to Genesis 1. In Genesis 1 we read about God creating us as human beings as the pinnacle of his creating work, and God made us as those who bear his image and his likeness. And it goes on to say that, as those created in his image and likeness, that we are called to exercise dominion in this world, to rule and subdue the other creatures. So, it's really interesting that in Psalm 8, when it talks about how God has made us a little lower than the angels, that he has called us to exercise dominion over the works of his hands. And so, this tells us something about our task as human beings. God made us to do something. He didn't make us just to be. He made us to be active creatures and to carry out his will, to carry out his purpose, and ultimately, to carry out his rule underneath his ultimate authority. But I think if we're considering Psalm 8, we can't just go back to Genesis 1. We need to go ahead to Hebrews 2. In Hebrews 2 there's an extended quotation of Psalm 8 and it's preceded by this, what seems to be a cryptic statement by the author of Hebrews: "It is not to angels that God has subjected the world to come..." and then he goes into this quotation from Psalm 8. And really, what he's getting at there is that God didn't just call us as human beings to rule this present earth, this present age, but he ultimately called us to rule a new creation. This is part of God's plan for us as human beings. And, as the author of Hebrews explains there, that if we look at ourselves now we don't see it, but we see Jesus, he says. And Jesus has already gone before us, is already exalted, and he's bringing many sons to glory. And so, ultimately we see God's intentions fulfilled in Psalm 8 in the new creation in which we are going to rule with Jesus forever.

Question 4:

Do human beings consist of both material and immaterial parts?

Dr. Bruce Little

There's a major question today that, even in evangelical circles, about whether or not humans are made up of both material and immaterial parts. Now, I answer the question, yes. I think that, first of all, I read the Scriptures, and I see words that indicate to me that there is something that is separate from the body, that there is... For example, we can look at 2 Corinthians 5:8 and Paul says, "To be absent from the body is to be face to face with the Lord." Well, I know that when I die my body goes into the grave. But Paul says something: "me," goes to be with the Lord. So, I have to take that into consideration and say, that's just not incidental that Paul makes that kind of a claim. Or, we have the claim of Jesus ... where he's on the cross and he says, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And then the next says, he gave up breathing. Well, we know that the body went into the grave, but he is saying he commended his spirit to the Father. So, verses like that, Hebrews 4:12, about the word of God being alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to dividing the center of the soul and the spirit, the joints, the marrow, well, that language is there. I don't know how it all works together, but I think there's the clarity there that would tell me, yes, there is a material part and an immaterial part of man.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

Traditionally, throughout the history of the West and even in the East, people have thought of human beings as having both bodies and souls — the material, physical, or the nonmaterial, immaterial parts of us... I think when we take the whole of the New Testament, and even the Old Testament into consideration, we have to draw out the conclusion that there's more to us than just this physical body. This physical body does seem obvious, right? I can touch it, I can poke it, I can feel things in it, but there's clearly got to be something more to me when I read the Bible, the Old Testament or the New Testament. The Bible talks about, in Ecclesiastes 12 for example, that at death the spirit goes back to God from where it came, and the body goes back to the earth from where it came. Paul talks about being absent from the body and being present with the Lord. There seems to be a distinction there between body and soul. Jesus talks, for example, about not fearing just the one who can destroy the body but not the soul, but needing to fear the one who can destroy *both* the body and the soul.

Dr. David W. Jones

We have to say that, certainly, there are material and immaterial components to us, although I think it's important to describe us as human beings as composite unities; that is, we're not different pieces put together as if we're compartmentalized. You know, we're all one being. That becomes so very important as we talk about so many theological and moral topics by way of how we treat the body, how we treat the bodies of others. If we view ourselves as human beings, as just kind of being the spirit as the *real* me and the body as some sort of prosthesis that's used by the real me, well then, you know, we're prone to neglect the body... But if we view our true selves as being a composite unity of immaterial and material components, then we see that our entire being is what Christ redeemed. While we may have a new spirit now, one day we'll have a new body at the end of the age. And so, really, the entire me is important; the entire me has been redeemed; the entire me has to be taken care of. And what we do with the bodies as well as the spiritual parts of us is equally as important.

Question 5:

What does the account of Adam's creation teach us about our own composition?

Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

In Genesis 2 we're told that God forms Adam out of the dust of the ground. And then in Genesis 2:7 we're told that he breathes his breath into the face of Adam. This is a wonderful image of God coming on this inert creature and breathing his own life into him... There's a very real sense that when God forms the first human, Adam, he's taking dirt and dust from his material creation, but the life given to Adam is out of God's own mouth... So, the breath, the spirit, the life are God's own; the substance of man is out of creation.

Rev. Xiaojun Fang, translation

What has the Bible taught us about man's composition? According to the Scriptures, in the book of Genesis man was composed of two portions. First, God formed man out of the earth, so we have a material body. Second he breathed life into man, and this refers to his soul. The material body is visible; the soul is invisible, and yet a man's thoughts, emotions, and will spring forth from there. This is what God has given to man at creation. While we are alive, we can see nature, we can see each other's material bodies, but we can also feel what cannot be seen. For example, a man's emotions are not visible, but can be felt. For another, air is not visible, but you need it. From this we know that there are things that [exist] though we cannot see them — heaven, hell, eternity, and the God with whom we shall commune eternally.

Dr. Mike Fabarez

We learn in the Bible that people consist of both a material and immaterial part. Back to Genesis 2:7, it speaks of the fact that Adam was made out of the ground, out of the dust of the earth, and God breathed into him the breath of life, which is exactly the pattern we see throughout Scripture: a material and immaterial part. James speaks in James 2 of the body when it's without the spirit it's dead. On the cross, in Matthew 27, Jesus dies and he gives up his spirit. So, the combination of the material and the immaterial, the body and the spirit, is what constitutes who we are. People have gone to try and divide that in more ways. But that's the basic constitution of human beings: a immaterial part and a material part. One we could see as just the component parts of our bodies, but the Bible goes on to say there is an element of that, much like a computer might have software and hardware, that hardware also has some firmware, and that gives us some problems — the idea of some built-in impulses in our bodies. And that is something that we struggle with as Christians, knowing that there are passions and desires of the body, and that even though our spirit may be made new in Christ, we still have this principle of humanity that pushes against our godly desires in our humanness. So, there's flesh and there's spirit, there's this new man within us and yet this old sense of our fallen humanity in our material part. Material, immaterial, those are the two basic components of who we are as people.

Question 6:**Are our physical bodies an important and permanent part of us?****Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer**

Our bodies are important, permanent parts of us. Probably one of the best places to go for this is not just stop at our bodies but all physical aspects of the universe. We find out in Colossians 1, Paul's grand, just expansive Christology in Colossians 1, that all things are being reconciled back to God through Christ; everything is created for him and by him. That includes the physical aspects of our universe as well as the nonmaterial aspects of our universe. And we have to be careful to get that right because that's the classic Gnostic error, to separate or to put too rigid of a distinction

between the nonmaterial and the material. No, they're much more connected to that. So even if we go back into Genesis 1, to be made in the image and likeness of God is more than just our nonmaterial qualities. That isn't to say that God is corporeal, God is flesh, but we are made in such a way in our physical bodies that we are the proper representation of God, how he intended it. So, when he made us he said that it was good. That includes our physical parts as well as our nonphysical parts. And we find out in the book of Revelation that the eternal state, the way that we're going to reside with God forever, is a physical realm. It's a new heaven and a new earth. It's not some ethereal, wispy thing. It's the city of God comes out of heaven and resides in Jerusalem in a physical reality. It's cleansed and clear of all sin, all death, all everything, but it nevertheless has a physical element to it. So, if the eternal state will include the physical, then we should be careful not to denigrate the physical, even though it's broken and scared by sin, in the present age.

Dr. Dinorah B. Méndez, translation

I believe that the physical part of the human being is very important and is part of the holistic being. So, sometimes we think in theological or spiritual terms that the human body, or the physical part, will not be part of salvation or eternal life, but if we believe that the human being is made of all these areas, of all these dimensions, and is holistic, then it has to be that the physical body is a part of salvation as well as eternal life in the future. Therefore, in my opinion, it is very important to consider the physical body to be part of our being, and it is also what gives us our identity. It is what distinguishes me as an individual from another individual, and it separates me, although it allows me to interact with others. I think it is a fundamental part of being a human being.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

One of the clear takeaways from the Old Testament and the New Testament is that we seem to have both a physical body and an immaterial soul, a nonphysical soul. Another seeming clear takeaway from the New Testament and the Old Testament is that at death the person seems to survive death via the soul. The body goes back into the ground and is corrupted and the soul goes off to be with God. I think a lot of Christians, erroneously though, assume that because of that, that this physical body is just not that important, because it's something that can die, it can decay, and that my life can somehow continue via the soul or spirit in the presence of Jesus at death. But I think that this is a misreading of the New Testament and the Old Testament. I think when we start off in Genesis 1 and 2, God made us male and female in his image, and he created us in physical bodies. Our life is in a physical body. And we come to the New Testament and it's not just a small thing in the New Testament. Jesus talks about it in John 11. Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 15 and then again in 1 Thessalonians 4. He talks about the resurrection of *the body*, that our future hope as Christians resides in this body coming back to life and us living in those bodies forevermore in the presence of Jesus. And so I say to my students sometimes, you know, God who is omniscient and all wise created us and put us in bodies, and surely a God with those attributes didn't just do that incidentally or whimsically, but he did it intentionally. He intends us to be embodied, and this is reinforced by the fact that in the final states

of existence, these bodies come back and we will have them forevermore. So I take from that that the body is a really big deal. And I could say that not just for these theological reasons, but also for just basic scientific and philosophical reasons as well. This taking the body seriously and saying that the body is part of who I am allows me to make sense out of personality changes when physical things change. So, for example, if you were to smack me across the head with a frying pan and there was damage done to my brain, my personality would change. Well, how does that make any sense? It makes sense because this body is part of what I am, it's part of who I am, and this also makes, I think, wonderful sense out of the resurrection where we get our bodies back. If, in short, I just am my soul and nothing else — this body's not important — then why do we need to get this body back in the resurrection? That just doesn't add up to me, and I think that because of that we have to have a very high view of the body as well when we think about the human person.

Dr. Ken Keathley

How important is our physical body throughout eternity? And the answer to that is completely important, despite the fact a lot of our hymns and much of our preaching puts emphasis upon the immortality of the soul. What we find in the Bible, though, is not the emphasis or the stress on the immortality of the soul but the resurrection of the body. Of course, this raises the question, what happens to the immaterial part of our being during the intermediate state, from the time that we die until the time that we're resurrected. And the Bible just doesn't say a whole lot. And I think there's a very good reason for that, and that is, it's merely an intermediate state. It is not the way we're going to be for all eternity. The stress of Scripture over and over again, some in the Old Testament but a lot in the New Testament, is the stress upon that there is a resurrection in which you and I as believers in Christ, we will be resurrected like him, and we will enjoy our resurrected bodies for all eternity. The relationship of this body to the resurrection body is one difficult to understand. Paul talks to us about it in 1 Corinthians 15, and he says, he uses the analogy, it's like a seed being planted that gives way to something much more glorious. In a similar way, the body we have now will be like the one we'll have then.

Question 7:

How are terms like spirit, soul, mind and heart interrelated?

Dr. Grant R. Osborne

The words spirit, soul, mind and heart are really related theologically to an issue that's called "dichotomist" versus "trichotomist" views of how God made us as human beings. What that means, are we three parts, body, soul and spirit, or are we two parts, basically material and immaterial? And this has actually been a huge debate for several hundred years, and I think the first thing I need to say about that is the Bible doesn't overly care about the issue. It's an issue that comes from theologians more... We have body; we have soul and spirit. Within that, the term for "heart" actually refers more to the mind than it does to the feelings in Scripture.

Studies of the word “heart” have shown that the heart is how we look at life. The heart is not just how we *feel* about life. The heart is how we consider life, how we think about life, and how we think about our walk with God. And so, therefore, our heart is what determines our walk with God, and our soul and our spirit are the way we relate to God. And of course, when we die, that is when we especially see this dichotomous or two-part. When our body is buried and becomes part of the dirt and our soul is with God, and when we’re in the, what’s called the “intermediate state,” that means our spirit will be with God waiting for Christ to return and give us our final eternal body.

Dr. David VanDrunen

Scripture uses a variety of terms to refer to us as human beings, and some of the common ones are soul, spirit, heart and mind. And they’re certainly very related, but there are also some important distinctions that should be made. If I could comment first on the terms “soul” and “spirit,” these are terms that are used almost synonymously in Scripture. Really, they describe the nonmaterial aspect of our being; we are bodies and God has made us with bodies. But God has also made us with a nonmaterial aspect to us, which Scripture refers to as both the soul and the spirit. So, sometimes when Scripture is referring to us, it will refer to us as body and soul. Sometimes it will refer to us as body and spirit. Now, when we talk about terms like “heart” and “mind,” these are a little more complicated, and they don’t really refer to one specific aspect of our person. If you take “mind,” for example, it really seems to get at our identity as thinking beings, and in part that says something about our soul. Our souls are involved in our thinking, and yet we know very clearly that our bodies are involved in our thinking as well. We have brains. And so, our mind captures something about both our bodily and our spiritual natures. Probably the richest term of them all is “heart,” and heart is a term in Scripture that really gets at what makes us tick. It’s what do we really love? What do we really value? And Scripture speaks about things that flow from the heart, that that really defines who we are. And so, when Scripture talks about the heart it’s usually not talking about that physical organ that beats inside of us, but really about what we love. And we’re called to love God with *all* of our heart, and that’s a way of representing the kind of fullness and completeness and the depth of the love that we should have for God.

Dr. Ken Keathley

Well, one of the difficulties in understanding what the Bible has to say about soul, spirit, mind, heart is that Scripture uses those terms interchangeably. Often you’ll find where at one place it’ll refer to spirit, another place to soul, and it appears to be referring to the same thing. So, the best thing I think we could say about those terms is that they’re referring to that part that is in contrast to the material person, which is *more* than the material part of your being. And third, talking about the *whole* of a person, both material and immaterial. So, I think that’s the best way to understand those terms. When Jesus talks about loving God with all of your soul, spirit, heart, mind, I think he’s using those terms almost as synonymous terms and piling up terms to emphasize that the whole person should be engaged in loving God.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

The Bible uses terms like spirit, and soul, and heart throughout the Old Testament and throughout the New Testament, and the temptation, I think, is for a lot of people to read these as referring to different parts of us, different, maybe, composites that make up the whole person. And I think that that's probably not the right way to look at that, that you could read a distinction between things like a body and a soul or a body, heart, mind, those types of things. Those terms like "heart" and "soul" and even "spirit" seem to me to be used interchangeably to refer to the nonphysical parts of the human being. But that doesn't mean that they have no nuances that are different from each other. So, "spirit" and "soul" might be referred to the inner part of the person that's immaterial, and words like "heart" also are referring to the immaterial, but this word seems to have a different connotation where essentially it's referring to the moral seat of a person, or maybe the seat of desire of a person. So, while all three of those types of terms may very well refer to the same part of the person, they refer to that part of the person to convey different kinds of nuances, to recognize that this immaterial part of the person really does have certain distinctions about it that need to be pointed out.

Question 8:**What is the covenant of works?****Dr. David VanDrunen**

The covenant of works is a doctrine that was developed in the early centuries of the Reformed theological tradition, and there are several aspects of it that I think can summarize what it was getting at. For one thing, it affirms that at the beginning, when God created man that he entered into a covenant with him. And so this covenant of works refers to God's original relationship with Adam. So, what it's affirming is that, just as later in history, God entered into covenant with his people in various ways at various times, so even before the Fall, God actually entered into this special relationship, a covenant relationship, with Adam. So, that's one aspect of this doctrine. A second aspect of this doctrine is captured in that term "works." And what this teaches is that, in this covenant, God required Adam to be obedient and that he was going to deal with Adam according to his obedience or disobedience. And perhaps it's helpful to see this in comparison with how God deals with us as people now. God doesn't offer us salvation, he doesn't offer us eternal life according to our good works. He offers it to us by faith in Jesus Christ. Well, God didn't go to Adam at the beginning and offer him a mediator, didn't offer him a savior, didn't offer him someone who would do the work for him. What he said to Adam was, "You obey me, and if you don't obey me, you will die," with the implication that if he would obey, he would live. And so that's why it's referred to as the covenant of works, because it was based upon the degree of Adam's obedience, or whether or not he would be obedient to God's call. But there's one other aspect of the doctrine that I think is worth mentioning, and that is the idea that God did not originally intend the human race simply to live in the Garden of Eden forever and ever and ever. Now, this is a

historic Christian idea. You can go back to Augustine, or John of Damascus, or Thomas Aquinas and you find this conviction that God actually desired to have human beings in his, we might say, an “eschatological fellowship,” that he wanted human beings to be with him and rule with him, not only in the first creation but in a new creation. And so, the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of works has ordinarily taught that if Adam had been obedient and had been faithful to the commission that God gave him, that God at some point, in some way, would have blessed him with life in the new creation. He wouldn’t have had to die in order to get there, but through that obedience God would have blessed him and blessed all of us in Adam with the blessings of everlasting life.

Dr. Bruce L. Fields

The covenant of works, or what I sometimes refer to as the “Edenic covenant,” is one of these debatable areas in the realm of biblical and systematic theology. I know a theologian who I hold in high regard, Anthony Hoekema, though a Reformed theologian would speak against the existence of the covenant of works. More recently, Michael Bird in his *Evangelical Theology* would also challenge the concept. Let’s just say I, with all due respect, I do return to the particular section of Genesis verses 15-17 where the Lord is, kind of, giving a word to Adam to not eat of the Tree of Life, and there I think that still we have some basic covenantal framework. For example, I do think that you have essentially two parties there, God and Adam, which a fundamental element of covenant. You do have a stipulation — now mind you, it’s very simple in form, but we would expect that, I think, in Genesis, you see — but the basic stipulation is don’t eat of the fruit, that there is also in the framework here a kind of promise of reward, though it’s stated in an opposite direction: “God says in the day that you eat of the fruit you shall die.” By implication, what is in play is that if you obey you will live. And I can’t help but believe that in the particular framework of this encounter that we can also understand life to be right relation with God, and death, at least initially, to be a broken relationship with God. So, I think you have, at least in a very, very fundamental way, certain characteristics of a covenant: parties, stipulation and the involvement of consequences or rewards if indeed obedience is followed through.

Question 9:

How was God’s benevolence toward humanity expressed in Adam’s day?

Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer

So, when we read the creation account, we see that mankind is the last thing God makes before he rests. The creation week is not a static, flat telling. It climbs in its intensity, its level of description ... and that ultimately gets expressed and manifested, its zenith is at the creation of mankind. So, the last thing that God does before he rests, before he stops — it’s not a rest because he’s tired; that’s a rest as in it’s complete; he stops. So the last thing he does is create people. So they have a

privileged place in the narrative and over all of creation. God's benevolence to Adam is also showed because Adam, humanity, gets to rule over everything else that God had made to the point where he created mankind, and indeed all of creation is made *for* Adam. So, Adam has this symbiotic relationship in a way where he is supposed to rule creation in God's image and his likeness, but then at the same time, creation takes care of him because everything that God has put — all the plants of the ground, all the trees, all the fruit — is for the sustenance of Adam. So, the fact that he's made last, has this privileged place in the creation account and in creation itself, and the fact that Adam is the only one who is able — well, along with Eve — Adam is the only one able to rule and subdue the earth, subdue all of creation, shows how much God had this intimate and close relationship that he had with Adam and Eve. And it's worth noting the stark contrast that that account has with all other ancient Near Eastern creation accounts, because in those cases, man and the creation of man is usually an afterthought. It is some gods losing a bet, some gods refusing to work, and so they make man to pick up the slack where the gods have gone on strike. And so, you just don't see this ethical, moral, intimate relationship that you see in other ancient Near Eastern accounts that you see in the Genesis account.

Dr. Rick Boyd

One passage in Scripture that I don't think gets enough attention are the first two chapters, and then at times we try to make too much of the first two chapters. But the first two chapters really do reveal the nature of God and our place as humans in his creation, so much so that Psalm 8 reflects back on that and says, "What is man" — or what is mankind, what is humanity — "that you think of him?" Or the son of man — each of us — that you visit us? You made us a little lower than God. But going back to the first couple of chapters of Scripture we see that God created everything, and in the first chapter, the creation account that's in the first chapter, humanity is the crowning touch. He builds each day some part of creation; the first three days he gives it form, and the next three days he fills it, and the crowning touch — what makes his creation not just "good" but "very good" — is humanity. In the second chapter we see God creates everything, including a garden and places us right in the center of it, so he is *so good* to us and provides everything that we need. And then we get to Genesis 3. That's where the problems come in when we do our own thing. But God's creation, his original creation, and his heart, even now, is for our good. He is such a loving and good God.

Dr. Dana M. Harris

When we look at the creation account, people often talk about the parallels between the biblical account and other ancient Near Eastern accounts. One thing to keep in mind is, there are profound differences, even if there are some superficial similarities. In a lot of these other creation accounts, there's often some kind of cosmic conflict between the gods and the goddesses. The result of that is that the body parts, often, of the gods and goddesses become then the stuff of creation. Moreover, on those accounts, humanity is often an afterthought. Human beings are created just to take care of the gods and goddesses. When we look at the biblical account, we see that God very purposely and redemptively works through the days of creation, where he

brings about order out of chaos and fullness out of emptiness. Each day, God ends by pronouncing that the work that he has done that day is “good.” When we get to the sixth day, God pronounces that the work that’s done on that day — the creation of Adam and Eve — is “very good.” So, even if we compare the creation account in the Bible with other creation accounts, we see an inherent goodness in God’s attitude towards humanity and the very exalted purposes that he has for humanity. So, if we look at Genesis 1 and 2 then, we see that, not only does God place humanity at the apex of his creation, but he then goes on to entrust humanity with the dominion of his very creation. So, humanity is presented in Genesis 1 and 2 in royal and priestly terms.

Rev. Thaddeus J. James, Jr.

When we look at Genesis 1 and 2 and then God’s benevolence — God’s loving kindness to his creation — Genesis 1 and 2 we see God creating man. After each day of creation God said that it was “good.” After creating man then he said that it was “very good.” So, we see man as the culmination, the epitome of God’s creation. Everything that was in the Garden was designed perfectly for man, that every tree, every plant, everything was for the purpose of man, to please man. But then God looked at man, and he said that, well, there’s nothing here that’s going to be suitable for man. So, then God says, okay, I’m going to fashion — now think about what that looks like — he took the rib from the side of Adam and he *fashioned* a woman that was perfectly compatible for Adam. So, again, showing God’s loving-kindness. And then he takes another step, and then he says that man and woman is to be one, so one physically, one spiritually, one emotionally, to walk together side by side in this creation. Can we imagine what it looks like when God, when he says that Adam walked with God in the Garden in the cool of the day. What was that like to have that state of perfection, that state of holiness, that state of purity and innocence that was all designed perfectly in this beautiful garden for man? So, that would be the epitome. In Psalms it talks about the blessed man, the man that has God’s divine favor, that person that has, again, God’s loving-kindness, his grace, his mercy is upon that man. How much more of a blessed man was shown in creation by the creation of Adam and then the fashioning of Eve? So, that would be the ultimate as far as God’s benevolence toward man.

Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

Genesis 1 and 2 is an amazing testimony to God’s goodness or to his benevolence toward us as his creatures. I think we take for granted that there is a creation, but one of the most stunning things is that if there’s a God who’s sufficient to himself, there’s no need for creation. If God, as Father, Son and Spirit can relate to himself eternally in his own being, then creation is not necessary. And yet, out of the abundance of his love, God *chooses* to create. And not only does he create, he does so in an ordered, logical, progressive way in which he draws beauty out of what he’s made. And then at the very capstone of creation, he places man and woman — humanity — to tend, to steward, to keep his creation. And so, the God who’s all-loving, who’s all-knowing, who’s all-powerful, creates out of an abundance of those things, and then instead of stewarding it himself, he creates us, in his image, as the stewards of this perfect

creation that he's made. It's an *amazing* testimony to the fact that at the core of his being God is love and expresses that love in giving us to creation.

Question 10: **How did Adam's sin impact the rest of creation?**

Rev. Timothy Mountfort

Adam's sin impacted the rest of creation, both humanity as well as the created order, in profound ways. First of all, we know from 1 Corinthians 15:22 that Paul says in Adam we all sin. So Adam, as a representative head, as what we call the "federal head" of humanity, was not only sinning in such a way that it impacted his own relationship with God, but it impacted all of humanity that would exist after his relationship with God. As a result of that, because man, because Adam had a position of being that federal head, everything that was under his authority, everything that was placed under his care was also therefore affected. So the created order was affected, the earth was affected... Everything on the earth that was part of Adam's responsibility to take care of was therefore impacted.

Dr. David VanDrunen

One of the things that we see in Scripture, and this is captured in most of the broader Christian tradition is that Adam's sin was not just a passing problem, but Adam's sin had a profound effect on himself, on his posterity, and on the whole created order as well. We can see it most immediately on the effects upon him and his posterity, the effects on human nature, that human beings have become spiritually dead, as Ephesians says, dead in our transgressions and sins, and we were destined to die. From dust God took us and to dust now we would have to return. But it's not just upon us in a small way as human beings that we see the effects of Adam's sin, but Scripture makes clear that because of Adam's sin, God also placed this curse upon the broader created order, and we see something of this already in Genesis 3, of course. God, when he came and pronounced judgment upon the serpent and upon the woman and upon Adam, one of the things he said to Adam was that from now on he was only going to get his food through his toil. He was going to have to work the ground, and the ground was going to be resistant to his toil in a way that it apparently wasn't before. We probably get our best theological perspective on this from Romans 8. In Romans 8 Paul talks about the whole creation being subjected to futility through the sin of Adam. And, of course, we want to avoid speculation... But we do know whatever exactly the implications were, that this world, this broader created order is not the way it was meant to be, that we see the presence of evil in this world and that, as Paul says, there is a futility to this world. And ultimately, what can we say about the world in which we live? That it's become a mammoth cemetery. It's where the dead bodies of fallen human beings are now buried. And one of the things that is very encouraging, of course, is that Romans 8 speaks about hope beyond this, that creation is, in a sense, calling out for this liberation from decay and points us ultimately to the

resurrection of our bodies, to our adoption as sons, as Paul puts it, to assure us that this curse upon creation is not the final word.

Dr. John Hammett

Well, in Genesis 3 we have the description of Adam's sin, the impact upon creation, especially on the curse placed upon the ground, so that God says that now the ground won't produce for you crops naturally, it'll produce thorns and thistles. And so, every farmer knows that a garden left to itself produces weeds and not crops. Well, I think that's a mark of the fall of creation. So, creation's in turmoil. Romans 8 as well says that creation, now, as being under futility, under slavery, this bondage to corruption that one day will be released, but right now we see that bondage and I think it works itself out in all types of ways. Why are there floods and droughts and famines and things like that? Why does creation not seem to cooperate with us? Why are there hurricanes and tornados and things like that? Well, there may be all types of natural causes that weathermen can trace, but they're talking about *how*, not *why*. Why are these things out there? Well, one, I think it has to do with the fact that creation is broken. It's fallen. I think that happened with Adam's sin... The fact that we see creation broken and fallen, not working right, all those things I think are the fruits of Adam's sin. It touches us in terms of our work in the world becomes toil. We have "work" before the Fall. After the Fall, we have "toil" because creation no longer cooperates with us. We're at tension with creation; therefore, our desire to care for creation becomes increasingly complex and difficult because of the fallenness of creation.

Dr. James K Dew, Jr.

Christianity has a lot to say about Adam's sin and the impact that that had on us as human beings, and the world around us as well. And typically, when we talk about Adam's sin and the impact that that has, the two things I think that I hear us say a lot is that, well, this explains our soteriological problem. Soteriology is the doctrine of salvation, so in other words, Adam's fall and Adam's sin explains to us why it is that we need salvation, why it is that we need grace. And I think that's absolutely right. It does. All have sinned, all fell in Adam, and so we now have to deal with this sinful nature that turns against God. We also talk about Adam's fall and Adam's sin with regard to our moral dispositions, and so, for example, we all have not just this need for salvation, but we all have this disposition to do bad things now. We even do things that we don't want to do. And as Paul says in Romans 7, the good things we want to do we don't do, the bad things we don't want to do, that's what we end up doing. And I think that Adam's fall helps us make sense of those two things — our need for salvation and also our tendencies, our bent-ness towards sin. But if we stop there and that's all we say about Adam's sin, then I think that we have a thin and flimsy view of the Fall. I think, frankly, we don't have a fully robust, fully orbbed biblical view of the Fall. I think we have to add to it more, that his sin did more than just affect us soteriologically and morally, but it also affected us physically, it affected the world in a physical way. So when sin, through Adam's sin, when it comes into this world, this taints, distorts, bends *everything*. I mean, I think that what the Bible is saying to us in Genesis 3 is that because of this sin, now even the ground

itself will spring up thorns and thistles and difficultly Adam will have as he works the ground. And I think that this helps us make sense out of a lot of things too. It explains not just why we need salvation and why we do bad things, but it also explains things like cancer, it explains things like tornados, it explains things like corruption and crime. In short, Adam's sin affects everything in creation; everything that God made was good, and now everything via Adam's sin is corrupted and tainted or perverted in some way. And so, I think we've got to have a much more robust view of the Fall and what happens there because it impacts everything in the created order.

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What Is Man?

LESSON
Two

THE IMAGE OF GOD



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What Is Man?

Lesson Two

The Image of God

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever seen pictures that small children have drawn of their parents? They don't often look very much like the parents, but the parents still treasure these pictures. To them, the value of the pictures isn't in the quality of the art, but in the feelings their children have for them. Regardless of how poorly the pictures might be drawn, they represent the parents. And something similar is true of modern humanity. We aren't perfect pictures of God, but we're still his images. And that gives us dignity, honor and authority, as well as a very high calling in the world.

This is the second lesson in our series, *What Is Man?* We've entitled this lesson "The Image of God" because we'll be examining what it means for human beings to be created in God's image.

In a prior lesson, we saw that to be God's image is to be like a statue or picture of God. In the ancient Near East, images of the king were placed throughout the kingdom to remind the citizens of the king's benevolence and greatness, to encourage the people to obey the king, and to show that the king was present with his people. In a similar way, human beings are created as God's likenesses. As we read in Genesis 1:27:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

Human beings are physical representations that remind all creation of God's power, authority and goodness. And through us, he manifests his rule over the world and all its creatures.

In this lesson, we'll consider three aspects of humanity's role as the image of God. First, we'll explore the image of God as an office or position we hold. Second, we'll focus on the attributes we possess as God's images. And third, we'll describe the nature of our relationships as images of God. Let's look first at our office.

OFFICE

The office of "image of God" is rooted in the authority God delegated to humanity. As we saw in an earlier lesson, God appointed human beings to rule over his creation on his behalf. Listen to Genesis 1:27-28:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue

it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:27-28).

Right after Scripture introduces us as images of God, it says that we govern creation. So, at least one important aspect of being God’s image is that we hold the office of delegated ruler. In theological terms, we’re God’s “vice-regents” — his administrative deputies or, in ancient Near Eastern terms, his servant or “vassal” kings.

We’ll explore our office first by considering how images of false gods functioned in biblical times. And second, we’ll see how these images shed light on our role as images of the true God. Let’s begin with images of false gods.

IMAGES OF FALSE GODS

For our purposes in this lesson, we’ll focus on two types of images of false gods that were prevalent in the ancient Near East: idols and kings. Let’s look at idols first.

Idols

Through our studies and research of the ancient Near Eastern religions, we know worshiping idols was very common. They used to worship them and consider them a source of strength and many blessings. God forbade his people to make idols or pictures of him or like him. The main reason is that God is spirit and cannot be defined by any physical body or image. God’s power and majesty stops him from allowing us to worship him through other things that are tangible.

— Dr. Riad Kassis, translation

Idols were typically hand-made images. But they weren’t merely intended to be visible representations of gods. When an idol was crafted, it was thought that the god it represented spiritually inhabited or indwelled the idol. This is why ancient religions venerated their idols. They believed the images were vehicles the gods used to be present with their people. In this way, the idols became representatives of, and even substitutes for, the gods themselves.

Early historical evidence of this belief was recorded on an Egyptian *stela*, or inscribed stone, during the Pyramid Age, around the third millennium B.C. It explains that the god Ptah created idols for the other gods to inhabit. Listen to this translation of the inscription provided in James Henry Breasted’s work, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, published in 1912:

[Ptah] made likenesses of their bodies to the satisfaction of their hearts. Then the gods entered into their bodies of every wood and every stone and every metal.

The prophet Habakkuk criticized this belief in Habakkuk 2:18-19, where he wrote:

Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? ... Woe to him who says to wood, “Come to life!” Or to lifeless stone, “Wake up!” Can it give guidance? It is covered with gold and silver; there is no breath in it (Habakkuk 2:18-19).

The false religions Habakkuk criticized believed that a divine liquid or breath resided within their idols, meaning that their gods could hear and perhaps respond to them through those idols. But Habakkuk insisted that there was no such divine presence within the idols.

Similarly, in Isaiah 44, God mocked the use of idols by pointing out that a carpenter might craft an idol from the same wood he used to build a fire and cook his food. It should have been obvious that the idol wasn't special in any way. But idolaters are so deluded that they can't even recognize the lies they tell themselves. As we read in Isaiah 44:13-20:

The carpenter ... cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak... [S]ome of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it... [N]o one has the knowledge or understanding to say ... “Shall I bow down to a block of wood? ... Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?” (Isaiah 44:13-20).

Ancient idolaters believed that when they offered food to their idols, or anointed them with oil, or venerated them in other ways, their gods were glorified by and benefited from this attention. But in reality, idols are powerless, and they aren't inhabited by the spirit of anything. Scripture teaches that *some* false gods are actually demons, as we learn in Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:37; and 1 Corinthians 10:20. *Other* false gods are purely imaginary. And in all cases, an idol is worthless and powerless.

Scripture doesn't deny that idols are images of gods. It simply insists that the gods they represent are false, and that the images are powerless. But as mistaken as these false religions were, they can still help us understand how ancient people understood the term “image of God.” They show us that, to an ancient audience, an image of a god was a sacred thing. Images represented the gods. They expressed and promoted belief in the gods. They spread the reputations of the gods. And they were thought to be instruments the gods used to be present with and to bless their people.

Having looked at how idols functioned as images of false gods, let's turn to human kings.

Kings

In many cultures of the ancient Near East, kings were called “images” of the gods they served. This was partly because the kings were thought to have access to the gods’ special presence, similar to the way the gods were thought to be present in idols. And it was partly because the kings reflected or personified the gods’ will. Kings were supposed to learn the will and wisdom of the gods, and then to enforce that will throughout their kingdoms.

For example, in the New Kingdom period of Egypt, beginning around 1550 B.C., the pharaohs began to be referred to as the images of various gods. And this practice continued well into the period of the Old Testament. We know that Amon I, who reigned in the 16th century B.C., was called “the image of Re,” the sun god. Amenophis III, who reigned in the 14th century B.C., was referred to as “my living image” by the god Amon. And the god Amon-Re said to Amenophis III, “You are my beloved son ... my image ... I have given to you to rule the earth in peace.” As we can see in these references, pharaohs were viewed as images of the gods because they ruled over the gods’ earthly kingdoms. It was thought that the gods showed them special favor, maintained close communication with them, and expected the kings to carry out their will.

We see something similar in Mesopotamian kingdoms like Assyria, although the practice was less common there. Various kings were referred to as an image of Shamash the sun god, an image of Marduk the ruler of the Assyrian pantheon, and an image of Bel, meaning “lord,” which was another name for Marduk. And sometimes, they were simply recognized as the image of a god, without the specific god being named. For example, in the *State Archives of Assyria*, volume 10, chapter 10, there is a letter from the priest Adad-shumu-usur to King Esarhaddon. Sometime between 681 and 669 B.C., Adad-shumu-usur wrote:

Man is the shadow of a god... But the king is the image of a god.

In an earlier letter, Adad-shumu-usur had said that both Esarhaddon and his father, the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib, were images of Bel. So, his point wasn’t that Esarhaddon *in particular* was the image of a god. Rather, Adad-shumu-usur was saying that kings had a closer relationship to the gods than other people did. And therefore, kings were more similar to the gods than other people were.

In Adad-shumu-usur’s words, “Man is the shadow of a god,” there may be a hint that the ancient Near East recognized varying degrees of images. They may have believed that kings were the truest images of the gods, but that people of lower rank were also divine images of a sort — the shadow, rather than the actual image, of a god.

In any case, these uses of the term “image of God” help us understand how Moses’ original audience might have received his teaching in Genesis. They suggest that ancient audiences might have looked at kings as the primary images of their gods because the kings reflected the gods’ authority and will. And as a result, when they heard the term “image of God” applied to human beings, they might easily have assumed that it spoke of the office of king.

Now that we've considered the office of "image of God" by looking at how images of false gods functioned in biblical times, let's look at how Scripture describes humanity as images of the true God.

IMAGES OF THE TRUE GOD

Genesis 1 tells us that during the creation week, God formed and ordered the entire world. And on the sixth and last working day of the week, as his final act of creation, he made humanity. Listen to Genesis 1:26:

God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (Genesis 1:26).

The first thing Scripture says about humanity is that we're the image and likeness of God. This is one of the primary ways God thinks about the human race.

So, when the Bible talks about human beings being made in God's image and likeness, really, what that's saying essentially is that everything that humans are, everything that humans do, *images* God. And the terms, one qualifies the other. So, we are an image of God. And the term "likeness" further defines what that is. We're not an exact copy, we're not exact copies of God. We are in the likeness of God; so it's a representational dynamic, not a static copy of him. Everything that we are images God... We can't lose sight of the fact that the essential idea is that humans, when God wanted to make a being that represented him, he made humanity.

— Rev. Ric Rodeheaver

Our discussion of humanity as images of the true God will divide into three parts. First, we'll explore the biblical vocabulary of image and likeness. Second, we'll consider Jesus as the perfect image of God. And third, we'll describe our authority as God's images. Let's look first at the vocabulary of image and likeness.

Vocabulary

The meanings of the words "image," or *tselem* in Hebrew, and "likeness," or *dēmuth* in Hebrew, aren't identical. But they do overlap in many ways. An "image" can be a carved or cast idol, as in Numbers 33:52; 2 Kings 11:18; and Ezekiel 7:20 and 16:17. It can be a model, like the gold rats that were returned with the Ark of the Covenant in 1 Samuel 6:5, 11. And it can be a reflection or shadow, as in Psalm 39:6 and Psalm 73:20.

By contrast, the word “likeness” never identifies an idol. But it does refer to statues like the bronze bulls in 2 Chronicles 4:3. It also identifies the sketch or plans for an altar in 2 Kings 16:10. And throughout the Old Testament prophetic writings, it describes the appearance or sound of one thing by comparing it to another. For instance, in Isaiah 13:4, the noise on the mountains is the *likeness* of the sound of a great multitude. And the prophet Ezekiel used *likeness* to explain the appearance of God’s chariot throne in Ezekiel 1 and 10 where there were creatures that looked like various animals, and sparkled like gems. And in Daniel 10:16, the prophet described an angelic messenger as having the form or “likeness” of a man.

Although not identical, the meanings of image and likeness overlap because they both describe a model or sketch of a greater reality. In a similar way, human beings are images and likenesses of God because we model God’s power, authority and goodness. Without a doubt, our power, authority and goodness are tiny compared to his. But they still point to him.

Now, many theologians believe that when image and likeness are used together, their collective meaning is broader than this overlap. In particular, they argue that while “image” points to our similarity with God, “likeness” distinguishes between God and humanity, so that we don’t wrongly assume that we’re exactly like him.

Besides Genesis 1:26, only one other verse in the Old Testament uses both “image” and “likeness” together: Genesis 5:3. Here, Seth is said to be both the image and likeness of his father Adam. Of course, being the image and likeness of an earthly father is considerably different from being the image and likeness of God. Adam and Seth were both human beings, but God alone is God. As Paul wrote in Romans 3:30:

There is only one God (Romans 3:30).

We find similar statements in 1 Corinthians 8:6 and James 2:19.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that we aren’t little gods, and we won’t become gods in the future. Even when we’re glorified in the new heavens and new earth, we’ll still be mere creatures, and God will still be infinitely greater than us. Nevertheless, the similarity between Adam and Seth should incline us to see ourselves as more than just reflections of God’s characteristics.

When we think of humans being created in the image of God, there are ways that we’re similar and then there are ways that we’re not. The thing to remember when it refers to us as being in the divine image doesn’t mean that we’re little gods... In other words, we are able to do certain things *like* him, in a similar way. Namely, we are able to create. We can’t create *ex nihilo*, but whenever we see humans being creative agents, this is a reflection of the divine image. We are also moral agents. The fact that we are able to originate choices, we are able to choose that which is supposed to be that which is right over that which is wrong; the very fact that we have the capacity to be moral agents is also reflections of the divine image. And the very fact

that we are able to think God's thoughts after him and contemplate the divine, these are all ways in which we are like him.

— Dr. Ken Keathley

Theologians infer a variety of doctrines from the biblical vocabulary of image and likeness. Some focus on our authority over God's creation. Others talk about the actual work we do. And others emphasize the fact that we share many of God's attributes in ways that distinguish us from animals. And all of these perspectives are true. We're God's images and likenesses because we rule over the earth as God's servant kings, and are endowed with the necessary qualities and abilities to perform our duties.

Having considered our office as images of the true God in terms of the vocabulary of image and likeness, let's turn to Jesus as our perfect example.

Jesus

As God incarnate, Jesus is the only perfect human being that has ever lived. He's completely without sin, and completely perfect in all his human attributes. Moreover, as the Messiah or Christ, he's also the human king over God's kingdom. And of course, God's special presence dwells in him more than any other being, since he himself is God. So, however we conceive of the image of God, we must look to Jesus as the perfect example of what that image should be.

In 2 Corinthians 4:4-5, the apostle Paul wrote:

Unbelievers ... cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake (2 Corinthians 4:4-5).

In this passage, Paul identified Jesus as the image of God in a way that distinguished him from all other human beings. First, he associated God's image with Jesus' divine glory as God. And second, he highlighted Jesus' human office of Lord or king.

As God's perfect image, Jesus displays divine glory in a way that no mere creature can. In Colossians 2:9, Paul taught that God fully dwells in Christ, holding nothing back, so that in Christ every attribute of God is present and manifested. And as a result, when Jesus reveals his glory — usually perceived as a great light — he visibly represents our Triune God. But the revelation of his glory goes much deeper than this. God's glory also includes things like his inherent worth, his fame, and the praise he receives. And all of these things are also true of God in Christ. As the author of Hebrews said in Hebrews 1:3:

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being (Hebrews 1:3).

And as Jesus himself put it in John 14:9:

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9).

Paul also said that Jesus is the ideal image of God because he is Lord. The word “Lord” refers to the fact that Jesus is the king that perfectly exercises God’s rule over creation. As God’s vice-regents or vassal kings, all humanity was charged with this task in Genesis 1:26-28. But as the king over redeemed humanity, and as the flawless keeper of God’s law, Jesus fulfills this office perfectly. Listen to how Paul described Jesus’ glory and kingship as the image of God in Colossians 1:13-18:

[The Father] brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves ... He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him... And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy (Colossians 1:13-18).

Jesus is God’s image because he has supremacy in every area. He’s the king of his own kingdom. He’s the firstborn over creation, that is, he has the full rights of inheritance over creation. He’s the creator of all other authorities, meaning that his own authority is greater than theirs. He’s the head or ruler of the church, and he has the honor of being the first resurrected and glorified human being. In all these ways, Jesus is the perfect representation of God’s power and glory, and the perfect example of what God’s kingship and authority look like when expressed through a human being.

Jesus is the perfect image of God. Jesus is the second Adam, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:45, the “last Adam,” who was the very power of God. And God’s extraordinary power was demonstrated in Jesus’ perfection because he became a human being who did not commit sin, a human being who was not born from sin. If we look in Matthew 1:19 and 20, we see that Jesus’ spirit did not come from Joseph or Mary or the lineage of Adam, but from the Holy Spirit. So, his life was a life that was perfect from within; his holiness was perfect from within, even as he wore human flesh and blood. And Jesus was the perfect image of God because he did not fall into sin, even though he felt weaknesses as a human being — Hebrews 4:15 — but he did not commit sin. He did not commit sin with his thoughts; he did not commit sin with his speech; he did not commit sin with his deeds. Throughout his life, until he completed his task as the Lord’s human being in this world, he did not commit sin. This is the perfect image of God; this is an example of a perfect life, given by Jesus Christ.

— Yohanes Praptowarso, Ph.D., translation

No other human being can represent God as perfectly as Jesus does. Even so, we're still full images of God, and not mere shadows, as the Assyrians believed. We still rule on his behalf, carry out his will, and reflect his glory. We don't do these things as well as Jesus does, but we do them nonetheless. And that's why in 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul was able to say:

Man ... is the image and glory of God (1 Corinthians 11:7).

So far, we've discussed our office as images of the true God by investigating the vocabulary of image and likeness, and by focusing on Jesus as God's most perfect image. Now let's look at our authority.

Authority

When Scripture identifies humanity as God's image, it associates our role as images with the authority we're given over the earth. This is entirely consistent with the ancient Near Eastern idea that kings were superior images of their gods because they ruled on their behalf. But Scripture extends this authority and office to more than just kings. All human beings — male and female, young and old, royal and common — are God's vice-regents, or servant kings, whose task is to make sure that his will is done on earth. This was God's reason for creating humanity, and it was the role he assigned us once we were created. Listen again to Genesis 1:27-28:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).

As this passage indicates, the authority we've received from God has at least three aspects: We're authorized to fill the earth with God's images, to govern all earth's creatures, and to subdue the earth itself.

We fill the earth by multiplying our numbers, so that we reproduce his living images throughout the world. This means that we can and should live in all parts of the world, carrying God's representative presence with us and establishing human culture everywhere we go. We govern all earth's creatures in various ways, including domesticating them, managing their habitats, and protecting them from mistreatment. And we subdue the earth itself through works like agriculture and the wise stewardship of earth's natural resources, turning it from a wilderness into a beautiful, life-supporting garden. In fact, the general idea we read in Genesis 1 and 2 is that humanity was supposed to expand the borders of the Garden of Eden until the entire planet was made into a fitting dwelling for God to inhabit. The ultimate goal was for God's special presence to fill the whole earth as fully as it originally filled the Garden of Eden.

Our role or office as images of God elevates all humanity to the level of royalty. God has appointed us the task of administering his reign throughout the earth. And that office gives us great dignity. We're *all* kings and queens. And we should treat each other with the appropriate degree of respect and favor.

Genesis 1 makes clear that Adam and Eve — that humanity — is created in the image of God according to his likeness. And while there are many facets of what that means, there's certainly the notion there embedded in Genesis 1, elucidated somewhat in Genesis 5 as well, that part of what it means for Adam and Eve to be created in God's image is to be created to be his children. And there is this extraordinary privilege and dignity of having this exalted status among the rest of the created order that humanity are in special relationship with God as his children. We are the royal sons and daughters of God, and what a position of great and extraordinary dignity and privilege as well as responsibility.

— Rev. Bill Burns

While recognizing the dignity and honor we receive as God's servant kings, we need to remember that God is still the great authority over us. We're still accountable to him in all things. He's the Creator; we're his creatures. He's God; we're not. And we hold authority only because he grants it to us. So, we should exercise that delegated authority with great reverence and humility.

It is important that we understand what it is to be created in the image of God. To be created in the image of God is actually that we are made in his likeness and we have power, and apart from power, we represent God. We are responsible agents, and we are relational with regard to God, but also relational with regard to our neighbors. Our need to submit to the reign of God is that we have to seek to live according to God's intended purpose... But we have sinned against God, and we need this relationship — which has already been broken — to be built again. So, submission to the reign of God means that it is by doing so that we'll be able to reflect God in the society.

— Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene, Ph.D.

Our reign over the earth is always subservient to the will of our great God and King. So, in our office as his images, we should never try to impose our own will. Instead, we should work to see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. And we should do that in a way that gives him all the glory.

Now that we've considered humanity as the image of God by exploring the office or position we hold, let's look at the attributes God gave us to empower us in that role.

ATTRIBUTES

Systematic theology has traditionally taught that God's image can be seen in humanity through a variety of attributes that he shares with us. We've already seen that our office is similar to God's. He's the supreme emperor, and we're the servant kings that he's appointed to rule over creation on his behalf. But we also have many attributes that resemble his. For example, we can think and reason and plan. We make moral judgments. And we have immortal spirits. Now, God's attributes are infinitely greater and more perfect than ours. But as his images, we still resemble him in these ways.

We'll focus on three categories of attributes that human beings share in common with God. First, we'll look at our moral qualities. Second, we'll consider our rational abilities. And third, we'll examine our spiritual attributes. Let's begin with our moral aspects.

MORAL

The term "moral" refers to our ability to distinguish between right and good and evil and wrong. In the case of Scripture, "right" and "good" are identified as those concepts, behaviors and emotions that God approves and blesses. And "wrong" and "evil" are the concepts, behaviors and emotions that he prohibits and punishes. And because we're created in God's image, we've been granted insight into his perspective on these matters. It's true that our moral judgment has been damaged by humanity's fall into sin. But it hasn't been completely destroyed. Moreover, for believers, it's in the process of being restored.

Consider the moral attributes of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When God placed humanity in the Garden of Eden, they understood that they were supposed to work it and take care of it, just as God said in Genesis 2:15. And they recognized those obligations as morally good. But they also understood that they weren't supposed to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil because God had prohibited it in Genesis 2:17. Sometimes Christians make the mistake of thinking that Adam and Eve didn't know right from wrong before they ate from the tree. But it's clear that this idea is mistaken. After all, in Genesis 3:2 and 3, Eve was able to tell the serpent what she was *allowed* to do and what she was *forbidden* to do.

Adam and Eve did gain knowledge after they ate the forbidden fruit. But Scripture doesn't describe this in terms of moral judgment. As we read in Genesis 3:7:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked (Genesis 3:7).

The word "naked" here implies not only nudity but shame and vulnerability. It's the same word that's used in Isaiah 47:3, where God said:

Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered. I will take vengeance; I will spare no one (Isaiah 47:3).

Eating the forbidden fruit increased Adam and Eve's knowledge by exposing their weakness. When they were obedient and secure in God's good favor, nothing could threaten or harm them. But they didn't realize that their success and security were provided entirely by God, and only because he favored them. So, they also didn't realize that when they sinned, they would lose his provision and protection. But once they ate, these things became clear. They didn't learn more about discerning good from evil, but they did learn more about the experience and consequences of both. In fact, when it comes to humanity's moral abilities, our fall into sin actually reduced our moral judgment. As Paul said in Titus 1:15:

To those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted (Titus 1:15).

Because our minds and consciences are corrupted, fallen human beings can't properly evaluate good and evil. In this respect, we've become poorer images of God. But the bad news doesn't stop there. We've also lost the ability to *act* in moral ways — to *do things* that please God. As Paul went on to say about unbelievers in Titus 1:16:

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good (Titus 1:16).

And in Romans 8:7-8 he added:

The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8).

We find similar ideas throughout Scripture, including in Luke 6:43-45; John 15:4, 5; and Hebrews 11:6.

Humanity's fall into sin had a profound effect on our moral ability as human beings today. You can already see an important aspect of that in the story itself in Genesis 3. After Adam and Eve sinned, what do they do? They hide from God. They try to evade responsibility. You already see the effects of sin there. You continue to read into Genesis 4 and you immediately come to the story of Cain and Abel and we see the destructiveness of sin as Cain kills his brother. And then the story of Cain's descendants that come from that and the kind of pride and arrogance that marks humanity. And so, really, if we're just to read the narrative in Genesis it signals to us what a profound effect Adam's sin had. And then as we move on in Scripture we find some theological reflections on that as well. If you think about Psalm 51, the famous Psalm of confession of David, he says that he was sinful from the time his mother conceived him. You know, there David places our sinfulness all the way back into the very beginning of our existence. It

wasn't something that we learned later in life through bad cultural influences or something. This is something which is deeply rooted... And this comes to its most mature and full teaching in the New Testament... We find Paul, for example, teaching how those without the Spirit are not able to understand the things of the Spirit of God — that's 1 Corinthians 2. Romans 8 speaks about how those who are in the flesh, which is all of us apart from Christ, how we cannot do things that are pleasing to God... We have this total inability to turn from our sins and to do what is pleasing in God's sight *apart from* that regenerating grace of God.

— Dr. David VanDrunen

In some theological traditions, the loss of our moral ability — along with our original righteousness and holiness — is thought to have been so great that we completely lost the image and likeness of God. But Scripture still refers to sinful humanity as God's images and likenesses. For example, Genesis 9:6 condemns murder because human beings are still God's images. And James 3:9 condemns cursing people because we're all created in God's likeness. So, most theological traditions have concluded that God's image and likeness in humanity were damaged but not destroyed.

In any case, all Evangelicals agree that humanity's fall into sin damaged our moral qualities. But there's good news for believers: when we come to faith in Christ, God begins to renew and restore that aspect of his image in us. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:24, believers are to:

Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24).

The “new self” Paul described involves every aspect of our being, including our moral judgment and our ability to do things that please God. Our knowledge, our righteousness and our holiness are all being restored in Christ. And this restoration makes us more “like God,” so that we become clearer images of him.

With this understanding of our moral attributes in mind, let's turn to our rational abilities.

RATIONAL

The doctrine of the image of God, of humanity, is often associated with the rationality of human beings for a couple of reasons. The first thing to point out is, though, with the fall of humanity, while the image of God was severely spoiled, it was not completely destroyed, and so there remains in us, even today, the image of God that we carry about in our being. And perhaps one of the best ways for us to understand that is the idea of understanding how we think and can

behave rationally. In other words, human beings, despite the Fall, have the ability to make decisions based on coherent thinking, in their ability to discern between that which is right and that which is wrong. And this speaks very clearly to the fact that we have been created with the law of God, the knowledge of the law of God has been infused into our very being, into our minds and our conscience. And so, the apostle Paul speaks to this, that despite the fact that the Gentiles have not been given the law of God as the Jews were, they by their very nature — we all by our very nature — have the knowledge of God infused in our conscience and thereby are able to make rational decisions.

— Dr. Jay Haley

From very early in church history, Christians have understood that the image of God in human beings includes our capacity to think rationally and process complex emotions. We can see the importance of humanity's rational capacity in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:19, 20. In these verses, Adam used his authority as God's image to give the animals appropriate names, and to evaluate their fitness for helping him fill and subdue the earth.

Some of this rational ability was lost in our fall into sin, as evidenced in many biblical passages that speak of human beings being irrational and even insane at times, such as Ecclesiastes 9:3 and Jeremiah 17:9. And other passages speak of us losing the ability even to understand the things God shows us and says to us. We see this, for instance, in Deuteronomy 29:2, 3 where the minds of the Israelites couldn't understand the significance of the miracles God had performed for them. And in John 8:43-47, Jesus explained that unbelievers were children of the Devil, who is the father of lies. And as a result, they believe lies and are incapable of accepting the truth. And listen to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:17-18:

The Gentiles [live] in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts (Ephesians 4:17-18).

Our fall into sin damaged our ability to think and to understand the world from God's perspective. But it didn't destroy it completely. We still have rational and emotional capacities, even if they don't work as well as they once did. For instance, as we learn in Romans 1:19, 20 even unbelievers have the rational capacity to know that God exists, and to recognize certain aspects of his invisible qualities and divine nature.

John Calvin, who lived from 1509 to 1564, defended the abilities of fallen, unbelieving humanity to think rationally in his work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In book 2, chapter 2, section 15 he wrote:

The admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its

Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears.

And there's even better news for believers. As Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 2:11-16, God has given us his Holy Spirit and the mind of Christ so that we can once again understand reality in the same way that God does. Beyond this, Paul told the Colossians that the restoration of our rational abilities is an aspect of the image of God being renewed in us. As we read in Colossians 3:10:

Put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:10).

The image of God originally included knowledge that was pure and unblemished. But, as we've said, our knowledge was damaged by humanity's fall into sin. When we come to faith in Christ, God begins to restore that aspect of his image in us. As a result, we're able to think and understand more correctly, so that our thoughts and reason become more aligned with his.

One of the most extraordinary things about the Holy Spirit's work in salvation is that the Holy Spirit recovers, repairs again, man's rational ability that was previously damaged, fallen in sin, polluted by sin. And the Holy Spirit works as God's Spirit that stimulates, repairs, perfects once again that ability. Hence, when God's grace comes in a person's life in the proclamation about the cross, about Christ, man can begin to respond again properly and to take the decision to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. And even after that the Holy Spirit still works as a Spirit of understanding, a Spirit that gives help to mankind to think, to absorb everything, to think everything, to evaluate everything, and to walk according to what God wills in truth.

— Rev. Agus G. Satyaputra, translation

Having looked at our moral and rational attributes as aspects of the image of God, we're ready to turn our attention to our spiritual attributes.

SPIRITUAL

Because God has no physical body, theologians often say that he's "a spirit." Of course, this doesn't mean that he's limited in the same way creaturely spirits are. Rather, it means that he exists beyond or above the natural realm, in the supernatural realm, where he doesn't have a physical body.

This is what the Westminster Shorter Catechism means in its question and answer number 4. After asking, “What is God?” the catechism’s answer begins by saying:

God is a Spirit.

The reason for this belief is clear from passages like John 4:24, which says plainly:

God is spirit (John 4:24).

God’s spirituality is also apparent in Old Testament passages that refer to the Spirit of God. For instance, Genesis 1:2 refers to the Spirit of God hovering over the waters at creation. And Exodus 31:3 reports that the Spirit of God empowered the craftsman Bezalel to create the tabernacle and its furnishings. In Old Testament passages like these, the phrase “the Spirit of God” refers to God himself, who is a spirit.

As we saw in a prior lesson, human beings also have a spiritual component. God created us with material bodies and immaterial souls or spirits. So, our immortal spiritual existence is another attribute that God shares with us. We can see this especially in Genesis 2:7, where God created a soul in Adam by breathing his own breath into Adam’s body.

We should also point out that God’s creation of Adam distinguishes humanity from God’s other creatures. Passages like Genesis 1:30, and 7:15, use the Hebrew words for “soul” and “spirit” to refer to the lives of animals. But only Adam is reported to have received his soul by God directly breathing it into him. Moreover, of all of God’s creatures, only human beings are said to have a spiritual existence after our bodies die. Only human beings will be resurrected on the last day, as we read in John 5:28, 29. And Revelation 10:11–21:5 shows that only human beings will be either punished forever in hell, or rewarded forever in the new heavens and new earth.

In prior centuries, systematic theologians often taught that the communicable attributes — or attributes that we share with God — were the primary aspects of his image in us. But more recent biblical scholarship has revealed that we bear his image primarily in terms of the office we hold. Even so, the attributes that God shares with us are still an important part of his image. These attributes have been damaged in us by our fall into sin. But they haven’t been so badly damaged that we’ve ceased to be his images. We still hold the office of his servant rulers over creation. And with his grace and help, we’re still able to carry out his will on the earth.

So far in our lesson, we’ve explored the image of God as an office or position humanity holds, and as a set of attributes we possess. Now we’re ready to address our last major topic: the relationships we have as God’s images.

RELATIONSHIPS

When God appointed humanity to the office of his image, he created a variety of relationships. God became the great suzerain or emperor, and humanity began to serve

him as his vassal or servant kings. Human beings began to relate to each other as fellow rulers. And the rest of creation became the subjects under humanity's rule.

We'll investigate our relationships as images of God in three parts. First, we'll consider our relationship with God. Second, we'll examine our relationship with other human beings. And third, we'll focus on our relationship with creation. Let's look first at our relationship with God.

GOD

As we saw in a prior lesson, when God created humanity he entered into a covenant relationship with us. This covenant resembled an ancient Near Eastern treaty between a great emperor or suzerain — in this case, God — and a vassal or servant king — in this case, humanity. In particular, God's covenant with humanity displayed three features that were common in ancient Near Eastern treaties: the suzerain's benevolence toward his vassal, the loyalty the suzerain required of his vassal, and the consequences that would result from the vassal's loyalty or disloyalty. And just as ancient Near Eastern covenants continued throughout the generations, God's covenant with humanity continues throughout our generations, too.

We'll highlight three aspects of our covenant relationship with God that are specific to our role as his images: first our obligation to reflect God's character; second, our duty to promote pure worship; and third, our responsibility to build God's kingdom. Let's start with our call to reflect God's character.

Reflect God's Character

Like images of false gods and of kings in the ancient Near East, images of the true God are intended to reflect his character wherever they appear. And God's character is utterly pure, holy and righteous. As a result, his human images are required to be utterly pure, holy and righteous, too. In 1 Peter 1:15-16, Peter wrote this:

Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

And the author of Hebrews said in Hebrews 12:14:

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

Of course, fallen human beings can't be utterly holy on our own merit. We rely entirely on Christ's perfect holiness for our standing before God. Nevertheless, God still requires us to pursue holiness in our lives through means such as keeping his commandments.

I would say, in essence, God's moral law, the Ten Commandments, actually reflect God's character. They tell us what God's like. And so, they're not wooden rules that are external to God. It wasn't like God was debating, "Should I tell them to murder or not murder?" No, God said "don't murder" in the sixth commandment because God is fundamentally not a murderer. You could say it positively. It says "don't murder," but we could say, "Do all you can to respect innocent human life." That's what God does. That's what God's like. Or the command tells us to not commit adultery. You could say that positively. "Be faithful to those with whom you are intimate." Well, why? Because God is like that. And so, since God's laws actually communicate who he is and what he's like, since we're living in God's world, and we're God's image-bearers made to be like him, to function like him, if you will — that's part of what image bearing entails — thus, we could say that it would be impossible for God's law not to relate and not to apply to us if we're talking about God's moral law.

— Dr. David W. Jones

Sadly, no matter how hard we try to obey God and keep his covenant commandments — no matter how much effort we put into being loyal to him — we'll always fall short. Scripture makes this clear in places like Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:18, 19 and 8:3; and Galatians 5:17. As the apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:8, 10:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us... If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives (1 John 1:8, 10).

And the answer to the Westminster Larger Catechism, question 149, offers this summary of our inability to be perfect:

No man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

Despite the fact that no image of God, except Christ, can perfectly reflect his character in this life, we're all obligated to pursue holiness and righteousness with our whole person. And by God's grace, we are becoming clearer images of him through that process. That's why in 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul was able to write:

We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Having looked at our relationship with God in terms of our obligation to reflect God's character, let's consider our duty to promote pure worship.

Promote Pure Worship

The fact that human beings are the real images of God means that idols and other non-human representations of him are false images. Although our fallen intuition might suggest that it would honor God to worship him through crafted images, Scripture rejects this idea. This may have been the sin Aaron committed in Exodus 32, when he made a golden calf for Israel to use in worshipping the Lord. And Exodus 20:3, where God forbade graven or carved images, clearly prohibits worshipping him through visible representations. Moses was probably addressing this forbidden use of images in Deuteronomy 4:15-16, where he wrote:

You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape (Deuteronomy 4:15-16).

Moses reminded his audience that God hadn't revealed himself in a physical form because he wanted to protect the purity of their worship. He wanted to keep Israel's relationship with God pure, unadulterated by the idolatrous theology and practices of the surrounding nations. He didn't want them to think that God could be spiritually bound to an object of any sort, or that such objects could be used to honor God, or to gain his approval or help. God is the true God, and he isn't to be treated like the false gods of the nations.

I don't think God wants us to worship him like other ancient Near Eastern cultures insomuch as they wanted us to worship images. God's not an image; he's a person. Indeed, we find out in time, he's three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But having said that, once you begin worshipping an image, historically what happens is we begin conferring to that image what we think are the best qualities about ourselves. So, in time we eventually, through that image, worship ourselves.

— Dr. Matt Friedeman

So far we've seen that our covenant relationship with God requires his images to reflect God's character and to promote pure worship. Now let's look at our obligation to build God's kingdom.

Build God's Kingdom

When God commanded humanity to “fill the earth” in Genesis 1:28, he was instructing us to place images of himself everywhere throughout the world. As we've seen, ancient kings would place their images around their kingdoms to remind the people of the kings' benevolence and greatness, to encourage the people to obey the kings, and to show that the kings were present with their people. And in a similar way, as human beings spread throughout the world, they demonstrate that God rules everywhere they go. But this demonstration isn't just symbolic. Since human beings are also God's vice-regents or servant kings, we carry his rule with us wherever we go. So, wherever we “subdue the earth,” as God also commanded in Genesis 1:28, we're doing that appointed work.

Now, we need to recognize that God's kingdom isn't the only one in the world. The primary opposition to God comes from Satan's kingdom. All fallen human beings are born into this enemy kingdom. And until we come to faith in Christ, we continue to struggle against God's kingdom in many ways — whether we know it or not. As Paul said in Ephesians 2:1-2:

You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Nevertheless, all human beings are tasked with building God's kingdom. And those that build his enemy's kingdom instead are guilty of treason.

Having considered our relationships as God's images with respect to God, let's turn our attention to other human beings.

HUMAN BEINGS

Being created in God's image impacts our relationships with other human beings in many ways. But for our purposes in this lesson, we'll mention just two: our obligation to treat people with dignity, and the importance of upholding justice. We'll start by considering human dignity.

Dignity

Imagine that a new mother and father took pictures of their baby and sent them to their family members. Some family members adored the baby, so they displayed the pictures in their homes. Others put them in their wallets and purses wanting to show them to their friends, or they put them in photo albums to protect them, to take care of them. But some family members disrespected the baby, defacing the pictures, throwing them in the trash. Well, you can imagine how offended the parents would be by the people that

showed such disrespect for their baby in the pictures. Something similar is true of God's image in humanity. Every human being is valuable to him because every human being bears his image. And that means that every human being deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

Genesis 1:27, 28 and 5:1-3, teach that *every* human being bears God's image. This is true regardless of our gender, age, ethnicity, wealth, social status, health, abilities, appearance, or anything else that distinguishes us from each other. Yes, our attributes can reflect God in varying degrees. But every human being bears God's image sufficiently to be treated with dignity and respect. Every person represents God in some way. And to mistreat God's representative is to insult God himself.

According to Genesis 1, one the foundational facts of our identity as humans is that God has created us in his own image. Then in some sense, all human beings are made to reflect God and to represent him in the world. And that's true for all human beings, and that has profound ethical implications for how we should treat every other human being that we come in contact with. If, in fact, all human beings represent God, then the way that we treat another human being indicates very much of our relationship with God. To the extent that we honor other human beings, we are honoring God their maker. To the extent that we dishonor and hurt and abuse other human beings, we dishonor God. So, for example, in Genesis 9:6 the ultimate penalty of capital punishment is imposed for the sin of murder because humans have been made in the image of God. So, the murder victim is an image-bearer of God, and you attack an image-bearer, you are attacking God. In James 3:9, we're told not to slander one another. So, now, not a physical attack but a verbal attack, but the reason is because humans have been made in the likeness of God. Not using the exact same language, but in Proverbs 14:31 we read:

[He who] oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but [those who are] kind to the needy [honor] God (Proverbs 14:31).

So, here the issue is economic exploitation. Whether it's physical or verbal or economic, the principle is clear: how we treat image-bearers of God has everything to do with our attitude and response to God himself. And the key thing to note in all of those passages is that the terminology for humanity is as general as it can be. This is not restricted only to the covenant people of God; this is humanity as humanity. So, no matter what race, no matter what gender, no matter what socioeconomic class, whether one is religious or irreligious, whether one is moral or immoral, every human being is an image-bearer of God, and so they are deserving of dignity and respect, and the way we treat them indicates so much of our attitude towards God.

— Dr. Steven C. Roy

Besides recognizing the dignity of all human beings, it's also important to uphold justice.

Justice

Scripture directly commands that we uphold justice for all images of God. Genesis 9:6 prohibits murder on the basis that all human beings are created in God's image; and James 3:9 prohibits cursing other people for the same reason. We can also see the importance of upholding justice by looking at God's kingdom. When God appointed humanity to build his kingdom, he commanded us to keep his covenant law, and to apply that law fairly and justly.

One of the best ways to see that our role as God's servant kings obligates us to preserve justice is to look at what Scripture says about good kings. For instance, in 2 Chronicles 9:8, the queen of Sheba offered this praise of King Solomon:

Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the Lord your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness (2 Chronicles 9:8).

The queen of Sheba rightly said that good kings "rule for the Lord," that is, they administer the authority he has delegated to them. And they use this authority to maintain justice and righteousness. Because all human beings share a similar role to Solomon's, we also share the responsibility of maintaining justice for our fellow human beings.

We find the same kind of language about justice in Isaiah's description of the coming Messiah or Christ — the ultimate king over God's earthly kingdom, whom we now know to be Jesus. According to Isaiah 42:1-4:

He will bring justice to the nations... In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope (Isaiah 42:1-4).

As the examples of Solomon and Jesus show, preserving justice for all humanity is an important part of our role as God's images.

Now that we've explored our relationships with God and other human beings, let's focus on the rest of creation.

CREATION

Our relationship to creation is described in Genesis 1:27-28. Listen again to these familiar verses:

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Genesis 1:27-28).

As God’s images, human beings are in charge of creation. Our task is to fill and subdue the earth, and to rule over its creatures. Theologians often refer to this assignment as the “cultural mandate,” because it requires us to cultivate the world, turning it from a wilderness into a garden, and to establish human culture and societies in every land. But what exactly does this entail?

When I look at Genesis 1 and 2 and think about the responsibilities we’re given as human beings, they tend to fall into two categories. One the one hand, God says to us, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth.” And it’s a wonderful command to bring about more human life, to be sub-creators, in a way, within the creation that God has made. The second command, or the second job given to us, is to tend creation, to steward it for God’s glory — to “subdue it” is what we’re told in those chapters from Genesis. So we’re told not just to reproduce, not just to multiply, but as we grow as humanity, we are to care for the creation God has made. We’re to bring continued order within the creation, we’re to bear fruit within the creation, we’re to till the ground and keep it. We’re to take the creative impulse that comes from God that’s implanted in us, made in his image, and to continue to create within the world that he’s given us.

— Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

In Genesis 2:8, we’re told that God planted a garden in Eden. But we’re never told what the rest of the world looked like. We know that God called the world “good” throughout Genesis 1. And biblical scholars tend to agree that, in this case, the Hebrew word *towb*, which we translate as “good,” means both “pleasing to God” and “physically beautiful.” Nevertheless, the fact that humanity was assigned the task of subduing the earth implies that there was still work to do.

Genesis 3:8 says that God used to walk in the Garden of Eden. So, it was a fitting place for him to dwell. As we saw in an earlier lesson, he gave priestly jobs to Adam and Eve in the Garden. So, the Garden was also his sanctuary or temple.

But these facts imply that the rest of the world was different. Through the cultural mandate, God expected human beings to spread beyond the Garden’s borders into the rest of the world, and to subdue it as they went, turning the entire world into God’s garden sanctuary.

In addition to cultivating the world, humanity was assigned the task of ruling over the animals. And we can get an idea of what this meant by looking at how God’s law later provided for the humane treatment of animals. With regard to domesticated animals:

Exodus 20:10 grants them a weekly Sabbath rest; Deuteronomy 22:10 prohibits unequal yoking, probably because of the physical stress it causes them; and Deuteronomy 25:4 permits an ox to eat the grain it's treading. With regard to wild animals: Exodus 23:11 permits them to eat from fallow fields; and Deuteronomy 22:6, 7 prohibits the killing or capture of a wild bird when gathering its eggs.

Our responsibilities over the earth and its creatures indicate that the world doesn't exist simply for our use. On the contrary, it primarily exists for God's use. So, as his images, it's our job to guard and manage those things he called "good," and to cultivate them in ways that improve them rather than harm them.

Being God's images has many implications for the way we relate to God, to other people, and to the world around us. As God's representatives on earth, our thoughts, behavior and emotions reflect on him. And he holds us personally responsible for carrying out our role in ways that accomplish his purposes, benefit his creation and creatures, and bring him glory.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we've considered humanity's role as the image of God. We've explored our office by comparing it to images of false gods and images of the true God. We've described the moral, rational and spiritual attributes we possess as God's images. And we've considered the relationships we have with God, other human beings, and the rest of creation.

Many modern philosophies are entirely human-centered. They believe that focusing on God as the ultimate authority reduces human beings to slaves; whereas, focusing on humanity apart from God promotes self-worth and confidence. But this is completely backwards. As God's images on earth, we have more worth and more significance than we could ever have on our own. God has placed his image on us, made us kings. We're responsible for representing his rule, exercising his delegated authority, expressing his character, and carrying out his will. What could possibly bring humanity more value and confidence than that?

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What Is Man?

LESSON
TWO

The Image of God Faculty Forum



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What Is Man?

Lesson Two: The Image of God

Faculty Forum

With

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Dr. Daniel O. Aleshire
Rev. Ian Benson
Dr. Kenneth V. Botton
Rev. Bill Burns
Dr. Marc Cortez
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Dr. David VanDrunen
Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer
Rev. Dr. Michael Walker
Dr. Michael D. Williams

Question 1:

What does the Bible mean when it uses the words the “image and likeness of God” to describe humanity?

Dr. Michael D. Williams

Now, the language of image bearing is actually quite rare — only three texts in the Old Testament. And there’s really not a definition that comes with it. And because of that, we’ve kind of felt free throughout two thousand years of history to simply read our cultural expectations into the text. Hendrikus Berkhof famously made the comment that you could tell the whole history, the Western intellectual history through how we have read this text. And we have taken image bearing, being an image bearer, as possessing a soul, being rational creatures, just on and on and on. Without getting into all the complexities here, I think that the suggestions have kind of fallen into two categories: either image bearing is something we are, a kind of static endowment, say, the possession of a soul or that I’m a rational creature, or it’s a task; it’s something we do. It’s a noun or a verb. It’s a thing or an activity... The verbal idea is more appealing in some ways because of what follows right after that: “Let us make man in our image and let them rule.” And I realize that the habit or the tradition of the last one hundred years has been to move away from ontological answers and move towards dynamic answers. We shouldn’t be too quick to say, well, we’ve swung the pendulum completely in the other way — it’s not a thing, it’s simply a verb. It’s simply either ruling or relationship or that kind of thing. One of my professors, Tony Hoekema, years ago in his book, *Created in God’s Image*, made this very point. He said that God has made the eagle as a flying creature, but the eagle must possess the abilities to fly, so there’s something both nominal and verbal. And it

may be that the image of God is both telling us our constitution, telling us *what* we are, but also telling us what we are to do.

Rev. Ian Benson

The Bible says that we are made in God's image and likeness, and what does this mean? The Hebrew uses two words: the word *tselem* for the word "image," and *demuth* for the word "likeness." And the word *demuth* comes from the word *damah*, which is "to be like" or "to resemble," and the word *tselem* is used sometimes of maybe an image, a graven image, or something like that. These words show that we are made in the image of God, that is, that we represent, we are physical representation of God... The Lord Jesus Christ became man and he is, according to Colossians 1:15, he is the Image of God. And I think it's very interesting ... that Christ is the Image of God and we are made in his image.

Rev. Bill Burns

Genesis explains that God creates humanity in the image of God according to his likeness, that unlike the rest of the created order, there's something unique about Adam and Eve that they are actually created in the image of God according to his likeness. That's such a rich idea that there are many different things that can be said about that... The first is that this idea of being created in the image of God, as we see clarified also in Genesis 5, when Adam has a son in his own likeness and image, is that part of the implication of what's bound up in the idea that humanity is created in God's image is that humanity is created to be God's children, that Adam and Eve are created to be God's son and daughter in that they share a family likeness. There's a resemblance in some fashion; even though God is God and humanity is not, there are some things that we have in common. We share in some of God's qualities and characteristics. We are able to share in his goodness, to share in his holiness, to share in his righteousness. We are able to know him and live in relationship with him. And so, this first dimension of what it means that humanity is created in God's image is that we're created to be like God and to share in some of his qualities, to bear a family resemblance, if you will, because we were actually created for God to live in relationship with God as his children. Well, to add one more dimension to that picture, Adam and Eve, as God's children, because God is King of the universe, are essentially royal children, that Adam and Eve have the extraordinary privileges as being a son and daughter of the King of sharing in his work of governing the world. God explicitly says there in Genesis that Adam and Eve are to have dominion over the world and to bring the order and the government of God, the benevolent good government of God, to the rest of the world on God's behalf. So it's this extraordinary privilege that humanity has of being in relationship with God, of resembling God, of having qualities in common with God, and actually getting to share in God's work, to participate in the family business, as it were, in extending God's goodness and his work of creation and his bringing beauty and order and justice and righteousness and all good things to the world. It's almost as if the Garden of Eden is a blueprint from which Adam and Eve are to use to extend the glory of God to the ends of the earth.

Question 2:

Why do many theologians teach that being made in the image and likeness of God means that we are God's kingly representatives on earth?

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

In Genesis 1 where it talks about God creating humanity, he says that he created male and female in the image of God, and then it says, "and in the likeness of God" ...

There's been a lot of debate amongst theologians about what this actually means, but scholars in the Old Testament are aware of a find at Tell Fakhariyeh in Syria where they found a statue of a ruler in that region, and it calls the statue the "image and likeness" of that particular ruler. So what this shines light upon Genesis 1 is that how humans, as God's image bearers, are those who are to be, if you will, like statues for God, or representatives for God being the real King of this world. So, when I think "image bearers," I think those who are called to represent or to reflect God in this world as they care for creation. Now, a scholar recently, Catherine McDowell, has importantly noted how also image is linked to kinship. That's why you could say that Adam had children and they were born in Adam's image in Genesis 5. So there's also a sense that we, being created in God's image are, in a sense, part of God's family. We are "kins," we are God's children. So, I would call to mind this view of us that to be created in the image of God means we're called to represent and reflect God and to do so mindful that we are God's children.

Dr. Marc Cortez

So when Moses uses the language of "image and likeness" in Genesis 1 to describe the human person, we've been wrestling for years, centuries, trying to figure out exactly what Moses meant by that. And probably among the most common answers for that is to identify the image with some capacity or set of capacities that human persons have. So, we image God because we're rational. We image God because we're moral; we're spiritual. Whatever it is, there's some capacity that we have... So the other most common way of understanding what Moses is doing there is to look at the broader cultural context and the way that language is being used when Moses was writing that particular text. And actually, it was fairly common to use that language, particularly in Egypt and Mesopotamia, to describe particular human persons, usually kings or pharaohs who are standing in as god's representatives in the world, ruling over the world that god has created, so that to refer to the pharaoh as "god's image" is to say that Pharaoh is god's designated ruler and that Pharaoh is ruling as god's representative in that particular place. And so, in that sense, then, the image isn't necessarily defining something about our capacities, our bodies, our intellect, anything like that, it's really talking about something that we were placed in creation to do. It's a much more functional, active understanding of the image, so that we are created to represent God, to represent his presence, to represent his rulership in creation... But if he drops this language in the text without actually defining it, it's probably because he thought that we already knew what the words meant, and if we

look at what the words meant in his context, it seems likely that it refers to this idea that we are functioning as God's representatives.

Rev. Dr. Michael Walker

The church has not had a *single* understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God, but in recent years some new scholarship on the ancient Near Eastern context in which the Genesis account was written has helped us to understand what it meant to be an image in that environment and how the first audience, the first readers or hearers of the creation story, may likely have understood it at that time. And ancient Near Eastern rulers would erect images or representations of themselves throughout their territories, the areas in which they were sovereign, and these images were reminders of who's king here, who's the ruler, whose land is this. Who needs to be obeyed here? So, they were representations of the reign of the king, and I think that is a significant part of what it means for Adam and Eve to be created in the image of God. I think that's what we're being told when we read that in Genesis, that they were created, and really all of us were created, to be representations, *re-presentations*, of the reign of God who reflect his character and who, in effect, announce to the world who's king here, who does all this belong to, who reigns in this place. And we can see this reflected as well in the explicit commands that are given to Adam and Eve after they are created, you know, to fill the earth and subdue it is essentially a command to fill the whole earth, all of which was God's kingdom, with representations, reminders of the king.

Question 3:

As God's images, how are we similar to him and different from him?

Dr. Ramesh Richard

The greatest compliment that God has given us as human beings is that he has made us in his image. This is not something that he extends to the rest of his creation. The image of God can sometimes be seen only as rationality or creativity, the "soft intellectual" sides of human ability and accomplishment. But as I have studied the image of God in Scripture, not only do we have the soft, nonmaterial side of God being reflected in us... We are the image of God where he's not otherwise seen, just like creation reflects God's eternity, his power, we are there to represent him in a way that cannot be captured by creation, meaning personhood, that we are persons who came from a Person. This is an amazing concept, which is not clear in other religions and other philosophies. One of the reasons we hold to the dignity of the human race is the fact that all our ethics come from the dignity of the human race; lots of others would like to borrow human dignity without the foundation of a God who is a person. We cannot philosophically get personality from impersonality. It's like getting a dime when there are only quarters inside your pocket. Now, how are we different from God? One, we are temporal and God is eternal. Second, we are limited in our abilities, unlike the God who is unlimited. Throughout the ages, philosophers have attempted to address, where are we like God and where are we not? In fact, how can

we speak about a God that we cannot see? Some think we are univocally able to capture what God is in our expressions, and that's impossible because God is beyond our thoughts, beyond our comprehension... And so, we talk about God in analogies or in similarities, so we are persons and God has to be a person; we have spirit and God is spirit; we have body *and* God came in a human body. Some of the most amazing parts of Christian anthropology and Christian theology come from it.

Rev. Ric Rodeheaver

So, in talking about the image of God, one of the necessary questions is, if we are image bearers of God, and we are in his image and likeness — which means we're not an exact copy but we're like him — in what way are we like him, and then in what way are we not like him? And basically, theologians would call that, that there are “communicable attributes” of God, in that they are communicated, they are given to us. And there are those things called the “incommunicable attributes” of God. So, an example of incommunicable attributes, attributes that cannot be communicated or given to us, are things like God's independence. The technical term for that is his “aseity.” There is nothing in the universe that has self-existence within itself. Everything in the universe is dependent on something else for its life. Even the sun itself, we know, is slowly dying. God is the only being that has self-existence; there's nothing like him that way... But then there are the communicable attributes. So, we have communicable attributes that are mental, so, wisdom, truth, knowledge. We share that in very limited form. There are communicable attributes that are moral, God's goodness, God's kindness, God's mercy, God's jealousy, God's wrath. We share those as well with him, in different ways, but we do share them. And then we have communicable attributes of will, purpose, and freedom. So, these are ways that we are like him, and then there are ways we are absolutely not like him, again because humanity is an image and likeness. We're not an exact copy but enough of a representation to where his sovereignty and authority can be extended through the universe, through the creation, through his image bearers.

Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer

So, in Genesis 2:7 we've got this very striking verse that we are formed “from the dust of the ground.” This is a sort of built-in governor on our pride, because in Genesis 1 the creation of mankind is so lofty, so grand, it's at the end of the creation account right before God rests and has all this unique language that expresses how important and how lofty the creation of mankind is; we go to Genesis 2, and we are nevertheless dust. So, we have within us, imprinted in who we are by God, this small bit of his authority so that we can go represent him well in human space-time, to rule and to govern and subdue. But nevertheless, we are a piece of creation. We are corporeal. We get to rule only that which God has created before and under us. So, we are like God in the sense that we can rule, we can subdue; we are creative beings. We are very much unlike God because we are nevertheless creation. So, even though we share some of those aspects and qualities of God, there's a huge chasm between us and him by the very nature of the fact that we are a piece of creation. So, we are rulers, yet dust, and we have to live in that tension.

Dr. Dinorah B. Méndez, translation

I think the image of God is also sometimes misunderstood as that we are equal to God. In fact, there have been religious groups who believe that to have the image of God is to be an equal to God, when in the Hebrew it says we were made to the “image and likeness of God,” the language is using a parallelism that speaks of two synonymous terms, not of two different things, but to say “likeness” helps us understand the term a little bit because it is *similarity*, not equality. Therefore, being or having the image of God in human beings does not make us equal to God. We have similarities like I mentioned, like we are intelligent, rational. We are personal and relational beings, moral beings, and we have free will. In the end, we have these characteristics, but we are neither gods nor are we divine. We are not equal to God, so one thing is that God has given us the privilege of having his image and likeness, and another is making us equal to God. Therefore, if we are similar but also different, there are many things that I have found in theology that are fascinating precisely because they are “yes” and “no” at the same time. We cannot give a categorical answer that *this* is the image of God and it is not *this*, but rather both things are true.

Question 4:

What does being made in the image of God teach us about our need for relationships, both with others and with God?

Dr. Mark Gignilliat

When you read the text itself in Genesis it says that he made them in his image, “male and female created he them.” So, there’s something about the male and female relationship itself, or being made as a humans in need of another, a complementing other, for the fullness of our own humanity, that we’ve been made for relationship with other, that whatever the “image of God” theology is, it certainly is not less than an understanding that we’ve been made for relationship with others, as that reflects the very character of God's own triune being.

Dr. Riad Kassis, translation

According to the Bible, God created man in the Garden of Eden. He created him in his image. God put in him some of his characteristics. He made man to love, think, and to desire to have fellowship with other human beings. All these characteristics show us that some of God’s characteristics are in us. And he calls us to improve and grow these in us so we can be human. The more we show God’s image in us through our behaviors and lives, the closer we become to him and in relationship with him. The more our relationship with him improves, the more we love him genuinely, the more these blessed characteristics show in our lives and in our behaviors.

Dr. John Hammett

In Genesis 1:5, 9 all those were affirmations that we’re made in God’s image. And all humans are made in God’s image, and only humans are created in God's image... So, I think the image is primarily centered on our capacity for relationship with God. I

think that's a distinctive only true of human beings, true of all us human beings, male and female, young and old... God can establish a relationship with them. I think that image is centered primarily in our spirit, so on that level that God establishes relationship with us and that was damaged at the Fall; it's being renewed in the Christian life... And most of all, Christ is the perfect image of God, that we're in a perfect relationship with God.

Question 5:

Why is the doctrine of the image of God often associated with human beings' rational abilities?

Dr. David VanDrunen

The doctrine of the image of God has been often associated with the rational capabilities of human beings. I think there are a couple of main reasons why that's been the case. One is a kind of common sense reason, and that's that as we look at the opening of Genesis and see man described as being the image bearer of God, it's obvious that Scripture is there in some way setting us apart from the other creatures; there's something unique about us as we were created. And as we look at ourselves, there's a lot of things we share in common with the other creatures, but one thing that certainly seems to distinguish us is the fact that we have rational capabilities. And I think it was very natural to read a text like that and to see that, to think that rational capabilities must be a very important part of the image of God. I think there's also a more, you might say, a more *exegetical* reason for that. If you go to the New Testament and consider a text like Colossians 3:10, which speaks about our being renewed in the image of God, it refers to that in terms of being renewed in knowledge. And so, that seems to indicate that the image of God has something to do with our knowledge, with our rational capabilities. Now, I would also add that I think it's probably best to understand the image of God as presupposing and involving rational capabilities, but I think we want to avoid the idea that that exhausts what the image of God is. Certainly we could not be the image of God if we were not rational. We couldn't fulfill the things that Scripture says about the image if we were not rational creatures. But I think it's really important as we consider a text like Genesis 1 that we understand that the image of God does not just lie in one particular capability or ability that we have as human beings but is ultimately a kind of a moral vocation. It's a call to be rulers under God, to exercise dominion in this world. And rationality is important for that, but it certainly doesn't exhaust everything that the image of God involves.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

When we talk about the image of God we almost always, as a default, come back to rational capabilities as an explanation of what the image of God is. And I think that there's good reason to start there. So, for example, we think about nature and we think about God and we think about human beings, and we could recognize things like this: We would say that, you know, as per John 1, God is the *Logos*, the ultimate

source of thought, rationality, intelligence, personality, all of those types of things... So, you find in God this rationality. You find in this world, rational structure, order, organization, things like that, and then you find in human beings, *unlike* the other animals, rational capabilities... It's almost like you have this little tripodal notion of rationality. It starts in the Divine Being, comes into the created world, and also is reflected in image bearers like us. And so, for those reasons I think that we're right to say that whatever this thing called "the image of God" is, it at least starts with and includes these rational capabilities that we have.

Dr. Ken Keathley

When we think about the image of God in man, often it's associated with the rational components of the human person, and it's easy to see why because that seems to be that which is distinct and different from the rest of creation. So, that distinguishes humanity from other created beings. And also, understanding God as spirit and immaterial mind, above all else, what we see is that God is rational. So, that seems to be one way, one place that we would locate the image of God. Interesting thing, this text doesn't explicitly say that, and so this is an inference rather than something that's derived from the text... So, generally, the church has located the image of God in the spiritual or immaterial part, and during the Enlightenment there was a great emphasis upon the *rational* part of the human person. So, that's why we generally associate the image of God with the rational components.

Question 6:

How is the fact that we are made in God's image connected to our need to submit to God's reign?

Dr. Mark Saucy

The doctrine of the image of God and our need to submit to the reign of God are intimately connected because of the language that we see in Genesis 1:28, which directly comes from the language of the image, where God gives a commission to both Adam and Eve, and that is to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth, rule and subdue it... And that tells us something about the one who has made his image. He is a king. And Psalm 95 says such a thing in its commentary of the creation act, that God is the King. And so he demonstrates that by making an image that is a king, and this whole kingdom story starts here, and I would say that the kingdom story is one that consumes all of Scripture and takes us all the way to the book of Revelation. Revelation 22:5 says that that's going to be the occupation of human beings forever, is to reign with him forever. And so, it's a kingdom story started by a king and commissioned to us. So, we're supposed to be his stewards, and we are supposed to be his vice-regents who actually submit to him and procure and carry out his will as the King.

Prof. Mumo Kisau

The image of God in us is we are created in the image of God. What that means is that then we can relate with God, we can understand God, and, therefore, God is able to have his reign upon us because we are created in his image, because he decided to make man and woman in his image.

Dr. Alan Hultberg

In Genesis 1, man is created in the image of God, and he's created for a purpose. God says, "Fill the earth and subdue it, rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, everything that creeps on the ground." And so, God is the Creator, he's the King of creation. His kingdom extends over the entire universe — Psalm 47, for instance. And mankind is created as a vice-regent, as someone to rule under the authority of God, but to rule creation as God's image. When we talk about the image of God, we're not just talking about that man looks like God or has features that are similar to God, although that's true, but also that man represents God in creation. When a king in the ancient Near East conquered a territory, he would set up statues of himself that indicated his sovereignty over that territory. And so, when man is placed in creation as God's image, mankind is to represent the sovereignty of God in creation and to rule creation under the authority of God. The problem was, we chose to rule under our own authority and that threw creation into chaos.

Dr. Douglas Moo

As people, human beings created in the image of God, we have a responsibility to oversee the created world on behalf of God, but it's that vertical idea, "on behalf of God," that we have to emphasize as well. We are doing this on *behalf* of him. We are not doing it on our own, we are not doing it for our own selfish ends, we are doing it to bring glory to God and to please him in terms of the way we steward the world he has given us. So, implied in the image of God is that ultimate accountability to God and a recognition that it is *he* who rules both us and the world he has made.

Question 7:

What is the significance of the biblical teaching that Jesus is the perfect image of God?

Rev. Bill Burns

The New Testament describes Jesus as being "the image of the invisible God," the exact representation of his likeness. Jesus — both as the Son of God in the divine sense and as a human being — Jesus perfectly lives out what it means to be the Son of God, what it means to be the image of God, to represent and show God, that God is the Father, and to carry out the Father's work. And the beauty of our redemption is that, in Christ, we are being restored in that image, "in Christ," as Colossians and Ephesians tell us that we are being restored in righteousness and holiness and full knowledge of who God is and who God has created us to be. And so, one of the great beauties of redemption is that, that wonderful status and privilege that humanity was

created for, and is forfeited by the Fall, is fully restored in the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ, the perfect Image of God.

Dr. Riad Kassis, translation

Moses wanted to see God, and God answered him that no one can see God and live. Man can't see God in his glory and power with his natural eyes. But because God loves us so much, he sent his Son, so that through him we can see the Father. Jesus was without sin, incarnate love, forgiveness in the flesh, full of mercy, gentleness, and care. Jesus Christ reflected the image of the Father through himself. John reported that Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."

Dr. Daniel O. Aleshire

The most important thing to know about God is that you can't know God. God's mystery, God's beyond us. And so, we're always looking for ways to understand God, and God is always looking for ways to make God's self understandable to us. And Christian theologians have thought that there are ways in which God has revealed God's self in terms of nature, in terms of the created order, that God has revealed part of God's self in Scripture, in revelation. But God's best piece of work in trying to explain to us who God is is in the character of Jesus Christ. Here, all that God is gets brought together with all that we are as human beings, and for the first time we get to see the true heart of God, the true longing of God, the most central characteristics of God as they would be lived out if they were in human form among us, which we find in Jesus Christ.

Question 8:

What does the doctrine of the image of God teach us about the dignity of human beings?

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

The great thing about being created in the image of God means that we, as human beings, have a unique role in creation. It is that we have a unique dignity... You can see it in Genesis; there's almost a pause, a zooming in on the day when God creates man. For the first time in creation, he has this divine meeting when he says, "Let us make man in our image." And there's a significance of that, and you see it later in Genesis where actually killing a human being is prohibited, and that killing is linked to one thing: because man was made in the image of God. Therefore, what gives human beings dignity is not necessarily your wealth or your education, but rather the fact that God created you in his image. And it also interesting, if you link it with the incarnation, that God chose to come into this world in a form of a man, in a form of a human being, meaning again that humans have this intrinsic dignity, and that value of it comes from God himself.

Rev. Xiaojun Fang, translation

Since human beings are [part of] God's creation, is their worth determined by the things of the world, such as wealth, beauty, knowledge, or social standing? We must go back to the Bible to see what it has revealed to us about man's worth. [As it turns out,] man's dignity is not directly from these things, but from his Creator.

[Furthermore,] people were given a mission from God at their creation to live in obedience to their Creator. If anyone could live this out — that is, live out true righteousness, integrity, love, and humility — then that person has expressed his dignity and worth to the utmost.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Because we're created in the image of God, we all have great dignity, wonderful dignity, holy dignity. But that has ramification for the way we live. I think that means that anybody who considers themselves a Christian needs to be out there in the world treating people with dignity and with love; every Christian is loved and can be known by God and can know and love God. Having said that, we need to make sure that the whole world feels that, and that's part of what evangelism becomes. We ought to be out in front of a place like an abortion clinic and saying these babies in the womb right now, made in the image of God, have dignity and worth. We ought to be at the prisons and we ought to be able to say to a prisoner, no matter what they have done, you have been made in the image of God. That image is marred but we can regain that by putting our trust in the Savior... People do have dignity because of God. We need to treat them as such.

Question 9:**How did humanity's fall into sin affect our moral ability?****Dr. David W. Jones**

I think describing man's sinful estate, it is more than just that we're a little bit off. I would say that man's fall, man's sin, the curse upon human beings that God meted out, it really was a complete, total fall. We fell into total depravity. As it says in Genesis 6 and then again in Genesis 8: "Every thought of man's heart was only evil continually" — our entire constitution being corrupted. Now, of course that doesn't mean in a practical way that every person is as evil as they could possibly be. There's all kinds of things that restrain us from evil. There is that latent work of God's law upon all men, even lost men, in society. There's the fear of getting caught. There is the lack of opportunity. And so, various things curb that fallenness, that complete corruption. And even beyond that, I mean, somebody may say, "Well, you know, I'm a nice person. I don't rob banks. I mean, I'm not really that bad." I personally like to use the illustration of my older brother. I often joke and say that God gave me an older brother to illustrate sin, and what I mean by that is that God gave me an older brother who is the first one to go before me to have a heart that would lead him astray. And thus, with that example, so I kind of made an effort, as a lost person, as a lost boy, to be the good son, and so I was the one who got good grades in school, I

was the one who didn't get involved in use of all sorts of illegal drugs and all kinds of evil in our context. But looking back on that, I can say that there wasn't a single thing I did as a lost boy that was actually meritorious. It was all completely evil; it was all complete idolatry; it was all total corruption, because the reason why I was a good boy was not because I had a heart that actually wanted to be good. It was because I liked hearing, you know, "Gee, you're not you're brother. What a good boy you are. How smart you must be; you get good grades in school." And so it was all idolatry; it was all corruption; it was all evil. And so, we have to be careful when we look at the question of how corrupt are we, how bad did sin actually make us, and we need to be careful and not measure it in a utilitarian practical way, what we see, because the heart was ultimately what was corrupted. And so, I think that sin's effect upon us is one of complete and total corruption.

Dr. Ken Keathley

Adam and Eve's fall into sin had a profound effect on our moral ability, and what it has done to humanity, it has rendered us incapable of doing that which is pleasing to God, and even more so, I would say that it has rendered us incapable in our natural state to even desire to do so. So, what we have now, as part of the human condition, is we are capable of that which is relatively good, but not good in the sense of being able to satisfy the demands of a holy God. This is one of the things that people misunderstand about the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity means that the whole person is affected and even in our best state we fall short. It does not mean that we're always as bad as we absolutely can be. And I think sometimes Christians struggle with this; they say, okay, the Bible teaches that everybody's sinners, and yet my neighbor, who is not a Christian, he loves his wife and is faithful to her, he feeds his kids and loves them, and he pays his taxes, loves his country and is a good citizen, so how can I say he's totally depraved? Well, yes, he is in the sense that no matter how loving and good he is, it always falls short of the demands of a perfect and infinitely righteous and holy God. And this is true of all of us. Even in our best state, I still fall short, and everything that I am doing good, it is due to the grace of God and the work of Christ in my life.

Dr. Riad Kassis, translation

From the time of humanity's fall into sin, from the time Adam and Eve sinned, we all have been following them in sin. This has affected the way we think and the way we live our lives... The values changed as a result of sin. That's why we need God to regenerate our thinking and realign our consciousness, so that we can differentiate between what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is not true, what is according to God's law and what is against his laws... So, due to the fall into sin, whether Adam and Eve in the past or us today, we have all lost the ability to judge correctly.

Question 10:

Why has God forbidden us to worship him through images like other ancient Near-Eastern religions used?

Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer

So, God doesn't want us to worship images, I think for a variety of reasons. I think the most important one is that God is Creator, so any aspect of creation cannot adequately represent God... So, part of that commandment in the Ten Commandments is rooted in the fact that it would be wholly inappropriate to worship the *Creator* by means of *creation*. So, our eyes should be constantly focused on the Creator, not the creation. I think the other thing is — and I don't know that this is a motivating factor, but it's something to note — is that in other ancient Near Eastern cultures the image of the god was seen or meant to contain the essence or the divine essence of the deity. So, you could truly worship an image and there, by extension, worship the god. But God is wholly apart from creation in the Judeo-Christian view. He's not a piece of creation or inside of creation. Not to say that he's a deist — he's involved in creation — but he's not a piece of creation as you might see in Hinduism or New Age or even some aspects of Gnosticism.

Dr. Ramesh Richard

Why has God prohibited us from worshiping him through images? It is a very profound question because the human heart would like to somehow capture God and give him some concretion so that we can picture him; we can have him feel what we feel; we can address him in a way that is an equal. Images allow that kind of a reflection, especially if they are idolatrous, made of metal or wood or stone. The Old Testament is rather harsh against all idolatry, whether it is made up of materials or conceptual, simply because God cannot be captured. God cannot be localized. He is the transcendent one. And so images, since they are inanimate, since they cannot in any way portray a person, is highly forbidden by God... We do not want to forget the God who is transcendent. And some religions need to know that God is great, and yet the religions who know that God is great should not forget that God can become close. So, at different times when we think we can capture God in an image, we've got to keep God as great, and that's why the monotheistic religions are insistent that you cannot capture God in an image. But when we feel that God is so distant and far, we've got to hold that God is close, that while he cannot be captured in an image, he chose to come in a person... I know that all of us take a bunch of pictures with our cameras and phones now. The photos are not the person, so we do not want to ever use an image as the person, and yet they bring a million memories. There are layers of meaning in how we see these photos as capturing the reality. There's two sides to the question then. Do we worship images? We cannot because God cannot be captured. But the God who cannot be captured decides to be victimized as incarnate so he can prove to us that the God who cannot be captured can also be the God who can be our companion.

Question 11:**How should the fact that all human beings are created in God's image impact our treatment of those who are different from us?****Rev. Xiaojun Fang, translation**

In life we will meet people who have different personalities, cultures, or backgrounds. How are we to interact with them? First, we are to know that the differences exist because of God's sovereignty. He has created people, [placed them in] different cultures and given them different personalities and backgrounds. Second, we have something in common with everyone, [even] those who are different from us. They are also God's creation and bear God's image, so we are to respect them out of a reverence for God's sovereignty and God's image. Because of sin, we will feel uncomfortable over our differences, so we must learn to be tolerant of them.

Dr. Craig Ott

Anybody who likes to travel, anybody who enjoys international food, learning foreign languages, they celebrate and enjoy human diversity. We see that in different cultures and different languages and ethnicities, and so on, and that's a beautiful thing. And at the same time we know that that human diversity is the root of very much human suffering: war, racial prejudice, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and so on and so forth. And so, it is an important question for us as Christians how we view this nature of human diversity. And again, we come back to the doctrine, first of all, of creation, that all humans are created in the image of God, and that gives all humans inherent worth. All humans reflect the person of God in various ways. But the doctrine of the Fall also tells us that that image of God has been marred and that even though it's been marred, we still bear that image. The doctrine of redemption in Colossians tells us that that image is being renewed through Christ. And so, the image of God in humanity is marred and yet can be renewed through the redemptive work of Christ. Now, how do we relate, then, or understand this human diversity? Well, the book of Genesis tells that not only are we uniquely created, but part of human diversity was the result of the tower of Babel and the scattering of peoples and the confusion of their languages. And yet, even that, God will use in the end to his greater glory. When we see the vision of the book of Revelation, we see people from every nation, tribe and tongue worshiping God. And we have the gospel being preached in Acts 2, sort of reversing the curse of Babel with the gospel being preached in these various languages. And so, I believe that God even takes this human diversity, which can be a source of conflict, and turn it into a source of his glory by renewing that image in us, which gives us a unity in the new creation in Christ, which transcends all these other differences. And that's where we have to go when we talk about navigating human diversity, is to focus on the redemptive work that Christ can do, to realize that we're all sinners; every culture is fallen. We look at others, and we will naturally tend to think, well, our way's better than the other way, and realizing that even in the family of God there's much diversity. Even Paul said there's issues that Christians will disagree on, and that's okay, and we should respect one another's conscience. And yet, we also anticipate that day when human unity will find its ultimate fulfillment in

Christ, and we want to celebrate the unity that we can have in Christ as brothers and sisters through him. But even those who've not joined the community of the redeemed, they are still bearers of that image, and we must respect and honor that with dignity and not with condescension, knowing that they are bearers of the image of God.

Dr. Kenneth V. Botton

Treating people that are different from us as, at least, as a natural individual, just as a human being... We like our own; that's just the truth of it. We like people who talk like us. We distrust people who either look differently or speak a different language or have different customs. It's not necessarily a wicked or an evil thing, it's just that we have our comfort zone, and the comfort zone is with people who, in fact, think like us... But, in fact, every human being, from an Aborigine in the Western Australia to the Wall Street executive in Manhattan, all created in the image of God, all God's image. And I think there's a lesson there in terms of how we treat these people, and I think this is where we need to back up and, again, get a God's eye view of what is happening... I mean, for goodness sake, it couldn't get any more basic than this: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." And we're not talking about loving the world's system — that's from 1 John. We're talking about loving the world as in the people whom God made, and we are to love them as God loves them. And we love them by wanting God's best for them. And sometimes God's best for them, sometimes we do need to feed them, and sometimes we do need to make sure that they're warm, and sometimes we need to do it just because they're made in the image of God, and that's exactly what we ought to do... And sometimes we need to be good just simply because doing good is the right thing, and God loves them. And knowing also, according to the book of Romans, it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance.

Dr. Philip Ryken

One of the first things that we learn about human beings in the Bible is that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. And that's certainly true of Adam and Eve as our first parents, but this is true of every human being who has ever been made, and this has huge implications for how we treat one another. We notice lots of differences between people; there are physical attributes that are quite different, people that come from different ethnic backgrounds and have different skin color. People have very different abilities, and in fact, some people are really hindered in life by very limited mental capacities, or they may have physical disabilities that cause real challenges for them in life. And left to ourselves we would, I think, often be tempted to look down on somebody else as being something less than we are because they are of a different racial background, or they don't have an ability that we have, and we like to try to feel good about ourselves, and one of the ways that we do that is by looking down on other people. And the doctrine of the image of God in people is a constant correction for us because it says that every person has this very high status and dignity and this gift from God, that each of us is made in his very image. And that tells us that we need to treat every person with absolute respect and with care and compassion.

Dr. Daniel Treier

Biblical texts concerning the image of God have important implications for how we treat each other. The first implication is sort of a negative one, that we should not commit any violence against those who are God's image bearers. Genesis 9 establishes the prohibition of physical violence. James 3 is an example establishing the prohibition of verbal violence against those who are God's image bearers. It's inconsistent for us to be praising God and at the same time cursing or doing violence against those who bear the divine image. But we can say more positively, secondly, that the image of God calls upon us to love those who bear the divine image. Already there is difference in the first "image of God" text in Genesis 1: "male and female he created them." And in many of the New Testament passages that are connected to image bearing, we have some kind of focus on Jesus Christ, both on the reconciliation that he accomplished for us with God and the reconciliation, then, that he accomplishes in us with each other, ways that we live in conformity to Christ by loving, not only God, but our neighbor. So, when we think about cultural difference, we realize that it's both a way in which we can image God in all of our diversity. Part of the reason for the prohibition of the golden calf is that it was choosing a merely human or creaturely way to image God in place of the way that God has chosen to reveal himself, which is partly through human beings as his image bearers. So, our cultural differences are not to be occasions for our idolatries to replace the revelation of who God is, but instead an opportunity for us by loving each other and embracing legitimate cultural difference to bear witness to the fullness of who the triune God is.

Question 12:**What responsibilities to creation does God give human beings in Genesis chapters 1 & 2?****Dr. Tim Foster**

We see in chapter 1 some of the key responsibilities that humanity are given as God's image bearers. They are to fill the earth, to subdue the earth, and to rule the earth. That is, they are like God's co-creators, continuing his creating work, filling, subduing, bringing order to the creation, and ruling, exercising the authority that God has given them over the created order. Well, what's really interesting is the second creation account in Genesis 2 focuses down and unpacks that for us. So, you see in Genesis 2:15:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15).

So, even in this paradox, even before the Fall, man had a job to do, and that was to work. He was to take care of the Garden, like I said before, continuing God's creating work. But implicit in all of this is the key thing that humans were created to do, and that is to live in obedience to God, to recognize that he is God and they are not. And

that obedience is to be marked in Genesis 2, of course, by enjoying the Garden, doing the work, but not eating the fruit of the tree.

Dr. Mike Fabarez

In Genesis 1 and 2 we certainly see God giving a commission to mankind to oversee — the word to “exercise dominion” — over creation. And while that can be taken way out of context ... we have to realize the sense is to care for and cultivate. Creation care can be taken too far, there’s no doubt about that, but we’re clearly given a responsibility in the dominion of this world, as difficult as it is after the Fall, to care for it, to make it usable, to be able to show that we, creatively, in the image of God, can do things that are useful, create useful things with our planet ... in a way that is reasonable, without allowing our hearts, like so many non-Christians, to worship and serve the created things rather than the Creator. So, we care for the world, we exercise dominion in making things within the world useful, and so in that sense we’re all for the scientific work, of creating new things and inventing things and discovering things scientifically. These are all very important to be able to marshal the elements of this world into things that are useful for the common good of mankind.

Dr. Dana M. Harris

In Genesis 1 and 2 we see how God has made the culmination, or the apex of his creation, the creation of humanity. And if we look carefully at the context of Genesis 1 and 2, God intends for the role of humanity to be one of co-ruling with him, so human beings are depicted in royal and priestly terms. So, the fact that God spends so much time and care and energy in preparing creation and then entrusting that to humanity reveals one of the very key things that God intends for humanity to do, namely, to take good care of his creation. If we look carefully also at the very end of Genesis 1 and 2, and particularly in Genesis 2:2, it says that on the seventh day God rested. Now, sometimes we think about this in terms of physical rest as if God needed to take a nap. But actually, the better way to understand that is God rests by ceasing one activity so that another activity can take place. And the biblical account makes it very clear that God ceases his activity of creation so that humanity can continue that work, not as the creator, but as created beings... So God's original intention for humanity was to extend his godly rule over the rest of creation. Now, I think this has very clear implications for how we treat creation. On the one hand, when we interact with creation as stewards, or those who have been entrusted with management of creation... We grow in our appreciation of God's good creation. In fact, many scientists often become believers and followers of Jesus Christ as they work in their own fields and see the marvelous aspects of creation. Unfortunately, we also live in a world where many times people look at creation as simply something to be exploited. Creation is the place where we get natural resources, or we can use animals or do things simply for our own benefit. I think this is partly what Paul has in mind when he talks about, in Romans 8:19-21, that creation itself was subjected to futility and eagerly awaits the revelation of those who are following Jesus. Another very important aspect about how we treat creation now is that, in some respects, this is a preparation for how we will appreciate God in the new creation. There’s a lot of discussion about whether there’s continuity or discontinuity between the present

creation and the new creation, but I think one thing that remains the same is that the more that we learn to appreciate God as he's revealed in creation is directly proportional to how we will be able to worship God in the new creation.

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What Is Man?

LESSON
THREE

THE CURSE OF SIN



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What Is Man?

Lesson Three

The Curse of Sin

INTRODUCTION

Most of us have been to too many funerals. Even if we've only been to one or two, it's been too many. At Christian funerals, we express hope, because we know that we'll eventually be reunited with our lost friends and loved ones. But we still weep because we hate the pain, the hardship, suffering and death that sin has caused in our world. We recognize that if it weren't for sin, there wouldn't ever be any funerals. Sin has wreaked havoc on our world, in our families, and in our own lives. And it ultimately will kill us. How did we come to this? Why does sin have so much power and presence in our lives?

This is the third lesson in our series *What Is Man?*, and we've entitled it, "The Curse of Sin." In this lesson, we'll examine what the Bible says about human sin, and especially its negative effects on humanity.

There are many types and degrees of sin. But at the heart of them all is a spirit of rebellion against God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism, originally published in 1647, expresses an ecumenical Protestant view of sin in its question and answer number 14. In response to the question "What is sin?" the catechism answers:

Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

As we'll see throughout this lesson, disdain and disregard for God's law were central to humanity's first sin, and they continue to characterize our cursed condition.

Our lesson on the curse of sin will divide into three parts. First, we'll explore the origin of humanity's sin. Second, we'll describe sin's essential character. And third, we'll consider sin's consequences. Let's begin with the origin of human sin.

ORIGIN

The existence of human sin is undeniable. People commit all sorts of atrocities against God, each other, other creatures, the world itself, and even against themselves. But where did sin come from? What is the ultimate source of human sin? And how did sin come to infect humanity?

We'll explore the origin of human sin from three perspectives. First, we'll review the origin of sin in the human race. Second, we'll focus on the origin of sin in individuals. And third, we'll consider the authorship or ultimate blame for human sin. Let's look first at the origin of sin in the human race.

HUMAN RACE

Humanity fell into sin early in our existence. In fact, it was the very first two human beings — Adam and Eve — that brought sin to the human race. As we saw in a prior lesson, Adam and Eve were created sinless. They had no predisposition to sin, and no reason to sin. God had been very benevolent toward them. They had every reason to trust him, every reason to be satisfied with the provision he had made for them, and every reason to want to continue in his covenant blessings and avoid his covenant curses.

And to continue in those covenant blessings and avoid the covenant curses, they needed to remain loyal to the terms of God’s covenant. Genesis 1, 2 lists a number of things that covenant loyalty entailed. This included Adam and Eve’s obligation to fill the earth with human beings, and to cultivate it to make it fit for God’s presence. They were also to rule over the other creatures God had created. And they were to work and take care of the Garden of Eden. In addition, they were given an explicit prohibition: They were forbidden to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

These covenant obligations indicated the types of things that pleased God, and the types of things that displeased him. Those things that pleased him would be rewarded with God’s covenant blessings. And those things that displeased him would be punished through God’s covenant curses.

Sadly, in Genesis 3:1-7, the serpent tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and she did. Then she gave some of it to Adam, and he ate it too. Immediately, they realized they were naked and felt shame. Genesis doesn’t claim that the tree had any power to make human beings sinful. Instead, it was Adam and Eve’s disloyalty that led to their sense of guilt and shame.

Then, in Genesis 3:8-24, God confronted Adam and Eve, and cursed them because of their disloyalty. Theologians often label this entire collection of events — from the serpent’s temptation through God’s judgment — “the Fall.” The name “the Fall” reflects the idea that Adam and Eve’s sin caused humanity to fall out of God’s favor and blessings. For example, in Genesis 3:16, God said to Eve:

I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you (Genesis 3:16).

God’s curse didn’t end Eve’s obligation to multiply images of God on the earth. But it did ensure that fulfilling the obligation would be painful for her. It also resulted in strife in her marital relationship to Adam. And in Genesis 3:17-19, God placed a corresponding curse on Adam:

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it

you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return (Genesis 3:17-19).

God didn't end Adam's obligation to subdue and cultivate the earth. He simply made it painful and harder. Even worse, Adam and Eve would both experience death because of their sin.

As a result of the Fall, God judged men and women and, indeed, the whole of creation. So, for example, work, which was something that Adam and Eve were engaged in prior to the Fall, became toil, and hence, human beings have a love-hate relationship with work. The relationship between the man and the woman, again, was corrupted and perverted. Childbirth is — again, another gift of God for the re-creation of more images of God — became painful, and basically, the overall result was that the good things that God gave for Adam and Eve to enjoy continued to be enjoyed, but actually, then, were also twisted and perverted in some sense, and weren't enjoyed in all their fullness.

— Dr. Simon Vibert

We don't know what would have happened if Adam and Eve hadn't sinned. Some believe that human beings would have lived perpetually in the Garden as long as they didn't sin. Others believe that Adam and Eve were on probation; and that if they had passed their probation, they would have lived forever. But the reality is that they *did* sin, and that their sin was the origin of sin in the human race.

Having looked at the origin of sin in the human race, let's turn to the way sin enters individuals.

INDIVIDUALS

If Adam and Eve's sin hadn't affected anyone else, then each individual human being would face a similar choice to the one Adam and Eve faced. Each person would have to decide for himself or herself whether to remain sinless or to fall into sin. But Scripture teaches that the curse on Adam and Eve applies to *all* their natural descendants — meaning everyone except Jesus. Listen to what Paul wrote about Adam's sin in Romans 5:12-19:

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned ... [T]he result of one trespass was condemnation for all men ... [T]hrough the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners (Romans 5:12-19).

Adam's one act of disobedience condemned all humanity because Adam was the covenant head of the human race. He represented not only himself, but also his wife, and every other human being that would descend from them through natural human generation. His sin was counted as our sin. And his guilt became our guilt. And because we share in that guilt, we also share in God's curse against that guilt, including death and corruption. That's why Paul could say that Adam's sin resulted in human death, and that it turned all human beings into sinners. Through Adam, sin has corrupted us all, so that we're born into this world already guilty of Adam's sin, enslaved to sin, and sentenced to death. Or as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 15:22:

In Adam all die (1 Corinthians 15:22).

God holds all humanity accountable for Adam's sin because of the doctrine of federal headship. Adam was, and is, our federal head. Now, a way to understand this is to think about a nation or a kingdom. There are two kingdoms, and each of the kingdoms has a king. If you're a citizen of kingdom A and the king of kingdom A declares war against kingdom B, because he's your federal head, you too are at war with kingdom B. It operates the same way theologically. Adam is our federal head; we are all in Adam when he is created. He is our federal representative, so when he falls, we fall in him. Now, if we have a problem with that, we're in trouble, because salvation works the same way. Christ becomes our federal head so that, just as in Adam, Paul says in Romans 5, "All sinned," in Christ, we're all made alive. So, Christ as our federal head keeps the whole law, succeeds where the first Adam failed and wins victory over death, hell and the grave. He is perfectly righteous so that he can impute that righteousness to us, and then in his passive obedience takes upon himself the death that we owe because of our federal head, Adam, so that in his passive and active obedience our sinfulness is imputed to him and his righteousness is imputed to us. This is the *other side* of federal headship. So, you don't really appreciate the federal headship of Adam until you appreciate the federal headship of Christ.

— Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr.

It might sound odd to think of it this way, but it was actually gracious for God to allow humanity to be judged in Adam. Adam had a much greater ability to avoid sin than we do. And he faced much less temptation. He wasn't born into a world where sin ran rampant. He wasn't subjected to sinful influences from hosts of other people. Further, he actually walked and talked with God in the Garden. Without question, his knowledge and experience of God surpassed ours. He also possessed great personal righteousness, being created completely without sin. No one but Christ has ever had a personal ability to resist sin that was greater than Adam's. If we were to face the same temptation Adam faced, we

would fail even more miserably. So, to be represented by him was actually to be given a great advantage.

It's easy to see that God applied sin's guilt to us directly because we were represented by Adam. But theologians are somewhat divided when it comes to the process by which sin corrupts and indwells individuals. Some believe that sin is directly applied to us by God as the proper judicial punishment for the guilt we share in Adam. Others believe that sin is inherited from our parents. They believe it's replicated in us in the same way our bodies are formed after the pattern of our parents. In any case, sin corrupts *every* human being from the moment of our conception. Psalm 58:3 says that the wicked are sinful from the womb. And in Psalm 51:5, David lamented his adultery with Bathsheba by admitting that he had been sinful from the time his mother conceived him. So, even children who die in the womb need to be saved by Jesus. As Jesus said in John 14:6:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

The fact that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus indicates that everyone, without exception, needs forgiveness and cleansing from sin. Because of our sin, we all come into the world in a state of spiritual death, just as Paul taught in Ephesians 2:1-3. And we all struggle with indwelling sin and a sinful, corrupt nature, as described in Romans 7:14-25. Every one of these problems originates in Adam's first sin in the Garden of Eden. That transgression was not only the origin of sin in the human race, but also the origin of sin in every individual human being.

Now that we've considered the origin of sin in the human race and individuals, let's turn our attention to the authorship of humanity's sin.

AUTHORSHIP

When we speak of the authorship of human sin, we have in mind the person that's ultimately to blame. For the sake of illustration, consider what happens when someone plays a game like billiards. A player moves a cue stick, which strikes the cue ball, which strikes another ball, causing it to move. We can describe the movement of the various parts from the perspective of any part. For instance, we can say that the cue stick caused the cue ball to move, and that the cue ball caused the second ball to move. But no one would say that the cue ball, or even the cue stick, was the origin of all this motion. Obviously, it was the player that started the whole thing, first by deciding to move the cue stick, and then by actually moving it.

And something similar is true when people sin. Of course, human sin is more complex, because each person has a will and can originate or author new aspects of events. But somewhere, there's still an ultimate source for the events.

This idea of authorship is important because many opponents of Christianity have accused God of "authoring" humanity's fall into sin. That is, they've tried to blame God for humanity's sin. They've generally had one of two purposes in mind. On the one hand,

some have argued that if God is sinful, he's not worthy to be God, and certainly not worthy to be worshiped. On the other hand, some have said that if God is the ultimate source of sin, then humanity isn't responsible for sin, so it would be unjust to punish us. But what does Scripture say?

You might recall that after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God judged the serpent, and Adam and Eve. And in the course of that judgment, Adam and Eve both tried to shift the blame to someone else. Adam was the first one to try to shift the blame. In Genesis 3:12, Adam said:

The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it (Genesis 3:12).

Adam didn't deny eating the fruit, but he did attempt to avoid being held responsible. First, he blamed his wife, who had given him the fruit to eat. And second, he implicitly blamed God, since God had created her. In Genesis 3:13, Eve shifted the blame to the serpent, saying:

The serpent deceived me, and I ate (Genesis 3:13).

Both Adam and Eve tried to argue that the ultimate blame, or the "authorship" of their sin, should be put on someone else. And it appears that they did this to try to get out of being punished. But of course, God didn't agree with their reasoning. He didn't deny that they had been influenced by others. But he did deny that these outside influences provided sufficient reasons not to punish them. So, in the verses that follow, God punished the serpent for deceiving the woman. He punished Eve for being deceived into mistrusting God, for eating the fruit, and for misleading her husband. And he punished Adam for being misled by Eve, and for eating the fruit. As far as God was concerned, Adam and Eve were guilty at the very least because they chose to disobey his command.

In this account, we might say that the ultimate "author" of sin was the serpent, because it was the first character to come up with the idea to sin, and the first one to try to cause humanity to sin. But Adam and Eve also contributed free choices to this event, and in this sense, authored human sin.

But that still leaves us some very common questions, like: Why did the serpent sin? Who was the first thinking creature to sin? Why did that creature sin? And, is God ultimately responsible for the sins of his creatures? Scripture doesn't answer all of these questions fully. But it does provide us with enough information to answer the most important aspects.

First and foremost, Scripture emphatically insists that God isn't culpable or guilty of sin, or of compelling anyone to sin. In fact, God himself is the perfect standard of goodness. So, by definition, he can't be guilty of anything. Listen to what John wrote in 1 John 1:5:

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

In this letter, John repeatedly used "light" to refer to moral purity; and "darkness" to refer to sin and its effects. And the point is clear: God is completely free from sin.

God himself is the ultimate standard of good and evil. There is no ultimate moral standard outside him that can judge him. Besides this, Scripture tells us that God hates sin in passages like Deuteronomy 25:16, Psalm 5:4, and Zechariah 8:17. And James 1:13 says he can't be tempted by sin.

But since God is free from sin, and God hates sin, and God is certainly powerful enough to prevent sin, how did sin ever happen? How could a sinless, all-powerful Creator design a creation that would lead to sin? Most theologians have answered this question in terms of the freedom, or liberty, of the will of God's creatures.

If anyone's thought about theology, the Bible, the Christian faith for any length of time, sooner or later the question is going to come up in their mind, "Well, why isn't God the author of sin?" And I think we do have to acknowledge and, in fact, affirm that everything that's going on is part of a grand plan. And so, God is the one from eternity past who planned all that we see, and also he has a grand purpose. So, from eternity past, the plan to eternity future is going to fulfill a glorious purpose... But we do not say that God is the author of sin because God is not the efficient cause of sin, and by that I mean he's not the "doer of the deed." We make much of the concept of permission, that God has created morally responsible beings and he has given them the ability to choose right and wrong. And when the good is accomplished, this is by God's grace, and we are quick to say that God has ordained the good. When evil happens, we say that this is within the permissive will of God, that God has *allowed* this. This is true all the way from the Garden up until the day that Satan bows at Jesus' feet and proclaims him Lord.

— Dr. Ken Keathley

Different theological traditions understand free will in different ways. But Evangelicals tend to agree to the following order of events and causes. First, God created the angels and endowed them with enough liberty of will that they were able to choose between sinning and avoiding sin. When angels chose to sin, they fell out of favor with God and came to be known as demons. Jude 6 refers to this when it says:

The angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these [God] has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day (Jude 6).

Second Peter 2:4 uses similar language to describe these fallen angels.

After the fall of the angels, God created humanity and placed them in the Garden of Eden. Like the angels, human beings were created with sufficient liberty of will both to sin and not to sin.

Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, who lived from A.D. 354 to 430, described this as the state of *posse non peccare*. This Latin phrase can be translated literally as, "to be able not to sin." In its theological use, however, the phrase is more commonly translated

as “the ability not to sin.” According to Augustine, Adam and Eve were empowered to avoid sin completely. But they also had the ability to sin.

After humanity was placed in the Garden of Eden, Satan, the most prominent fallen angel, took the form of a serpent. And in this form, he tricked Eve into eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Although Genesis doesn’t identify the serpent with Satan, Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 both call Satan the “ancient serpent.” And in Matthew 4:6, Satan used the same strategies to try to trick Jesus that the serpent in the Garden used to deceive Eve. In both cases, the strategy was to quote and then misapply God’s words. For reasons like these, most evangelical theologians have equated the serpent in the Garden of Eden with Satan.

In any case, Genesis 3:6 records that both Eve and then Adam ate the forbidden fruit. They knew God’s command and freely chose to disobey him. There was no compulsion from any internal or external power. Their minds and choices were their own. In this way, humanity was culpable for their sin, and God was not. Now, we may still ask why God *allowed* humanity to sin. What purpose did it serve?

One of the perennial questions Christians have, and rightly so, is, why did God allow Adam and Eve to sin? It seems inconceivable to us that an infinitely powerful God could not have, in a sense, preempted all of these catastrophic consequences, these centuries, millennia, of death and suffering and human pain when he knew what was ahead. Why did God allow this? Well, we don’t know. And it’s typical of us to stand in judgment of our Judge and to ask tough moral questions of his behavior, but I think in the end faith says, God must have been acting from a calculus rooted in his infinite wisdom and goodness. And he must have seen that even though this is not the use of human freedom and dignity that he intended, a greater good could come from this than cancelling at the outset this magnificent human experiment. And I think, perhaps, in the end, we will not see the answer to this question until we will be able to look back with gratitude and amazement at the glorious triumph over evil, the magnificent good that God will, in the end, achieve through this human experiment and in spite of the tragic rebellion of the participants. We have no clear idea yet just how great God's magnificent triumph is going to be.

— Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

God’s purposes aren’t always clear to us. And his reasons for allowing sin into the world can be somewhat mysterious. It’s true that history would have taken a very different course if God had kept us from sin. But it’s obvious that God has chosen this course for us instead. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:11:

We were ... predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11).

Nothing that happens is outside God's plan or control. So, he certainly had a reason for allowing human sin. At the very least, we can affirm that our sin gives him the opportunity to express many of his attributes that would be hidden from us if we never sinned. For instance, he sometimes expresses mercy and forbearance in response to human sin, and at other times he expresses wrath. God is both known and glorified through the expression of these attributes. So, there's a sense in which he's glorified by dealing with our sin. We can even affirm that, ultimately, sin works to the benefit of believers, making it a useful part of his plan to bless us. As we read in Romans 8:28:

In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

Everything God does is right and good. There isn't even a hint of sin in him. So, we should never imagine that human sin somehow detracts from his holiness. On the contrary, human sin provides an occasion for God to reveal his glory, to express his mercy and compassion through forgiveness, and to express his justice and wrath through judgment. And all of these things contribute to and demonstrate his absolute purity and goodness. So, when we think about the origin of sin in the human race and in human individuals, we need to remember that the blame rests squarely on human shoulders.

Now that we've explored the curse of sin in terms of the origin of human sin, let's consider sin's essential character.

CHARACTER

The easiest and surest way to identify sin in Scripture is to look for examples of things that God prohibits, condemns or curses. When we do that, we see that the Bible uses a wide variety of vocabulary to refer to sin. It regularly describes sin in terms of injustice, trespassing, negligence, missing the mark, going astray, perverseness, vanity, dishonesty, causing injury, rebellion, impiety, treachery, disloyalty, rashness, lewdness, lust — the list could go on and on, and so could our discussion of each word. So, rather than try to explore the meaning of every term Scripture uses to identify sin, we'll focus our attention on sin's general attributes.

We'll describe the character of sin in two parts. First, we'll see that sin is fundamentally lawless. And second, we'll see that it's unloving. Let's look first at the idea that sin is lawless.

LAWLESS

It's common for Christians today to think that God's law is unnecessary or even harmful to us. Usually, this is because they misunderstand Paul's teaching about the role of the law in salvation. Of course, it's true that the law can't save us. It can only condemn us. That's why in Galatians 5:4, Paul wrote:

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace (Galatians 5:4).

But that's exactly why the law is so useful in helping us identify and characterize sin. The law's power to condemn us lies in its ability to identify our sinfulness. As Paul wrote in Romans 5:20:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more (Romans 5:20).

The law increases sin in different ways. For instance, it places obligations on us that weren't required before the law. And it ignites our sinful passions by drawing attention to what it forbids. Nevertheless, the law is still *good*. It's still a true reflection of God's character, and the standard by which sin is measured. As Paul went on to write in Romans 7:12:

The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good (Romans 7:12).

People often wrongly think that all of God's law was given to hinder, to hinder man's life. In truth, it's not that way. God's law was given to mankind in order that mankind [would know how to] live ... rightly. But because humans are unable in sin, [the law] becomes something that is then wrongly understood by sinful mankind. But after a person knows God, he will know with clarity that God's law was given for that person to be able to obtain a life that is good, that is perfect in God. So with that, in truth, a believer ought to respond to God's law in a positive way, with gratitude, because God's law protects him, preserves him, guides him. And God's law, according to God's Word, is something that is perfect in itself.

— Rev. Agus G. Satyaputra, translation

The lawless character of sin is readily apparent in the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve received a single explicit prohibition from God. And they sinned by directly transgressing that law. And every sin since then has reflected that lawlessness.

Think about sin's lawlessness in terms of God's covenant relationship with humanity. We mentioned that God's covenant demonstrates his benevolence toward us, requires loyalty from us, and provides consequences for our loyalty and disloyalty. Well, the *law* is what describes the loyalty God requires from us. Everything he approves and blesses is a requirement in his covenant law — whether or not it's explicitly mandated in Scripture. And everything he condemns and curses is a prohibition in his covenant law — whether or not it's explicitly forbidden in Scripture. And therefore, everything we do is

either in obedience to God's covenant or in violation of its law. Every motive of our hearts either seeks God's glory and pleasure, or seeks our own satisfaction. Every thought we think, every action we take, every emotion we feel, is either a step toward building God's covenant kingdom or a step toward rebellion against its king. This is what led the apostle John to write in 1 John 3:2-4:

We are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:2-4).

In this passage, John contrasted law breaking with the absolute purity of being like Jesus. Those were the only two options he saw. Either we're sinless or we're lawless.

John believed that the law isn't limited to a finite number of "dos" and "don'ts" in Scripture. Rather, it summarizes God's perfect character. That character itself is the ultimate fulfillment of the law, whereas the written law in Scripture simply describes it. And therefore, anything that's contrary to God's holy nature violates his law. Listen to how James put it in James 2:10-11:

Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder" (James 2:10-11).

James's point was similar to John's: Every scriptural law comes from the same God and requires us to please God fully.

God himself is the ultimate standard for our behavior, and the law reveals that standard to us. The law isn't intended to reveal God fully. After all, God is infinite, incomprehensible — no words could ever describe him completely. Instead, the law merely summarizes his character. Correspondingly, our obligation isn't just to *do* what the law says explicitly. It's to conform ourselves to the perfect character of the God the law describes. And wherever we fall short, our sin is rightly described as lawlessness.

Having seen that sin's character is lawless, let's explore the idea that it's also unloving.

UNLOVING

When Adam and Eve first sinned against God, they demonstrated a terrible lack of love for God and for each other. And the same thing is true when we sin. Our sin is unloving toward God and toward other human beings.

Now, in order to understand what it means to be *unloving*, we should begin by explaining what it means to be *loving*. There are many different conceptions of love. Scripture speaks of love between a husband and wife, love between family members, love between friends, love for justice and ideals, and even love for food. But when it

speaks in terms of loving God and humanity, it tends to have something different in mind. This is a love of loyalty to our covenant obligations, and a love of kindness toward others for the sake of the covenant. Think of Jesus words to his disciples in John 14:15:

If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15).

Love is properly expressed as obedience only when the one we love has authority over us. Can you imagine a child saying to her parents, “If you love me, you’ll obey me”? Or can you imagine saying that to one of your friends? Of course not. Friends can’t command their friends to obey them. And children don’t have authority over their parents. But Jesus wasn’t challenging his disciples to love him as a child or a friend. He was challenging them to love him as their covenant king. John captured this same idea in 1 John 5:3, where he wrote:

This is love for God: to obey his commands (1 John 5:3).

And in Deuteronomy 6:5-6, God associated love and covenant loyalty in this way:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts (Deuteronomy 6:5-6).

In both these passages, we learn that the primary expression of the love God required is heartfelt obedience to his commandments.

Love for God, I think, motivates obedience to God because if he loves me and I love him back, and I also understand the price that he paid on my behalf, I’ll do anything for him. I have this relationship with some human beings. Not quite like God, but with my wife. I’ll do anything for her she needs for me to do because I know she loves me. I love her in return, but I understand the price that she has paid in our marriage to make me happy, to make me holy, to make me all of the man that God wants me to be. And so, recognizing that, I have tremendous motive to be all the man I need to be for her. And the truth is, I think it works precisely like that with a God-man relationship. We’ll do anything once we know about that love and about that price.

— Dr. Matt Friedeman

God didn’t want his people to obey him simply because they feared him, or simply because they wanted to be rewarded. Rather, he wanted them to obey because they truly honored him, because they were thankful for his benevolence, because they were loyal to his covenant, and because they treasured him and his law in their hearts. This is why Scripture so often speaks of God’s covenant in terms of love. For instance, listen to these words from Deuteronomy 7:9-13:

He is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands... If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the Lord your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers (Deuteronomy 7:9-13).

In this passage, both God's love for his people, and his people's love for him, are described in terms of covenant faithfulness.

This is what Jesus had in mind when he talked about the greatest commandment of the Law in Matthew 22:34-40, and Mark 12:28-31. In those passages, Jesus was having a discussion with a Pharisee who was an expert in the Law. And the Pharisee posed a question designed to test Jesus' understanding of how the commandments of the Law relate to each other. Specifically, he asked Jesus to name the greatest or most important law. And Jesus responded by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5, 6 and Leviticus 19:18. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

First, by way of reminder, notice that Jesus identified these laws as broad summaries intended to reflect the full character of God's law. Second, notice that both these laws were expressed in terms of love: love for God, and love for neighbor.

Paul made similar statements in Romans 13:9 and Galatians 5:14, where he said that the entire Law can be summed up in terms of love for neighbor. In other words, love for God and love for neighbor are more than just two halves of the Law. Instead, each of these commands summarizes the whole Law. Love for God is one summary of the whole Law, and love for neighbor is another summary of the whole Law.

Therefore, it follows that sin is fundamentally *unloving* toward both God and neighbor. At the very least, every sin is unloving toward God because it shows that he isn't the foremost commitment of our hearts. Every sin is a rejection of his character, a rebellion against his authority, and a violation of his covenant. And every sin is also unloving toward our neighbor. It despises the reflection of God's character and authority in our neighbor, who is God's image. And it fails to seek our neighbor's good through the blessings of God's covenant.

I teach my students that they can't graduate unless they pass “Theology 101,” and then I tell them Theology 101 is simply the statement: God is God and you're not. Sin says, “I'm God.” Sin marginalizes God, God's glory, God's honor, God's will, God's kingdom, and centralizes *our* glory, *our* honor, *our* will, *our* kingdom. And so, following from Theology 101, I have Theology 102: Because

God is God, you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and because you're not God, the world doesn't revolve around you. You are to love your neighbor as yourself. And so, yes, sin is *fundamentally* not loving others. It's loving yourself; it's centralizing yourself. And so, the perfect obedience to God — that is, not to sin — is to love. It's to love God and it's to love others.

— Dr. Alan Hultberg

Think about sin's unloving character in terms of humanity's fall into sin. The serpent tempted Eve by telling her that God was lying about the forbidden fruit. He said that if she ate it, not only would she not die, but she would become like God. After she had eaten it, Adam was apparently convinced of the same lie, so he also ate some.

Now, how were Adam and Eve unloving toward God and neighbor? They were unloving toward God by rebelling against his covenant law, and by trusting the serpent's lies over God's truth. Eve was unloving toward Adam by tempting him to sin, by being dissatisfied with God's image in him, and by failing to seek his good through obedience to God's law. Similarly, Adam was unloving toward Eve by failing to correct her understanding when she had been deceived, by affirming her dissatisfaction with God's image in herself and in him, and by committing a sin that had negative repercussions for her.

And something similar is true of all human sin. Just like that first sin of Adam and Eve, every human sin takes a similar view of God by rejecting his truth, by distrusting his benevolence, and by rebelling against his authority. In short, every human sin fails to demonstrate proper covenant love for God. And every human sin also fails to demonstrate proper covenant love for our neighbors. Whether we sin against them directly or indirectly, and whether we sin by our action or our inaction, our sin always harms other people. It disrespects God's image in them. It fails to seek their good. And it damages their lives with the corruption and consequences of sin.

Have you ever met Christians who believed that they could break God's law, as long as they were motivated by love? Or people that believed that if they kept God's law, it didn't matter if they loved anyone? Both of these types of people have it wrong. We love God and our neighbors only when we value them as God's covenant requires. And our actions keep God's law only when they're motivated by covenant love. That's what makes it so easy to sin. Sin doesn't care which half we ignore. Whether we're lawless or unloving, sin wins. That's why it's crucial for believers to understand the character of sin. Because when we understand it, we're better prepared to avoid it, and we're more appreciative of our salvation from it.

So far in our lesson on the curse of sin, we've explored the origin of human sin, and described sin's essential character. Now we're ready to address our third major topic: the consequences of sin.

CONSEQUENCES

In traditional systematic theology, the term “original sin” refers to the consequences of humanity’s first sin. Different theologians have explained the details of original sin in different ways. But in each case, the focus has been on:

The condition into which Adam’s natural descendants are born as a result of Adam’s fall into sin.

Adam’s disobedience negatively impacts every human being that naturally descends from him. Only Jesus avoided original sin.

Original sin, briefly, is sin that, at bottom, a person has possessed since he was born. And a person cannot evade this sin. Every person who is born must accept this because people are born from a sinful lineage. I’ll give an example: It’s not possible for a lion to give birth to a lamb, and it’s not possible for a sinful person, Adam’s offspring, to give birth to a holy person, a person who is right before God. And this is sin that already exists. Although we don’t commit it with our thoughts, don’t commit it with our speech, we don’t commit it with our deeds, it’s already there. And there is no one among us who can avoid it. That is what is called “original sin.” Like David said in Psalm 51, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

— Yohanes Praptowarso, Ph.D., translation

For our purposes in this lesson, we’ll focus on three consequences of humanity’s fall into sin: corruption, alienation and death. Let’s begin with corruption.

CORRUPTION

You’ll recall that when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, it changed them for the worse. Earlier, we mentioned that Augustine, the bishop of Hippo described humanity’s original, sinless state as *posse non peccare*, meaning that humanity had the ability not to sin. But after Adam and Eve sinned, they lost this ability, and retained only the ability to sin. Augustine described their new state as *non posse non peccare* — the inability not to sin. The corruption Adam and Eve suffered removed their capacity to please God and to merit his blessings, and left them only with the ability to sin and to merit God’s curses.

Now, as we see in Genesis 3:12, 13 Adam and Eve confessed their sin, however imperfectly. And in the verses that follow, God was lenient with them. He could have killed them outright for their sin. But he didn’t. Instead, he showed them mercy. And in Genesis 3:15, he even promised to send a redeemer to rescue them from sin and its

effects. By means of the faith and repentance that Adam and Eve expressed, God renewed their spirits and restored their ability to avoid sin.

Unfortunately, their personal restoration didn't extend to their natural descendants. The rest of the human race was doomed to be born with the inability not to sin. Jesus and Paul compared this state of moral corruption to being slaves to sin in places like John 8:31-44, and Romans 6:6-20. And we all remain in this state of corruption until God saves us, just like he saved Adam and Eve.

In Luke 6:43-45, Jesus compared our corrupt state to a bad tree that can only produce bad fruit. He didn't mean that unsaved fallen humanity never does anything *outwardly* good. They still take care of their children, still respect civil laws, and so on. But sin's corruption makes them incapable of acting out of respect for God's law, or out of covenant love for God and neighbor. And therefore, everything they do is tainted by sin. As Paul said in Romans 8:6-8:

The mind of sinful man is death ... the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8).

Unfortunately for fallen humanity, our corruption isn't limited to our inability to avoid sin. It extends to every facet of human nature. Different theological traditions understand the extent of this corruption in different ways. But we can all agree that every faculty of our human nature has been affected, including every part of our bodies and souls. For example, our bodies suffer and die, just as God said in Genesis 3:16-19. Our minds don't understand, as Paul pointed out in Romans 3:11. And our hearts lust after sin, as John pointed out in 1 John 2:16.

Sin is pervasive in our lives. It corrupts every part of fallen humanity's being — our bodies, our souls, our minds, and our desires, our thoughts, and everything else. And as a result, it also corrupts everything that flows from our being — everything we think, do and feel. When we come to faith in Christ, God renews us in ways that restore our ability to please him in all these areas. But for those who haven't yet been saved, sin expresses itself in everything they do.

Consider just three ways Scripture talks about the sin our corruption produces before we come to faith, beginning with the sinful concepts we embrace.

Concepts

Eve's concepts were corrupted when she believed the serpent's lies about God's motives and about the forbidden fruit's effects. And Adam's concepts were similarly corrupted when he determined the fruit was worth eating. But the most terrible thing about those corruptions is they were passed down to all human beings through God's curse.

As we saw in a prior lesson, sin has damaged humanity's capacity for conceptual thought, and caused us to believe that false ideas are true. Ecclesiastes 9:3, and Jeremiah 17:9, say that sin makes us all insane in some ways. We don't value what God values,

and we commit ourselves to evil. Deuteronomy 29:2-4 says that sinful minds have trouble grasping the significance of God's miracles. And John 8:43-47 teaches that sin causes us to embrace lies and prevents us from accepting the truth. In Ephesians 4:17-18, Paul described sin's impact this way:

The Gentiles [live] in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts (Ephesians 4:17-18).

Whenever we fail to believe the truth, it's because sin has corrupted our concepts. What's worse, many of our false concepts are themselves sinful. It's not sinful for us to misunderstand concepts that are too difficult for us to grasp, or to be ignorant of things we haven't had the opportunity to learn. But it *is* sinful for us to affirm false doctrine and unbiblical ways of thinking. That's why in 1 Timothy 6:3-5, Paul accused false teachers of sin because of their culpable ignorance and corrupt minds. False doctrines and wrong ideas are lies that obscure the truth of God, and that lead us into further sin.

God is God and he is worth knowing correctly and rightly. We owe it to him to know who he is aright and to have correct doctrines, because correct doctrine describes who God is and our relationship to him. So, first of all, God is worthy of our best thought and of thinking about him absolutely as *correctly* as we can. And so, correct doctrine is important because it honors God. It gives respect to him. We want to know him as he truly is. We want to know the truth about him that he has revealed to us. That, of course, is the purpose of Scripture, that we can know that. Secondly, the New Testament speaks so strongly against false doctrine because it leads to a false way of life. It leads to sin, to turning away from God. When we don't understand God correctly, when we have an aberrant view of God, then we're going to live an aberrant life. We're not going to serve him as he would have us to serve him. So, that's why the New Testament speaks so strongly against false doctrine.

— Dr. Gareth Cockerill

A second result of our corruption is the sinful behaviors we perform.

Behaviors

Adam and Eve's behavior was probably the most obvious aspect of their sin: they ate the forbidden fruit. And this sin served as the model for all the behavioral sins that have plagued humanity since then. After that time, as we read in Genesis 6:5, God was so

angered by sinful human behavior that he destroyed the entire race with a flood, saving only Noah and his family to repopulate the world.

Sadly, the human race hasn't done much better this time around. We still commit all sorts of behavioral sins. In fact, in Romans 1, Paul argued that one reason we sin so much is that God has given us over to our sinful appetites. In that same chapter, Paul also provided a frightening description of the behaviors that now characterize us in our unsaved, fallen condition. Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 1:29-32:

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:29-32).

You know, when the twentieth century began, there was so much optimism in the world, especially the Western world, that due to, because of the advancement of science, because of the wide availability of education, because of all the discoveries, technological progress, and so on, there was among philosophers and social scientists and even liberal theologians, there was this great aura of optimism that the twentieth century would be a century of peace in which there would be war no more. Twentieth century would be a century in which the human reason would rule, and reasonable beings will not go killing each other. So, in this enormous expectation that we were arriving in a century in which there would be peace, you see, the problem in this kind of thing... And that was the problem in Marxism. It had an optimistic anthropology that ended in social disasters because it didn't have the doctrine of sin. And so what happened? You had the First World War. You had the Bolshevik Revolution. You had later the Holocaust, Second World War, Hitler, Nazism, and we could go on. And so, as a result, to sum it up, in the twentieth century, some 112.8 million people have been killed in warfare. I'm talking just warfare — civilians and soldiers, as far as recorded data permit us to calculate. That is four times as many as in the previous four centuries cumulatively. What does that tell us? That something is wrong, not only social conditions. With all of the knowledge, advancement of science and progress of civilization, there is something fundamentally wrong with human nature. And this is what we are — Christians — calling "sin." Now that's not a very popular word in the media, in the academy and so on, and yet as Reinhold Niebuhr said, the Christian doctrine of sin is the *least*

popular of all doctrines, and yet the one for which we have the most overwhelming empirical evidence everywhere.

— Dr. Peter Kuzmič

The third result of our corruption we'll mention is our sinful emotions.

Emotions

As we've seen, the first and second greatest commandments of God's law are both commands to love: first, to love God; and second, to love our neighbors. And of course, love is an emotion, at least in part. It's the motivation that drives us to obedience in every area of our life. So, it shouldn't surprise us that sinful corruption also affects our emotions, preventing us from loving God and our neighbors as we should, and preventing us from manifesting other righteous emotions that flow from this love.

The corruption of Adam and Eve's emotions was involved in their sin itself, in its immediate effects, and in its lasting curse. For instance, in Genesis 3:6, Eve desired the wisdom that the forbidden fruit offered. In verses 7-10, Adam and Eve felt shamed over their nakedness. And in verse 16, God cursed the way their emotions and desires would impact their marital relationship.

And something similar is true of sin's corruption of the emotions of every human being. We all struggle with coveting, lust, pride, hatred, unrighteous anger, and all sorts of other sinful emotions. As Jesus said in Mark 7:21-22:

From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly (Mark 7:21-22).

Even before we act, our sinful emotions and desires drag us toward sinful thoughts and behavior. James put it this way in James 1:14-15:

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin (James 1:14-15).

In our sinful nature, even outward obedience to God's law is impossible. But when we consider our emotional corruption, and our inability to love God and our neighbor as we should, it becomes apparent that, apart from his saving grace, we have no ability to please God.

Having seen that pervasive corruption is one of the terrible consequences of humanity's fall into sin, let's explore our alienation from God and from other human beings.

ALIENATION

It's really impossible to overstate the effect of sin. First, the wages of sin is death. Death enters the human experience because of sin. We all will die because of sin. Second, we are cut off from God because of sin. Our relationship is fractured and we have no right to be connected to him at all because of our sinfulness. And third, our relationships with each other are fractured, fragmented and broken because of sin. Because we choose to put our own needs first and put ourselves ahead of others and are inflated by pride and selfishness and conceit, we fail to get along together in perfect harmony. So, all of this is explicable because of sin.

— Dr. Constantine Campbell

Human beings were created in God's image to rule over this world in fellowship with him. We were supposed to expand the Garden of Eden to fill the whole earth, so that all creation would become his earthly kingdom. And in that kingdom, God would live with us and manifest his presence to us. And we were also supposed to live as a united race, cooperatively and lovingly governing creation as God's vice-regents or vassal kings.

But sin broke our fellowship with God, and damaged our relationships with each other. It caused God to banish Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:24 says that he even posted angels at its gate to make sure they didn't sneak back in. As a result, humanity was forced to live in the untamed wilderness away from God's presence and protection. And as we learn in Genesis 4–6, humanity quickly turned against each other in the wilderness. Cain murdered his brother Abel, and became the father of many generations of people that treated others wickedly. Eventually, humanity's abuse of each other became so great that God flooded the entire world in the days of Noah.

Humanity's alienation from God and from each other has continued in this catastrophic manner ever since. We no longer walk in God's immediate presence like Adam and Eve did; instead, we hate and make war with him. And lies, deception, hatred, strife and all sorts of other relational problems prevent us from living peacefully and cooperatively with other people.

As we've seen, the initial cause of this alienation was Adam and Eve's act of rebellion against God when they ate the forbidden fruit. In their sin, our first parents asserted their own authority over the authority of God. It was an act of treason against God's covenant that turned our entire race into God's enemies.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul revealed that humanity's fall into sin caused our entire fallen race to join the kingdom of Satan. We went from being God's close allies to being enemy combatants in a spiritual war. As a result, every one of us begins life in total alienation from God's favor and grace. We know him only as our natural enemy. In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul offered this description of his audience prior to their salvation:

You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Notice that Paul applied this description to every unsaved, fallen human being when he said “all of us” lived this way. He made a similar point in Romans 5:10, where he wrote:

When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son (Romans 5:10).

We're not just alienated from him because our relationship is strained, or because we can't be in his immediate presence. It's much, much worse than that. Humanity's fall into sin made us God's enemies.

And while it didn't harm our relationships with all other human beings to the same extent, the Fall still alienates us from each other in many ways. Of course, our sin has created many enemies and wars among human beings. But it's also responsible for our more common relational problems. In the same way that it created shame and marital strife for Adam and Eve, it creates problems in every other marriage, too. In the same way that it produced violence in their children, it produces violence in every society as well. It causes us to lie to each other, to hate each other, to harm each other, to take offense and to give offense. It makes us jealous, spiteful, unforgiving. And even among believers, after God has rescued us from our hopeless slavery to sin, we still struggle to treat each other with love and compassion. As James wrote to believers in James 4:1-2:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight (James 4:1-2).

Humanity's fall into sin has alienated us both from God and from each other. We were created to exist in peaceful, loving relationships with God and with other people. We were supposed to live and work together, centering our lives around the God we served. But the Fall made us selfish, arrogant and hateful. So, instead of serving God, we oppose him. Instead of living selflessly with others, we covet what they have and use them to serve our own purposes. No, we're not as bad as we could be. And we do see remnants of good in fallen human relationships. But it's not like it should be. Sin has destroyed our relationship with God, and severely damaged our relationships with others. Apart from God's grace, these problems have no solutions.

So far, we've considered the consequences of humanity's fall into sin in terms of corruption and alienation. Now we're ready to address the matter of death.

DEATH

In Genesis 2:17, God told Adam that if he ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he would die. Then, after Adam ate the fruit, Genesis 3:19 records that God cursed Adam to physical death. But, as we mentioned earlier, Adam's sin and its curse didn't just affect Adam. After all, he was the covenant head of the entire human race. He was our king. So, when he rebelled against God, our entire human kingdom fell under the shadow of his guilt and, consequently, under the curse of death. As Paul said in Romans 5:12-17:

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned... [T]he many died by the trespass of the one man ... [B]y the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man (Romans 5:12-17).

Paul said that all sinned because God reckoned Adam's guilt not only to Adam, but to the rest of natural humanity, too. And this guilt results in our death. From the legal perspective of original sin, every human being is just as guilty as Adam was. So, if Adam was worthy of death — and he was — then we are too. And that's why we die. Even after we come to faith in Christ, sin's curse hangs on to our bodies. As a result, we all eventually die and return to dust, just like Adam.

Now, Adam didn't die immediately when God cursed him — at least not physically. And the same thing is true of the rest of us. God permits us a physical lifespan on earth. But Scripture does imply that Adam died spiritually when he was cursed, and that his natural descendants are spiritually dead before they come to faith.

The question of spiritual death is very nicely addressed in Ephesians 2. Basically, Paul says we're dead in our sins and our transgressions. So the understanding there is that we're dead, and a dead person really can't do much with respect to pleasing God. And particularly, I think, Paul is addressing the issue of our actions and how God sees our actions. That verse goes on to say in chapter 2 that ... we're following the leader of this world. We're doing the things that he wants us to do, because that's our natural tendency. When we're dead in our sins, we follow the leader of death who is Satan. When we are made alive in Christ ... we are given a new life. It's a new life. It's a life that allows us to act, to do things that are pleasing to God, but only possible through that ... through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and our faith in him.

— Rev. Timothy Mountfort

Paul described spiritual death in Ephesians 2:1-5 when he said:

You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time ... But ... God ... made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (Ephesians 2:1-5).

The people Paul described were physically alive. They engaged in sin, and fought against God in the spiritual war. But Paul still called them “dead” because they stood under God’s condemnation, and because they lacked the spiritual vitality necessary to please God. Paul also said that even believers used to be “dead” in the same way. All fallen human beings share this spiritually dead condition until we receive spiritual life in Christ. As Paul wrote in Romans 8:10:

If Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness (Romans 8:10).

Here Paul said that we have spiritual life if Christ is in us. By implication, if Christ is *not* in us, we’re spiritually dead.

Because of Adam’s fall into sin, human beings suffer immediate spiritual death when we’re created, and eventual physical death. And worse, if we never come to faith in Christ, if we’re never redeemed from sin’s curse by God’s grace, we’ll continue to suffer both spiritual and physical death in hell. And just like spiritual death in the present world, it will be a conscious experience. The unredeemed will exist forever, suffering the everlasting curse of sin in both body and soul. The curse of sin is very real. But by God’s grace, we can struggle against sin’s influence now, and completely escape it in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on the curse of sin, we’ve explored the origin of sin in the human race and in human individuals, and discussed sin’s ultimate authorship. We’ve also described sin’s essential character as lawless and unloving. And we’ve considered sin’s consequences of corruption, alienation and death.

The weight of human sin would cause us to despair if we didn’t have hope in Christ. As we’ve seen in this lesson, it’s not a small thing. It’s a terrible burden that chains us to corruption in this life, and drags us into everlasting death. In his famous book, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan described sin as a load fastened to our backs that can only be removed by the cross of Christ. In our next lesson, we’ll look at how that happens when our Savior redeems us from the curse of sin.

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What Is Man?

LESSON
THREE

The Curse of Sin Faculty Forum



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What Is Man?

Lesson Three: The Curse of Sin

Faculty Forum

With

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Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.
Dr. Frank Barker
Dr. Bruce Baugus
Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.
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Dr. Glen G. Scorgie
Dr. Daniel Treier
Dr. David VanDrunen
Dr. Guy Waters
Rev. Dr. John W. Yates
Rev. Gao Zhen

Question 1:

What were some of the consequences of Adam and Eve's fall into sin?

Dr. Philip Ryken

As we open up our Bibles and turn to the third chapter of Genesis and see the decision that Adam and Eve made to eat the forbidden fruit, it's hard not to read that passage with a deep sense of sadness, because we live in a world that is broken, and it's broken because of the consequences of sin. And there are all kinds of consequences of sin. We see that already in Genesis 3. We see Adam and Eve ashamed of what they've done, which is why they hide from God. They are guilty of sin, which is why they don't have a good answer when God comes to correct them for their sin. They feel guilty about what they've done. They are alienated from one another. One of Adam's first impulses is to blame Eve for the fact that she was the first to sin. We're also estranged from God. And that's true, that's evident as well in what Adam says, because he doesn't just blame Eve, he blames God for giving him Eve, and there's a sense already that there's an alienation from God that's a consequence of sin. And then as you continue on in the Scriptures, and you see Cain murdering his brother Abel, and as you see lying and deception and greed and lust and pride and all of the other sins that flow from that first sin, and even creation itself, the very physical world around us, is burdened by the sin of humanity, and it's longing for a day of redemption. And it's a great sadness that has come into the human race because of sin. But I also want to say that that sadness is not without hope because God has a plan of redemption that deals with *all* of the consequences of sin, and God deals with the consequences of sin in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Frank Barker

Well, according to Romans 5, some of the effects of man's fall into sin, it says by one man — talking about Adam — sin entered into the world and death passed on to all men, for that all sinned, and the meaning is all sinned in him. He represented the whole human race, and when he sinned then his guilt was transferred to the whole human race. Also, his corrupted nature was transferred... Then when Adam had children that corrupt nature was passed on to his children so the whole human race came into existence with this corrupted nature and rebellion against God. And so, that was one of the effects. Of course, another effect was that this curse was on the whole earth so that the earth would not bring forth the fruit as it had, and it would bring forth all kind of diseases and that type thing. So, the whole world is in bondage. Now it says when Christ comes back, that bondage will be released — in Romans 8 — but it had lots of effects.

Dr. John McKinley

The consequences of humanity's fall into sin extend, in a first place, to destruction of relationships and capacities that humanity was built with. So, in relationship with God there is loss of that, there is separation, and that leads to the unraveling of everything else the human is supposed to do and the connections that humans are supposed to have to each other and to the environment. So, within ourselves, human beings now are trying to bear this burden of being the center for their lives, instead of God being the center, because our fall into sin, we're now trying to relate everything to life as ourselves at the center, and that is too much for us. It crushes us and leads to all kinds of identity issues and pride in the first place, and these illusions that we can be in the place of God. In relationship to each other, we are constantly trying to use each other, and competition and hostility still living with ourselves in the first place, instead of God in the first place, and so you have a destruction of relationships. Right away, with Adam and Eve, it shows, and as the human race unravels you have people murdering each other very quickly. In relationship to the created world, you've got chaos in creation where you have now storms and animals destroying each other. Everything is now hostile to life because humanity was supposed to order creation under God's rule, to live in ways that is for well-being. But now, having misled creation, cut off from God, everything is kind of off the tracks, and now things are destroying and self-destruction is just working its way out through all the extension of creation.

Question 2:**Why does God hold all of humanity accountable for Adam's sin?****Dr. Steven C. Roy**

In the third and fourth centuries, in the debates between Augustine and Pelagius over sin and grace, Augustine's position was that God did hold all humanity accountable for the sin of Adam, that original sin. He affirmed that all humanity, all subsequent humanity, inherited from Adam both legal guilt and moral corruption. And this

position of Augustine, over and against that of Pelagius, was affirmed by the church in the Council of Ephesians in the year 431. And that has been the dominant position in the church ever since. But the question then is why? Why would God hold you and me and all subsequent humanity both legally guilty and morally corrupt as the result of this original sin of Adam? Augustinians have affirmed in general that that is because of a unique and special closeness that exists between Adam and all humanity. Now, among Augustinians, there are two primary ways of explaining this closeness. There is a position that's been called "realism," which was the position of Augustine himself, and many others, that accounts for this closeness because of Adam being the first human and the biological head of the human race, and in a very real sense all humans are "*in*" Adam. Even as an example would be how the author of Hebrews argued that Levi, the founder of the Levitical priests, was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, who was the forerunner of the order, the priesthood that Christ himself would one day have. So, realists would say that this connection is *natural*. The other view among Augustinians has been called "federal headship," which says that the closeness between Adam and all subsequent humanity is *covenantal*. They would argue that Adam is the covenant head of a covenant of creation that God had with all humanity. And so, as covenant head, Adam represents us all, and so his actions — in this case, his sin — is rightly held, we are held accountable for that. In an analogous way, Paul will argue in Romans 5 that Christ is also the covenant head of his people of the covenant of redemption. And so, even as Adam's sin was transmitted to the people of his covenant, so Christ's righteousness is as well. My own position is that of federal headship. I think this best fits the covenantal structure of Scripture as a whole. It accounts for the comparisons that Paul makes in Romans 5 and also in 1 Corinthians 15 of Christ as the second Adam whose righteousness, obedience and righteousness also impacts his people. I think this best accounts for the reason why God holds all humanity accountable for that original sin of Adam.

Dr. Guy Waters

God holds all people, except for Jesus Christ, accountable for Adam's sin, because Adam, when he sinned, sinned as our representative in a covenant that God made with Adam, and in Adam, with human beings, his posterity. The response to that on the part of many is, that's not fair. How can God punish me for something that someone else did? And I think a couple of things are helpful to remember. First, that God is sovereign, and he is free to set up this covenant because he is our Maker, and he did so for good purposes. Second, we should remember that salvation comes to sinners along those lines. Jesus Christ came into the world as second Adam, and he bore the curse, and he won life for his people as their representative, and to any who puts his trust in Jesus Christ then all that he has done as representative becomes theirs. And that's not fair, but that's the grace of the gospel. And so, when we are concerned or when we hear people expressing concern about fairness, then we should invite them and ourselves to look to Jesus Christ for the grace that God has lavished on those who would come to him.

Question 3: **Why did God allow Adam and Eve to sin?**

Dr. John McKinley

We wonder why God would allow Adam and Eve to sin because he has the power to prevent them, and he's good, and so why not stop the problem that's going to cause all this distress to many people in creation? And it seems that God is wanting to create good, but bring creation to perfection by upholding their freedom all the way through. And so, to get a free creaturely response, for us to relate to God and enjoy him and honor him without being controlled, he has to also permit us to misuse that freedom temporarily. So, the long-term plan is to shut down on sin forever, but in the meantime he has to let us do some damage, and including damage to ourselves, knowing that he has the solution for it, where he's going to enter into the system and take the curse upon himself. So, he lets them sin because he wants to support freedom, he wants us to have relationship with him, and it's not something that's going to thwart his purposes of bringing creation from good to perfect and complete and safe with him forever.

Rev. Agus G. Satyaputra, translation

God allowed Adam and Eve to fall into sin because, firstly, God wanted to create mankind in his own image. God was not pleased to create a robot, and he didn't want to create a robot, because robots don't have the freedom to do anything — including sin. But in the image of God, in God's desire to create man in his image, it included within it man's freedom. God gave human beings freedom so that mankind would really be human, because a person without freedom is a robot, not a human being. And because God wanted to create human beings with freedom, he then allowed sin to happen, as a consequence. But God didn't allow the consequence to negate the possibility of hope, because before mankind fell into sin, God already knew everything, and he had even already prepared a Savior, long before mankind fell into sin. In other words, in reality here were the options: create human beings as robots or create human beings with freedom. And God chose mankind as human beings with freedom, with all the consequences.

Dr. Ken Keathley

When considering the Genesis account, chapters 1, 2 and 3 — God creating the heavens and the earth, creating Eden, populating it with Adam and Eve — the question is always going to come up, well then why did God allow Adam and Eve to sin? The thing to remember is that they're not the original sinners. You might as well take the question back one step: Why did God create Lucifer knowing that Lucifer would rebel and become Satan? The Bible doesn't give us any type of elaborate answer to that question. Whenever the serpent shows up in Genesis 3, he is already cunning and devious with no backstory. And so, the quick and short answer to that question is that the Bible doesn't give us a good and thorough answer to it. There are several things that we do know, though... God is not the author of evil, nor is he the author of sin. The fact that he created a world in which there are genuinely and truly

morally responsible human beings and beings above us, angelic beings, who are morally responsible and evidently have the ability to choose and make moral decisions, it is clear that God thought it was better to have this world than to not have this world, and we are going to have to trust his wise and good choice in this matter.

Question 4:

How does God's moral law in Scripture reveal his character?

Dr. Bruce Baugus

When we think of the moral law, we obviously are thinking about the summary of the moral law in the Ten Commandments. And if we look at the Ten Commandments, we can see that this too is a revelation of God, for example, God being the most glorious, the best, the perfect, the incomparable, and so on. With that being the case, how could there be a moral law that would ever command the worship of anything other than God, that would ever even permit the competitors to the exclusive worship and devotion of God by his creatures? If we think about God as so glorious that he alone reserves the right to establish images and likenesses of himself, which he, of course, has done in humanity, how could he grant that to anyone else who would obscure that glory and skew the knowledge of God by whatever they might manufacture? God, in his divine being, though, is a personal God who has created us to be in personal relationship with us, and so having not given us visible images and idols that signify him, he gives us something far better and far more intimate, and that is his name, and gives us the right to call on him by his name. This is a great honor and privilege. And this is all revealing to us who our God is and what kind of God that we have, a God that provides for us sufficiently and invites us to rest in him fully and in his provision for us. And of course, he establishes for us the Sabbath as a principle of rest and looking to him and leaning upon him... And he is a God who is ever faithful and true. So, when we look at the Decalogue, what we're really seeing from one side are things that we are to do because on the other side we're seeing who our God is and what is worthy of him.

Dr. Patrick Nullens

How do we come from the Law to the character of God? The center of our Christian ethics is God himself. We have a theocentric ethics. He reveals the good. Micah 6:8 is very important; there Micah, says the prophet: God has given — “reveals” — the good. And so, he is the center, his personality is the center. First of all, the word “law” is a problem. The Latin, *lex* — “law” — has a very ... static idea of something that is unchangeable, that is not moving, while God is interacting with us and with his people through the Scriptures, so it is not a static thing. “Torah” means direction; it's referring to the directions of God. God gives us directions, and that's why we have to read the Law always together with the narrative aspect of the Bible. Read the stories and try to understand from the stories how the Law is applied and what does that tell us about who God, in fact, is.

Rev. Agus G. Satyaputra, translation

In all of God's Word we can find God's character behind everything. It's true that, in certain forms, we find that it involves human lives, involves human history, but if we see the essence of God's law, then it actually goes back to God, who gave it. If we believe that it is from God, and see God behind everything, that also reveals God's character, and God's character is revealed in context, in his laws, in his commandments, in his ordinances, in his guidance throughout the Holy Bible. Consequently, when someone reads the Holy Bible from front to back, he is, in reality, engaged in relating, attaching, connecting with God's Word, wherein, certainly he can know God's character. Someone who reads the Holy Bible, studies it will become much closer to God and will become more like God in his character.

Question 5:**How does love for God motivate obedience to God?****Dr. Jay Haley**

One of the important aspects from Scripture that we learn in terms of relationship with Christ is that Christ makes the point that if we love him that we are willing to obey his word and his command. And Christ doesn't say this in a vacuum. He demonstrates it very forcefully in his life. If we take, for example, John 13 as Jesus enjoyed the Last Supper with his disciples before he goes to the cross, we see he does something extraordinary. He takes off his outer clothing and he takes a cloth, and he goes to each disciple one by one and he washes their feet. He does something that only a servant does. And so what Christ manifests in this episode is the whole principle that Paul points out in Philippians 2, that Christ, the eternal Son of God, was willing to pour himself out as a bondservant in obedience to the Father to be the one mediator between God and man. And why did he do that? Why would he be willing to commit himself to such a thing as this? And the answer is because he loves the Father. Not only does he love the Father and willing to be obedient to him, he loves us. And so he told his disciples later on in John 14, he told them very clearly, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." And so, he points out that the impetus for our obedience to Christ himself is demonstrated in our love for him. And so, the point that also Christ makes, which is a hard saying for some, he says, if you don't love me more than anyone or anything else in this world, you are not worthy of me. Well, what is Christ saying? He's saying just as I loved you, so must you love me, and anything that supersedes your love for me is evidence of the fact that we're not in real relationship, because you don't understand my love for you and, therefore, outside the work of the Holy Spirit, unable to do that which I've called you to do in love.

Rev. Gao Zhen, translation

The Bible describes loving God as obeying him. Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments." This has very deep implications for our relationship with God. If we are to God as merely a servant, or as a slave to a master, then there would

be fear [in the relationship]. But if it's a relationship of love, then there is no fear in serving and obeying God. When we love God, we delight in submitting to him, so we offer, deny, and sacrifice ourselves willingly. This kind of love pleases God, so he equates it with obedience.

Question 6:

Since love for God and neighbor summarizes the law, is sin fundamentally unloving?

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

We hear in Scripture that love for God and neighbor is the fulfillment of the law. And this raises the question, is sin fundamentally a lack of love? Well, ultimately, when you peel back the layers of the onion, that's probably true. And yet, because love has become such a cliché today, a mere sentiment, we don't really get very much traction in the truth by making that observation. We need to go back and remember that the biblical vision of loving is affectionate self-giving for the benefit of a valued other. And really, when it's understood that way, it cuts right to the heart of the fallen human spirit. At the heart of our human natures in their fallen state is a passionate self-interest and self-regard that is so fierce and so consuming that it enables us to trample on others. It is ultimately selfishness to the height of intolerant trampling on all that threatens or is perceived to threaten our pure self-interest and self-indulgence. Christ came by his Spirit to make us new inside with a capacity to open up this hard shell of narcissism and create space for the inconvenient other, and it is in that capacity to widen the sphere of our self-interest to encompass the God who created us and makes claims upon us, and encompass the neighbor who needs us and needs our compassion, that we begin to turn the corner and move in the direction of God's best and leave behind the characteristic odor of sin.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Jesus taught that the love of God and neighbor summarized the law, and the question would be, therefore, is sin fundamentally being unloving? And I think there is a strong case to be made for that. It's really interesting who Jesus asks us to love, however. Love of God, that's kind of obvious, but love of neighbor? Recall that in the Luke account the answer to the question, "How may I obtain eternal life?" is answered with love of God and neighbor, but then it goes on to say, "Who is my neighbor?" And it talked about in terms of a race story; it talked about a needs story. It talked about someone bleeding by the side of the road, so, boy, that encapsulates a lot of love. I've got to reach out to someone who I ethnically don't like. I reach out to someone who's in tremendous need who might put me in a position to get hurt in the next several miles of this road. And then, of course, Jesus teaches, yeah, but I want you to be loving towards even your enemies. And so, boy, there's all kinds of real challenges in this. Love of God and neighbor? It's standard, but I think it almost comes too easily off our lips. It's a major challenge in the Christian faith.

Question 7: **What do theologians mean by the term “original sin”?**

Dr. David VanDrunen

What theologians mean by “original sin” is the sin with which each of us is born. So, each of us individually are born as original sinners. And there’s some variation among theologians as to what exactly that means, but in the mainstream of the Reformed theological tradition, there are really two aspects to this original sin. One aspect is the idea that we are guilty in Adam, that we are all in this covenant and organic union with Adam as he fell into sin, and we are now guilty. We are born in sin because of Adam and we lie under God's judgment because of that. And I think this is a very important point that Paul makes in Romans 5. Well, there’s a second aspect to original sin, and that might be referred to as our original corruption. It’s not just that we are born under God’s judgment or are conceived under God’s judgment, but from our various earliest days, our natures are corrupted. As Paul says in Ephesians 2, we were dead in our transgressions and sins. So, not only are we guilty in Adam, but it means we also add to our own guilt every day. We are prone to evil, and apart from God’s grace, his sanctifying grace for us, we will continue to sin and to be unable to please him.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

The term “original sin” is one of those standard theological phrases... Original sin has to do with the first-ever willful disobedience of human beings in our representatives Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But the doctrine of original sin affirms more than that this actually happened. It also affirms, and this is very important, that somehow the consequences of that first sinning are transmitted intergenerationally through the centuries to all human beings, and that this is an intergenerational transfer, a recycling, a repetition that no one escapes, that we’re all implicated universally. Now, this is a big mystery. Some people plead that it’s unfair. The truth is we don’t fully understand, or at least have a Christian consensus on this mystery, but empirically it seems very plain that this is what’s going on. And that’s the doctrine of original sin.

Dr. John Hammett

The term “original sin” is used by theologians with two different meanings. The first is referring to Adam’s first sin, so the actual original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden. More often we’re using that term “original sin” for the consequences flowing from that sin. So, what’s happened to human nature as the result of that first sin? And the reason why we have to ask that question is we find in our experience that humans, all humans, from birth onward have this propensity so that they instinctively seem to act in wicked ways. No one has to teach a child how to lie or be selfish. They come from the womb already equipped to be that way. It begs the question, why? Were we made this way? We say, well, no. There’s been, between the creation and now there has been a Fall, and the original sin has affected all of us. And whether we see that

simile, that Adam was somehow the head of us, in terms of being in the loins of Adam, whether this is a representatively — he was our representative — but in some way there's some connection between what happened to Adam and Eve and the fact that all humans follow in their footsteps. And so, when we talk about original sin, we're talking usually about the consequences. What happened to us, to human nature, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden?

Question 8:

Why did humanity's fall into sin have such terrible consequences for humanity and creation?

Dr. John McKinley

Yeah, we wonder why when Adam and Eve sinned it affected more than just them. Why did it affect other people? And why did it affect the rest of the creation? We have a statement that “cursed is the ground because of what you've done” — what God tells Adam in Genesis 3 — and it seems that God has created human beings to be not stand-alone things, but we're a corporate family tree, and what the first human beings did affects all the rest of us. And then he also created human beings in a tight relationship with the creation. So, the details of this show up — Genesis 2:7 — the man is created from the ground, and the ground is the *adamah* and the man is the *adam*, and we were created to rule creation from creation. And in effect, it was put into our hands, and we led creation away from God. So, within humanity we brought pollution on ourselves. It's a twisted family tree, and everybody is created out of that twist. And so, God is creating people through procreation, but he's using warped wood, as I think Kant said, and so he is creating them, but they are distorted. And then creation is suffering the chaos of our mismanagement. The salvation comes by God becoming a man and steering creation back to him; so us, individually, but then the whole creation. And Paul gives us this link in Romans 8, that the creation is desiring to be free from its bondage to decay, and the freedom is the children of the sons of God.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

Christianity says that when Adam sinned that the whole creation is now cursed, and there's a result of that for us as well. We fall as well; we stand guilty before God, we are in need of salvation. And it's a very normal and natural question ... for someone to ask, why? And I think that we have to go back and look at those statements in Genesis 2:16-17 and then Romans 3:23 as well. In Genesis 2 it says, “Don't eat this fruit, and the day you do it you shall surely die.” In Romans 3, the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. And so you have this, it looks like a formula, where God is saying, “If you sin, I will kill you.” And the natural question to ask is, why? What is the logic or the rationale behind sin and the resulting damnation and destruction that comes to the earth as the result of that? That's the natural question. And I think what we have to remember is, first of all, who God is. So, we say a lot of different things about God, and we could list a lot of those attributes right now, but let me just

mention one. God is the creator, which means as Creator he's the one that gives life. He's the fount of being and the fount of existence. He's the one that brings us into existence and gives us life. Let's just stop right there. What is sin? Sin is by definition a turn away from God into something else. And so, when we put those two ideas together we can see that God is the giver of life, the fount of life, *life itself*. Sin is a turn away from God. Where we were designed to turn to him, we now turn away from him, which means in sin we turn away from God, which is life, which is then a turn into death. So, the rationale behind this statement, "You eat this fruit, you die," "the wages of sin is death," is not just some arbitrary decision on God's part — "Oh, I know what I'll do. I'll kill them if they disobey me." No. It's a recognition that, "I made you; I give you life; seek me because in seeking me you seek life. If you turn from me, you turn out of life, and you turn into death." And so, I say to students a lot of times, "Listen, you were made for a particular thing, you were designed for a particular thing, and that is relationship with God. And when we turn away from that, that life-giving relationship to God that has horrible consequences for me, for you, for everybody, because a turn away from God is a turn into death and destruction and damnation as such. And so, this doesn't look like to me to be some arbitrary decision that God makes in heaven in eternity past somewhere. It seems to me that it follows logically and clearly that when we turn away from God we are thus bringing death and destruction on ourselves as a result of that.

Dr. Jay Haley

When God created the heavens and the earth, that we learn from the creation accounts in Genesis, after he created all that we see and humanity, he decreed that it was "good." But he was saying there, one of the things God is saying is, that which he created perfectly reflects his will in his creation, and that which reflects God's will reflects God himself. And so, at that point in creation, before the Fall, you see that humanity exists in perfect relationship with God Almighty, humanity obeyed the word of God; humanity did, Adam and Eve did that which God had called them to do. Yet, after the Fall, when Adam and Eve decided at that point that they no longer wanted to be subservient, so to speak, or obedient to the will of God, they decided they wanted to be God themselves. And as such, what happened after the Fall is that relationship, that perfect reflection of God in his image was destroyed, not completely, but it was marred to the point that no longer could even creation enjoy this relationship with Almighty God in view of humanity's willingness to turn their back on this relationship and become gods of their own. And this speaks, of course, of the necessity and the need for a reconciler between God and man, one who would come and renew the image of God that was spoiled in the Fall.

Question 9:**How did God show mercy to Adam and Eve, even when giving the curse in Genesis 3?****Dr. Daniel Treier**

God showed mercy to Adam and Eve even in giving the curse in Genesis 3 in a number of significant ways. First and most basically, God didn't destroy the creation he had made. He certainly, in his holiness, would have had the right to do so, but he did not. Secondly, not only did he not destroy the creation, but he goes and finds Adam and Eve, and he speaks to them. Already we have redemptive revelation being initiated by God... Even when they would prefer to hide in their guilt and shame, God pursues them. Thirdly, we can say God doesn't just speak to them, but God provides even further for reconciliation. God provides the garments to cover them in their shame, and this may also indicate the beginnings of atonement, something gesturing toward sacrifice, so that not only shame, but guilt is going to be addressed. Fourthly, we can say that God will not leave rebellious humans in their self-destruction. His barring them from the Tree of Life is not merely judgment. It is also, ironically perhaps, life-giving. We see that this is so if we look at the Tower of Babel episode, and we see what aggregated human potential might choose to pursue and might threaten to accomplish if left to itself. So, God barring humans from the Tree of Life now, keeps them from destroying themselves in combining moral autonomy with this drive for immortality. Instead, the flaming cherubim suggests that people will now only be able to come into God's presence when they pursue the cultically-provided means through having their sins atoned for that God makes possible. Then and only then, may people come into God's presence and have life. So, fifthly, we might speak of God showing this mercy in terms of the concept of preservation. God doesn't destroy the creation, but God doesn't simply leave it in its fallen state, and God doesn't instantly and comprehensively redeem it, but God preserves it for the sake of redeeming it. And that signals something very significant about what God is ultimately going to accomplish in his redemption. He's not going to redeem us out of earth and its cursed history, he's going to redeem us by transforming that earth and the meaning of its history into a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells.

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

When you look at Genesis 3, which depicts the fall of humanity, where Adam and Eve have sinned, and they're hiding in shame, God's calling out to them, and they're doing some blame shifting, and as God kind of works through the curses, first to the serpent then to Eve and then finally to Adam, we see a lot of dimensions of curse. There are some bad things that are going to be coming about as a result of their sin. But what we see following the curses is a remarkable display of God's mercy. As they're made to leave God's presence in the Garden and depart from it, God kindly makes them some animal skin clothing, which is a remarkable, remarkable display of God's care for his people. Even though they had sinned against him, he was concerned about their well-being outside of the Garden. And this little sign shows that

God's not done with humanity yet, and this prepares the way for the rest of the story, where God continues to pursue humanity outside of Eden with a hope of redemption.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

One of the great testimonies of the grace of the Lord is that he comes to Adam and Eve immediately after the sin, immediately after the Fall, and he comes to them in his mercy and his grace. He speaks to them, first speaking to the serpent, and actually, as he speaks to the serpent — and in speaking to the serpent he's speaking to Satan — he gives a promise, he gives a testimony of God's grace. And what he says is that there will be enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed... But then he makes a promise when he uses the word "her seed" because it's the only place in Scripture where "her seed" is used. Usually it refers to *his* seed. But here, in the very beginning of the book of Genesis, you have a reference to one who is going to be born of the line of the woman, which would be the virgin birth. It's an incredible way that the Scripture fits together. And in doing that, he also says that, of her seed, this one will crush the head of the serpent, and the serpent will strike him on the heel. And so, he is speaking about the coming of one of the line of the woman, this one who will be uniquely born, and that he will mortally wound the serpent, he will mortally wound Satan. And that promise, which is really the unfolding of the rest of Scripture as it brings about the truth that God is going to send a Redeemer, that he's going to send a Messiah who will come through the line of the woman and who will redeem his people. We also see in that promise the fact that the serpent will strike the seed of the woman on the heel, but it's interesting that through that striking, that through the cross itself, the serpent head is crushed and God's people are redeemed.

Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve are cursed by God and evicted from the Garden, I think one of the surprising things we see is the evidence of God's mercy in the midst of that discipline. You see it first when he clothes them, he provides to cover their nakedness and their shame. The second thing he does is — we see it as punishment, but there's an element of kindness in it — in the actual eviction from the Garden, the Tree of Life is still there. They could still hypothetically partake of the Tree of Life and live eternally in their rebellion. To put a barrier between them and the Tree of Life is to keep them from eternal rebellion. The third thing that he does is, he provides a way for them to continue living within his creation. It's broken, it's fallen, but he continues to bless them with life. Now death is at the end, and death is a part of the curse, but there's also an element of mercy in the curse of death, because we aren't left to live eternally in our rebellion... While death is foreign and alien within God's good creation, there's an element in which it's a mercy. We aren't condemned to eternally live in rebellion against God.

Question 10:**How has sin affected our minds, behavior and emotions?****Dr. Jay Haley**

In the Garden, before man fell into sin, God created humanity to perfectly reflect his own glory, his own nature. And so, in that state, Adam and Eve were able to engage in a relationship with Almighty God in a way that truly reflected his glory. They thought the things that God would have them to think. They thought in terms of God himself and the things that God would have them to do. They did the things that perfectly reflected the law of God and the will of God. They strove to do things that pleased him, and the things that, their emotional state, so to speak, their emotions were always reflected upon Almighty God. They wanted to do everything, if you will, in a way that brought glory to his name, and they demonstrated that before the Fall. After the Fall, however, we see a devastating effect on how we function as human beings, and so no longer was is our mind steadfast on thinking about the things of God and yearning to do the things of God. That which once was filled with light now has become filled with darkness. No longer, now — in our behavior, the things that we do — do we naturally seek to do the will of God. Rather now, that which we formerly did that perfectly conformed to the law of God, struggles to do the things which bring glory to his name. And emotionally even, that which formerly in the Garden before the Fall was pure and operated in perfect unity with the living God, now is chaotic and subject to all manner of swayings and deceptions. This is what happens, or the effects of sin, in the life of anyone. And again, it speaks to the fact that we needed a Redeemer, someone who can come and renew this image that had been destroyed by sin.

Dr. Dinorah B. Méndez, translation

I believe that sin has affected human beings in a holistic manner. We have said that human beings are holistic, made up of intellect, of mind, of emotions, behavior, will, physical body. And sin has also affected holistically. It has affected our way of thinking, our way of reasoning, our emotions, and even our physical bodies. And even the creation, truly, has had a cosmic effect from [our] having disobeyed God. It affected creation because when God made everything, he said everything he made was good; everything he saw was good, but when sin entered this dimension, or into creation, everything was affected holistically, and that is why human beings are affected in every area, and creation is affected in every area, because sin separates us from God. It separates us from our Creator. It puts up barriers in our relationship with God. So, human beings are affected and all of creation — the whole universe, let's say — is also affected by sin.

Dr. Josh Moody

Sin has had a pervasive effect on our minds, thoughts, emotions, the whole way that we're internally wired in our behavior... So, even the most beautiful things, which reflect our made-in-the-image-of-God nature and reflect the goodness of God and his grace, his general grace in the world, the fact that they are also tainted by sin screams

our depravity by contrast... And so, the effects of the Fall on our nature are all-pervasive and, therefore, lead us to cry out for a sovereign rescue. In many ways, the departure point for heresy is to have a too-small view of our depravity, which then leads to an insufficiently great view of the necessity of sovereign grace... So, we must hold onto this doctrine and realize that it takes us intention and in combination to the need for sovereign grace and, therefore, leads us to rejoice in that grace as we receive it.

Prof. Brandon P. Robbins

The question of how sin affects our minds and our emotions and really the whole thinking process is definitely among debate within Christian circles. Of course Romans 1, according to Paul, says that by nature — because of the Fall, right? — man suppresses what should be known about God in our unrighteousness. But Jesus even says that the men of his day can determine things by looking at the sky and figure out whether it's going to rain or, you know, be able to determine the seasons, so it depends on what you mean. For some, the natural man, outside of being regenerate or having a new mind in Christ, is unable to really see the things of God because they, by nature, suppress that truth in our unrighteousness. But they can know some things, right? They can learn about math: 2 plus 2 equals 4. They can know things like, this is a circle and this is a square. They can understand propositions. But do they rightly apply those things? Do they have true biblical wisdom? Of course not, because the beginning of true wisdom, right, is the fear of the Lord.

Question 11:

What do some theological traditions mean when they refer to humanity's state of corruption after the Fall as "total depravity"?

Dr. Scott Manor

The term total depravity is really the first of five main points within what we would call "Calvinistic" theology, or Reformed theology. And the idea there is that, as the result of sin, mankind has become completely depraved. And that means in terms of breadth; from who we are, to what we think, to what we do, sin has affected each and every part of us. And so, that's what total depravity is. There's not a part of us that's inherently good. It's been misunderstood often by people thinking that total depravity is less of a sort of a *breadth* idea of sin affecting everything and more of a *depth* idea, that we are as sinful as we could possibly be, that nothing that we could ever do could be understood as anything other than just the pure bottom depths of depravity and sin. And that's not really what the concept of total depravity is meant to convey. Total depravity is meant to just say that there's not a single part of us that stands on its own as being worthwhile or good.

Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

A term like “total depravity” is an easy one to misunderstand because it could make us think, well, if humans are totally depraved, then people are guaranteed to act as bad as they can possibly act. But that’s not the point about total depravity. Total depravity is not about how *bad* people will act, but it’s about the extent to which sin affects us as human beings. So, total depravity means that there is no part of us as humans that’s untouched by sin.

Dr. Bruce L. Fields

Grappling with the area of total depravity, let me first of all try to describe what it is not, and this is the realm by which much in terms of misunderstanding can take place. Total depravity, for example, does not mean that I, you, will commit every sin. To speak of total depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we can be. No, I think we can still progress along that way. Total depravity does not mean that you and I are incapable of doing anything good. By “good” I mean that which benefits others... Total depravity does not insist that we are incapable of doing things that could be regarded as admirable, sacrificial, for the sake of others. What total depravity basically encompasses is the reality of the pervasiveness of sin. Sin pervades *all* that we are, meaning even in our best thoughts, even in our most noble intents, self-centeredness, a certain self-glorification are also evident. It is essentially total depravity that contributes to the understanding whatever we do in terms of what we assess as good, or what others may assess as good, is still shot-through, is still contaminated before God. All our righteousness is as filthy rags before him. And total depravity is basically the element of the doctrine of sin that helps to explain why that is. It kind of just totally disqualifies us before God of doing anything that would somehow merit his favor, merit his acceptance.

Dr. Guy Waters

“Total depravity” is a phrase that describes the condition of humanity in Adam, and what it speaks to is the fact that sin has permeated every part of our being, our thinking, our choosing, our affections, so that there’s no part of the person in Adam that is free from the dominion and presence of sin. It’s sometimes misunderstood to mean that total depravity says that people are as bad as they possibly can be. And that’s not true. People can always get worse. But it refers to the fact that sin leavens the whole person and that sin has lordship over a person. We’re dead in trespasses and sins, and so it means that if we’re to be rescued or recovered out of this condition, it’s not going to come from within ourselves, it’s going to have to come from without, and the good news of the gospel is that that’s just what God has done for sinners through his son Jesus Christ.

Question 12:

Why does the New Testament speak so strongly against teaching false doctrines?

Dr. Matt Friedeman

I think the New Testament teaches strongly against false doctrines in large measure because a theological statement, whether it's large or small, is a picture of who God is and a promise of what we can become. So, the New Testament, obviously, and the New Testament writers obviously, want us to worship God and honor him with a correct perspective, a truthful, a holy perspective of who he is. The Bible gives us that. But there's much false doctrine out there too, and the false doctrine comes in to give us a false picture of who he is. And when we begin worshiping that false picture, we become like that falsity. We become wrong. We become sinful. We become unholy.

Dr. Douglas Moo

I think the world we live in is one which has a pretty strong practical emphasis these days. We're concerned with getting things done, and maybe we're not as concerned about the truth behind what we do. I think this has affected the church to some degree as well. We say, well, let's just go out and do the work, do the work of Christ for his sake, but let's not worry about what we believe or fight about those things anymore. And yet, when we look at the NT*, while it is very deeply concerned about how we live, about the practice of the faith, it's also deeply concerned about holding onto to the truth of the faith. God has done certain things in certain ways. He reveals himself as a certain kind of God. And these truths are fundamentally important for the life of the Christian. We can't separate truth and practice. I think the NT ultimately says, in fact, that we are not going to practice the faith well unless we believe the right things about the faith. So, again and again, in the NT, we see authors combatting various false ideas that very quickly arose in the early church, because the authors are concerned to help Christians with their understanding of these things as fundamental to their life in the faith.

Nicholas Perrin, Ph.D.

You know, one of the most surprising New Testament books is the book of Galatians. And I say it's surprising because this is Paul's first letter — at least I believe it's Paul's first letter — and think about how he starts. He starts without a greeting, and every Greek letter is supposed to have a greeting, "Hey, how are you doing?" He skips that and he goes right to the punch, "I am astonished at you Galatians that you are so quickly turning to another gospel — which is no gospel at all." Then Paul goes on to say, "If anyone listens to a gospel other than the one we preached, even if it's an angel" — even if it's someone like Gabriel — "*anathema esto*," let there be an anathema, an excommunication, on such a person. What Paul is saying in his very first letter is that truth matters. And the reason he writes Galatians is because there are

* New Testament

well-meaning people following up on his ministry who are saying, “Well, you know, if you really want to be right, if you want to be on the inside, you Gentiles, you need to be circumcised, and we can help you with that.” And Paul says, “Stop! That’s false teaching.” And you say, isn’t Paul overreacting? Not at all, because Paul sees the very gospel as being imperiled by their insistence of bringing about a fuller gospel through the rite of circumcision. So, for Paul, this purity of the gospel is so important and it plays out not just into notions but in practices like circumcision. We see as we continue to walk through the New Testament chronologically, we see that false teaching is a recurring theme again and again. It occurs in Hebrews, in Jude, in Revelation. Here’s why this is such an important topic, is because people on the outside you can deal with. You say, they’re not like us, the people who persecute us. Okay, we’ll huddle together, we’ll proclaim Christ faithfully, we’re not going to buckle on that, but we know, you know, how to deal with that. Which is much more problematic is the wolves in sheep’s clothing because then they can sow confusion. There’s an element of trust there that they can build on, and if the gospel can be deconstructed by simple moves, and maybe people who are well-meaning — again, not vicious people — then this is something that has to be stopped right away. Paul saw that; the apostles saw that; Jesus saw that. And Jesus makes the final appeal. He says, at the end of the day, by their fruits you will know them. When it comes to false prophets, you will have them. They’ll be part of the tribulation, and so it’s not going to be easy. But look at the character of their life. Whatever they say, before you take that on board, contextualize it in who they are. The Bible makes a big deal out of false teaching because it’s such a dangerous element and continues to be such a dangerous element in the church today.

Rev. Clete Hux

The New Testament speaks very strongly about teaching false doctrine simply because God wants his people to understand the difference between truth and error. For instance, you have, in 1 John 4, John explaining the difference between the spirit of truth versus the spirit of error. And all throughout the New Testament, practically every book of the New Testament has something to say about false teachers, false prophecies, false prophets, and whenever you find that, it typically is surrounding the person and work of Christ, who he is and what he did on the cross. So, if the New Testament gives that much evidence of speaking so strongly about false doctrines, it’s apparently very important from God to his people that we understand the difference between truth and error.

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What Is Man?

LESSON
FOUR

THE COVENANT OF GRACE



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What Is Man?

Lesson Four

The Covenant of Grace

INTRODUCTION

In the 19th century, Charles Dickens published the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. At one point near the end of the story, the protagonist is in prison awaiting his execution. But he's rescued through a secret plot in which a free man switches identities with him. The prisoner is set free, and the one who freed him voluntarily dies in his place. In significant ways, this scenario resembles believers' experiences in the covenant of grace. Humanity's fall into sin placed us all under a death sentence. But in the covenant of grace, Jesus became our mediator and representative. And he used that position to do what we couldn't. He took away our death sentence by dying on the cross in our place. And by his righteousness, he earned God's covenant blessings, which he shares with us. So, instead of dying in our sin, now we live in Christ through God's grace.

This is the fourth lesson in our series *What Is Man?* — a series exploring theological anthropology. We've entitled this lesson "The Covenant of Grace" because we'll be focusing on the gracious covenant relationship God established with humanity after our fall into sin.

In the beginning, God made a covenant with humanity through Adam, often referred to as the "covenant of works." This covenant could have resulted in life for humanity. But Adam violated the terms of that covenant, and our entire race fell under the curse of sin. Thankfully, God didn't leave us without hope in our sinful state. Instead, he made additional promises to govern his relationship with humanity, and secured those promises in what theologians often call the "covenant of grace." The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 7, section 3, describes the purpose of the covenant of grace this way:

The Lord was pleased to make a second [covenant], commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved.

When the Confession says that this covenant is "commonly called" the covenant of grace, it means that the term comes from theologians rather than from the Bible. But this shouldn't worry us, because the same thing is true of many other terms, like "Trinity." And the ideas summarized by the term "covenant of grace" are solidly grounded in Scripture.

For those who have saving faith in Jesus, the covenant of grace repairs the damage we've suffered through Adam's sin. And it does so by providing forgiveness and redemption on the basis of God's mercy in Christ.

Our lesson on the covenant of grace will divide into four parts. First, we'll explore its background in God's eternal counsel. Second, we'll describe its origin in terms of

divine providence. Third, we'll describe its elements. And fourth, we'll survey its historical administration. Let's begin with God's eternal counsel.

ETERNAL COUNSEL

The covenant of grace has its roots in God's eternal plan for history, which theologians refer to as his "eternal counsel" or "eternal decree." From the perspective of God's eternal decree, the covenant of grace flows out of an arrangement between the persons of the Trinity.

Even before God created the world, he knew humanity would fall into sin. And in light of that reality, he created a plan to save us. And that plan involved all three persons of the Trinity committing themselves to different aspects of our salvation. Evangelical traditions disagree over the precise commitments they made. But we all agree that God planned to redeem sinners through Christ's death on our behalf.

God, in the beginning of the world, in the beginning of creation, he had already planned what to do with man... And therefore, in his creation, it was not afterthought for him to plan for Jesus Christ; for example, that Jesus eventually who would be the one who would come to redeem and cure this problem of sin... And therefore that's what we read in the Bible that he already saved the seed of a woman who would be the one to crush the serpent, would be the one to crush sin. And when it says the seed of a woman, he referred to the birth of Jesus Christ, as we know it in the Christmas story... And this is God's plan from eternity past.

— Prof. Mumo Kisau

For our purposes in this lesson, we'll focus our attention on just three aspects of God's eternal counsel that relate to our redemption. First, we'll look at the timing of God's counsel. Second, we'll consider the roles assigned to the various members of the Trinity. And third, we'll focus on the fulfillment of God's eternal counsel in the covenant of grace. Let's look first at the timing of this agreement.

TIMING

God's plan to redeem human beings from the corruption and consequences of our sin was made before he created the universe. This timing is mentioned in places like Ephesians 3:11, which speaks of God's "eternal purpose," historically accomplished by Jesus. Second Thessalonians 2:13 says that we were chosen for salvation "from the beginning." And 2 Timothy 1:9, 10 speaks of grace that was given to us "before the beginning of time."

As an example, listen to what Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3-4:

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight (Ephesians 1:3-4).

Here, Paul said that our redemption was determined before the creation of the world. And in Ephesians 1:11 we read:

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:11).

In this, and several other passages in the New Testament, God's decree of salvation is referred to by the Greek word *proorizo*. This term is most commonly translated "predestination." In context, it means that God's eternal decree of salvation was foreordained, or decided before the world began. The word *proorizo* is also used in places like Romans 8:29, 30 and Ephesians 1:5.

Different theological traditions understand God's eternal counsel regarding salvation in different ways. Some teach that God didn't choose specific people, but simply proclaimed that all who would receive Christ would be saved. Others think that God looked down the corridor of time and acknowledged those specific people that he knew would come to faith. And still others believe that God chose particular individuals purely on the basis of his good pleasure, and that his choice of them guarantees that they'll come to faith in Christ. But we can all agree that God's decision to save sinners was made as part of his eternal counsel, before the foundation of the world.

Having looked at God's eternal counsel in terms of its timing, let's turn to the roles the members of the Trinity assumed.

TRINITY

God's eternal plan of redemption involves the work of all three persons of the Trinity. The Father originated the agreement because of his desire to redeem fallen human beings from the curse of sin. In particular, Scripture says that it was the Father's plan to save us. For instance, in Ephesians 3:10-11, Paul taught:

[God's] intent was that ... the manifold wisdom of God should be made known ... according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ (Ephesians 3:10-11).

According to Paul, it was the *Father's* eternal purpose to accomplish our redemption through Christ. We see the same thing in Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; and 1 Peter 1:20.

Correspondingly, the Son agreed to add a perfect human nature to his perfect divine nature, so that he could die on behalf of sinners. That's why in 2 Timothy 1:9, Paul

said that we received grace in the Son before the beginning of time. And we see something similar in John 17:4, 5.

And just as God's eternal counsel decreed roles for the Father and the Son, it also determined the Holy Spirit's part. The Holy Spirit agreed to enable and empower the Son's work, and to apply salvation to those whom the Son redeemed. Listen to what Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2:13:

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

In this passage, Paul indicated that the Father's choice was made from the beginning, that is, before creation. And that plan involved the Holy Spirit's agreement to perform the sanctifying work of applying salvation to us. Moreover, the name "Lord" probably refers to Jesus here, so that all three persons of the Trinity are mentioned.

All three persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, were and are involved in our salvation. The Father planned our salvation from eternity past, chose his people in spite of who we would be, chose us in grace, chose us in Christ, and covenanted with the Son, that the Son would come to redeem us. He gave us to the Son, as Jesus says in his prayer in John 17, that Father had given us to him before eternity began — before creation began. And the Son has come, has taken our human nature, offered the obedience that we owed but failed to offer, offered himself as the sacrifice, and rose again. So, he came as the *accomplisher* of our redemption. The Father is the planner, the *purposer*, the giver of the Son. The Son is the *accomplisher* of our salvation, and the Holy Spirit is the *applier* of our salvation. He's the one who brings our stony hearts to life, makes them tender to God's word, who gives us the ability to believe and trust in Christ and so to be united vitally to Christ.

— Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

Having considered God's eternal counsel with respect to its timing and the persons of the Trinity, let's look at the fulfillment of this counsel in the covenant of grace.

FULFILLMENT

God's eternal counsel is his plan of what will happen in history. And the covenant of grace fulfills part of that plan. The persons of the Trinity always knew that humanity would fall into sin. And they always intended to redeem human beings through Christ's

life, death, burial, resurrection and ascension. They decreed these things in their eternal counsel. And they implemented them in history through the covenant of grace.

Consider, for instance, that the Father eternally decreed our redemption in Christ. And then he fulfilled this decree in the covenant of grace by sending the Son and the Spirit to do their work. He also appointed the Son to the office of Messiah or Christ, which was necessary to his redemptive work. In Acts 2:36, Peter told the Jews:

God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

In John 5:36, Jesus himself said:

The very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me (John 5:36).

And in John 6:38, Jesus added:

I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me (John 6:38).

Clearly, when God the Son, Jesus Christ, came to do his saving work, he was executing the Father's plan. The Father also gave the Son his powerful Spirit without limit, as we learn in John 3:34. And he prepared the Son's perfect human nature, as recorded in Hebrews 10:5.

For his part, God the Son also fulfilled his eternal agreement to redeem humanity. He veiled his divine glory, added a full human nature to his full divine nature, lived a perfect life, and died an atoning death. Listen to Paul's explanation in Philippians 2:5-8:

Christ Jesus ... being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus became incarnate for the specific purpose of dying on a cross to save us from our sins. And 2 Timothy 1:9, 10 indicates that he provided this grace to fallen human beings to fulfill God's eternal counsel. Listen to how Hebrews 2:13-17 puts it:

[Jesus] says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might ... make atonement for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:13-17).

Here, the author interpreted Isaiah 8:18 to mean that the Son had come to die as an atonement for the people the Father had previously given him, in fulfillment of their eternal counsel. We find similar statements in Romans 8:3, 4 and Galatians 4:4, 5.

And the Holy Spirit fulfills his part in God's eternal counsel, too. He enabled and empowered the Son's incarnation and subsequent work by conceiving the Son's human nature in his mother Mary, as recorded in Matthew 1:20 and Luke 1:34, 35. The Holy Spirit also empowered Christ's death on the cross, as we're told in Hebrews 9:14. And he was instrumental in Christ's resurrection, as Paul taught in Romans 8:11.

Beyond this, the Holy Spirit also continually fulfills his agreement to apply salvation to us. He regenerates our spirits, as we see in John 3:5-8, and Titus 3:5-7. He empowers us to resist sin, as we learn in Romans 7:6. He gives us the spiritual gifts that are part of our salvation, as 1 Corinthians 12:11 says. And he secures our salvation, as Ephesians 1:13, 14 teaches. We might summarize the Spirit's work by saying that he is the person of the Trinity that enables, empowers and applies the Son's saving work in the world. Wherever God's power is shown, and wherever salvation is realized, the Holy Spirit is fulfilling God's eternal counsel regarding our redemption.

God's eternal counsel regarding our redemption should be a great comfort to believers. It reminds us that the tragedies we see in history, including the murder of Jesus Christ, aren't problems that God struggles to solve. They aren't unforeseen crises that require his creative solutions. Rather, they're obstacles he has designed to accomplish his greater purposes of redemption. So, no matter what happens to us in life — and many terrible things do and will happen — God has a plan. And that plan will *unfailingly* bring believers to salvation and glory through the covenant of grace.

Having considered the background of the covenant of grace in God's eternal counsel, let's explore its origin in terms of divine providence.

PROVIDENCE

In contrast to God's eternal counsel, which was determined *before* the creation of the world, providence is God's preservation and governance of creation in *history*. It involves all of his interactions with the universe, with particular emphasis on his creatures and their actions. So, when we think about God's offer of salvation as a response to humanity's sin, we're approaching the covenant of grace from the perspective of providence.

We'll address the covenant of grace in terms of providence by looking at two ideas. First, we'll explore how human sin made the covenant of grace necessary. And second, we'll look at Christ's role as mediator of the covenant of grace. Let's look first at how our sin necessitated the covenant of grace.

SIN

Historically, the covenant of grace was necessary to restore humanity's ability to fulfill the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. As we saw in a prior lesson, Adam and Eve broke the terms of God's covenant by eating the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And God responded by cursing humanity. This resulted in

the corruption of our beings, alienation from God and other people, and physical and spiritual death.

Humanity justly deserved God's curses. But these curses created a problem; after all, God created humanity as images to reflect his glory, and as rulers that would expand his heavenly kingdom to cover the whole earth. In our fallen state, we couldn't do those things to his satisfaction. Our corruption prevented us from being *able* to please him, and even from *wanting* to please him. Our alienation kept us away from his presence, and prevented us from cooperating to build human culture throughout the world. And death kept us from enjoying the blessings of his kingdom.

But God didn't leave us without hope in our state of misery. In the face of these huge problems, God's solution was to redeem us. He didn't withhold his covenant judgment against Adam and Eve. But he did restrain it so that they didn't die right then and there. And beyond this, he graciously offered to redeem them. This offer of redemption appears in God's curse against the serpent. In Genesis 3:15, God told the serpent:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).

In executing covenant judgment, God promised that a human descendant of Eve would eventually crush the serpent's head. Revelation 12:9 identifies the serpent with Satan. So, the promise in Genesis was God's way of foretelling that a human being would eventually conquer Satan's sinful kingdom. This person would rescue humanity and save them from sin's oppression and condemnation. Theologians often refer to this announcement by the Latin term *protoevangelium*, or its Greek-based equivalent *protoeuangelion*, both of which mean "first gospel." And this first gospel marked the beginning of the historical covenant of grace.

Louis Berkhof, who lived from 1873 to 1957, explained the gracious nature of this covenant in his *Systematic Theology*, part 2, section 3, chapter 3. Listen to what he said there:

This covenant may be called a gracious covenant, because in it God allows a Surety to meet our obligations; because He Himself provides the Surety in the person of His Son, who meets the demands of justice; and because by His grace, revealed in the operation of the Holy Spirit, He enables man to live up to His covenant responsibilities. The covenant originates in the grace of God, is executed in virtue of the grace of God, and is realized in the lives of sinners by the grace of God. It is grace from the beginning to the end for the sinner.

In the initial covenant with Adam, humanity's blessings and curses were completely contingent on our works. If we obeyed, we'd be blessed; if we disobeyed, we'd be cursed. This is why God's first covenant with humanity has been called the "covenant of works." But the covenant of grace is different. Rather than depending on

our works, it depends on Jesus' works. He fulfills the terms of God's covenant for us. And then he graciously shares his covenant blessings with the people he saves.

In our theology, we sometimes speak of the covenant of works, which God made with Adam before the Fall, and the covenant of grace that God enters into with sinful humanity after the Fall as a way to bestow upon them, upon us, the great salvation in Jesus Christ. And it's important to distinguish these covenants. There are some different things going on with these covenants, and yet they also are related in some very important organic ways. In terms of understanding the distinction between them, the thing that I think is most important is to focus upon those terms "works" and "grace"... We might say that the covenant of works is all about the law, whereas the covenant of grace proclaims the gospel to us. But even in saying that, it's important to see their relationship, because it's not as if God simply cancelled out the covenant of works after our fall. It's not as if God said, "Well, sin doesn't really matter," or "Obeying my law doesn't really matter." Part of the good news of the covenant of grace is that Christ has actually come and he has satisfied God's law. Christ has done all that the covenant of works demanded. He has obeyed God's law perfectly and he's also suffered the penalty of disobeying that law. And so, as we look to Christ in the covenant of grace, we are fleeing to him and believing in him as one who has actually fulfilled all that God originally desired humanity to fulfill.

— Dr. David VanDrunen

From the perspective of providence, God could have utterly condemned humanity when we sinned. But as we've seen, that wouldn't have accomplished his purposes for us. Unfortunately, the covenant of works didn't provide a way for covenant disobedience to be forgiven. Worse, God couldn't simply ignore the covenant of works, because a covenant is a solemn oath. And God can't break his oaths.

So, God presented the covenant of grace as a solution to the problem. We can think of the covenant of grace as an expansion and continuation of the covenant of works. The covenant of grace incorporates all the terms of the covenant of works, including its divine benevolence, requirements of human loyalty, and consequences. In this way, it preserves the covenant of works. But it also introduces additional divine benevolence, additional requirements of human loyalty, and additional consequences. And it's these additions that provide the way for our redemption.

Having seen that divine providence required the covenant of grace as a response to human sin, let's focus on Christ's role as mediator of the covenant.

MEDIATOR

The covenant of works took the form of a typical suzerain-vassal treaty, with a fairly simple relationship between the covenanted parties. God was the suzerain, and humanity was the vassal. And Adam served as the head or representative of God's vassal people.

In the covenant of grace, these same parties retained their positions. God was still the suzerain, humanity was still the vassal, and, at least at first, Adam was still the head or representative of humanity. But in addition to these parties, God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, joined the covenant as its mediator. As the mediator, the Son intercedes for God's covenant people. He reconciles us to God by taking both the blame and the punishment for our sins. He preserves the integrity of the covenant, and the lives of his people, by suffering the covenant curses on our behalf. Similarly, through his obedience to the covenant's requirements of human loyalty, the Son *earns* the covenant blessings for himself. And then shares them with the sinners he redeems.

Louis Berkhof had the Son's role as mediator in mind when he referred to the covenant's "Surety" in his *Systematic Theology*, part 2, section 3, chapter 3. Listen again to this part of his explanation:

This covenant may be called ... gracious ... because ... God allows a Surety to meet our obligations; [and] because He Himself provides the Surety in the person of His Son.

The Son began to mediate the covenant of grace when it was first made — back in the Garden of Eden, when God first offered redemption to Adam and Eve. And he's continued to mediate ever since. Throughout the Old Testament age, his mediation provided forgiveness and salvation for the Old Testament saints, all on the basis of his promised future work. No one was ever saved on the basis of his or her own merit or worthiness, since no works of obedience can erase our sin. And no one was ever saved on the basis of sacrificed animals, since no animal's death could really be a sufficient substitute for a human being. The author of Hebrews put it this way in Hebrews 10:11:

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins (Hebrews 10:11).

As Paul explained in Colossians 2:17:

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ (Colossians 2:17).

You know, one of the questions we ask ourselves very instinctively when we realize that we are saved on the basis of Christ's historical work, what about the Old Testament saints? Were they saved? Were

they saved through this achievement of Christ even though it had not yet happened? Or was God perhaps operating by different ground rules back then? The Bible tells us that they were saved by their faith, their faith in the promises that God had made to them. Now, that was sufficient for their salvation, but on what basis could God offer salvation to an Old Testament saint who had expressed saving faith? Unknowns to them, the necessary and singular basis for all salvation is the merits of Jesus Christ. So, in a sense, they were anonymous Christians. They would not be fully informed about the basis for their salvation in their lifetimes, but let us be sure that there is no other name under heaven whereby anyone, before or after the cross, can be saved.

— Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

The Old Testament ordinances were symbols that God's people performed in faith. But the power of these ordinances was the mediatorial work of the Son. That's why Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day, as we read in John 8:56. And it's why so many figures in the New Testament claimed that Moses and the prophets explained the work that Jesus would come to do. Abraham made this claim in Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:29-31. Phillip said the same thing in John 1:45. Paul said it in Acts 26:22 and 28:23. And after his resurrection, Jesus explained it on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27, and to the gathered disciples in Luke 24:44.

The Son's mediation of the covenant of grace centered around his incarnation as Jesus, his life of perfect faith and obedience, his death on the cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven. As mediator of the covenant of grace, he fulfilled the covenant of works on our behalf, and guaranteed that we would receive its blessings.

In Romans 5:12-19, Paul contrasted Adam's role in the covenant of works with the Son's role in the covenant of grace. And he did this to show how the Son's role as mediator fulfilled both covenants. He began in verses 12-14 by explaining that Adam's sin had thrown the entire human race under the curse of sin and death. And at the end of this passage, he indicated that Adam and Jesus held similar covenant roles. In Romans 5:14, he wrote:

Adam ... was a pattern of the one to come (Romans 5:14).

Then, in Romans 5:15-19, Paul argued that Adam and Jesus had parallel but opposite histories as our covenant representatives. Adam's history revolved around sin, failure, condemnation and death. In Adam, humanity received the only covenant consequence available to us: condemnation. Listen to Paul's words about *Adam* in Romans 5:15-19:

The many died by the trespass of the one man ... The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation ... [B]y the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man ... [T]he result of one

trespass was condemnation for all men ... [T]hrough the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners (Romans 5:15-19).

All humanity was condemned in Adam because the covenant of works was based entirely on justice. It didn't provide a mechanism for mercy and forgiveness. It didn't provide a mediator. So, once we were condemned, there was nothing anyone could do within the covenant of works to reverse our condemnation.

But in this same passage, Paul also explained that Jesus succeeded where Adam had failed. Jesus' righteous works benefited us because the covenant of grace *does* provide a mechanism for mercy and forgiveness. And that mechanism is the mediation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As a result, Jesus' history centers on obedience, righteousness, justification and life. Now listen to what Paul said about *Jesus* in Romans 5:15-19:

God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow[ed] to the many ... [T]he gift followed many trespasses and brought justification... [T]hose who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness [will] reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ... [T]he result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men... [T]hrough the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (Romans 5:15-19).

Redemption is possible under the covenant of grace because Jesus isn't just our representative; he's also our mediator. And that enables him to take away our personal, individual guilt. As we read in Hebrews 9:15:

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (Hebrews 9:15).

And 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says:

There is ... one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Jesus' role as the mediator of the covenant of grace is really surprising. I would say, first of all, that the Lord Jesus is priest and sacrifice that initiates the covenant of grace, or the new covenant, if you will... And at the Last Supper, the Lord Jesus in the Gospels explained that his sacrificial death had significance at two levels. Yes, it was an atoning sacrifice in which he suffered the wrath of the holy God for our sins in our place so that we could escape it, but he also described his death as a covenant-initiating sacrifice. His blood

initiated the new covenant, he says in Matthew and Luke very clearly. So, his death is that sacrifice that brings about the new covenant era. So, Jesus is, on the one hand, the priest offering the sacrifice, and yet surprisingly, he is the sacrifice himself.

— Dr. Charles L. Quarles

Jesus' role as our fully divine and fully human covenant mediator is what enabled him to atone for our sin by dying in our place. And because this solution to human sin will always be available in the covenant of grace, there will never be a need for divine providence to introduce another covenant, another covenant representative, or another mediator.

So far in our lesson, we've considered the covenant of grace in terms of God's eternal counsel and divine providence. Now let's turn to our third major topic: the covenant's elements.

ELEMENTS

We began our study of theological anthropology by focusing on the origin of humanity. As part of our discussion, we described humanity's original covenant with God in terms of three elements common to ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties. These treaties consisted of: the benevolence of the suzerain toward the vassal, the loyalty the suzerain required from the vassal, and the consequences of the vassal's loyalty or disloyalty to the covenant. With these elements in place, ancient Near Eastern covenants became binding laws between nations.

And something similar was true of God's covenants with humanity. The original covenant with Adam — the covenant of works — was based on God's divine benevolence toward us. For instance, he created our first parents, assigned them authority over creation, and gave them food and shelter. God also required human loyalty in the form of heartfelt priestly and royal obligations. Among other things, God expected Adam and Eve to serve him in the Garden of Eden, and to expand the borders of his kingdom to fill the earth. And the consequences of the covenant included the blessing of greater life if Adam and Eve trusted and obeyed the covenant, and the curse of death and condemnation if they distrusted and disobeyed. The covenant of grace maintains all of these elements from the covenant of works. But it also expands them to account for humanity's sinful nature and Christ's mediation.

We'll explore each of these expanded elements in order. First, we'll consider divine benevolence in the covenant of grace. Second, we'll reflect on the human loyalty it requires. And third, we'll address its consequences. Let's begin with divine benevolence.

DIVINE BENEVOLENCE

In many ways, God's benevolence is the most prominent feature of the covenant of grace. Goodness and kindness motivated the Father to send the Son as our mediator, and motivated the Son to rejoice in that assignment. Benevolence moved God to create a covenant arrangement in which he himself would fulfill the conditions that we couldn't fulfill, so that we could be given rewards that we could never earn. It's what makes the announcement of the gospel such good news — that the priceless gifts of forgiveness and life are available to us for free. We serve a great and loving God, who has sworn a solemn covenant vow to be good to us.

God's benevolence is the first part of the covenant of grace that Scripture reveals. In Genesis 3:14-19, when God first enforced the consequences of the covenant of works, he displayed tremendous benevolence. The covenant of works stated that Adam and Eve, and all humanity with them, could justly be put to death if they ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But when God rendered his judgments, he tempered his justice with mercy, goodness and kindness. The first benevolence was that he let humanity live. He allowed us to continue to multiply and fill the earth. He permitted us to continue to cultivate the ground, and to produce sufficient food for our survival. And most importantly, he promised to send us a redeemer that would reverse the curse of sin. As he told the serpent in Genesis 3:15:

The woman[’s] ... offspring ... will crush your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3:15).

As you'll recall, this judgment was a figurative way of saying that, ultimately, a human being would conquer Satan's kingdom and rescue us from the curse of sin. This provision alone would have been an amazingly benevolent gift. But God increased his benevolence even more when this redeemer turned out to be God the Son himself. Jesus agreed to bear our sin in his own person on the cross. And even before his incarnation, he agreed to serve as mediator or "surety" for the covenant of grace. Beyond this, the Holy Spirit contributed benevolence as well when he agreed to work within sinful humanity to bring us to faith, so that we would receive redemption. Paul talked about this aspect of the Holy Spirit's work in 1 Corinthians 2:12-14, where he wrote:

We have ... received ... the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us... The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

We find similar ideas in places like John 6:63-65 and Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Of course, theological traditions don't always agree on how the Spirit works to bring us to faith. We can illustrate the Spirit's work of conversion in terms of two roads or paths. One path represents receiving Christ as Savior. And the other represents rejecting him. All evangelical Christians should agree that the Holy Spirit providentially

causes people to encounter the gospel, and to be faced with this decision. But there are at least three major views regarding the Spirit's involvement in this process.

First, some theological traditions believe that human beings have the natural ability to choose either the path to salvation or the path to destruction. In this view, the Spirit's providential work focuses on bringing us into an encounter with the gospel.

The second view agrees that the Holy Spirit orchestrates our lives so that we encounter the gospel. But it also believes that fallen human beings lack the natural ability to respond positively to the gospel. In our fallen state, we would always choose the path of destruction. So, in this view, the Holy Spirit provides prevenient grace, or grace that comes before saving faith, that enables us to choose the path of salvation. Once we receive this grace, both paths are open to us, and we can choose either to receive or to reject Christ.

The third major view agrees that the Holy Spirit causes us to encounter the gospel and that we lack the natural ability to choose life. But, in this view, the Holy Spirit provides *irresistible* grace to those he chooses to save. This grace not only *enables* us to choose the path of salvation, but actually *ensures* that we will. But regardless of the view we take, all Evangelicals should agree that the Spirit's work is an act of goodness and kindness toward us.

Having considered divine benevolence as one of the elements of the covenant of grace, let's turn our attention to human loyalty.

HUMAN LOYALTY

The covenant of grace requires absolute obedience to God, just as the covenant of works did. In fact, the requirements of human loyalty actually increased in the covenant of grace. We'll look at this idea in more depth when we explore the covenant's administration later in this lesson. So, for now, we simply want to make the point that the covenant of grace requires heartfelt human loyalty.

Under the covenant of works, the requirement of human loyalty had to be fulfilled twice. First, it had to be fulfilled by Adam, our covenant representative. If Adam had been fully loyal to God, his obedience would have been counted as humanity's corporate obedience. And although Adam failed in this regard, the covenant of grace continues to hold us accountable to this standard. We can't avoid its judgment simply because we're unable to change our past.

Second, the covenant of works also required our personal loyalty. For instance, Eve wasn't judged only as part of Adam's race. She was also judged for her own actions. This indicates that God required her personal obedience. It might have been possible, for instance, for Adam to have obeyed God but for one of his descendants to have fallen into sin. In such a case, while this sin wouldn't have condemned all humanity, it would have condemned the sinner.

But one of the beautiful benevolences in the covenant of grace is that Jesus acts as our covenant head and mediator. As our covenant head, he's already fulfilled the requirement of corporate human loyalty through his perfect obedience to God. And as our mediator, he's stood in the place of each of us, and thereby fulfilled the requirements of

personal loyalty. Wherever we've sinned, he's taken the blame. And wherever he's been faithful, he's credited his faithfulness to our account. So, even though the requirements of human loyalty have *increased* in the covenant of grace, they've become much *easier* to meet — because Jesus, our mediator, fulfills them on our behalf.

I think the first place to start when we think about this issue of our loyalty to God is to realize that apart from the grace of God that has been demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ that we will not have the ability to be loyal to God. I think that's the first place to begin in realizing that we need to rely on a power or a grace that is outside of us... And what we need to understand is that if we think that the loyalty comes from within us apart from what God has done for us in the person of Jesus Christ then we will fail even though we're trying so desperately to be loyal. So we need to look at the loyalty of another. We need to look at the fact that Jesus Christ was the perfect servant who came to meet the demands of the radical nature of the law, and that loyalty, and that fidelity, and that allegiance, and that obedience, and that service now gets imputed to us.

— Dr. Stephen Um

Theologian John Wesley, who lived from 1703 to 1791, described God's requirement of human loyalty in section 1, part 8 of his *Sermon 6: The Righteousness of Faith*. Listen to what he said:

Strictly speaking, the covenant of grace doth not require us to do anything at all, as absolutely and indispensably necessary in order to our justification; but only, to believe in Him who, for the sake of his Son, and the propitiation which he hath made, “justifieth the ungodly that worketh not.”

Here, Wesley appealed to Romans 4:5 as proof that the only thing the covenant of grace absolutely requires of us personally is to have faith in God for our salvation in Christ. In this regard, Wesley concurred with the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 7, section 3, which we read earlier. Listen again to what it says:

The Lord was pleased to make a second [covenant], commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved.

Evangelicals agree that the only thing we absolutely have to do to be saved is possess saving faith in God. And this is in full agreement with the teaching of Scripture. As just one example, recall Paul's second missionary journey, recorded in Acts 15:36–18:22. During that journey, Paul and Silas were jailed in Philippi for preaching the gospel. But around midnight, an earthquake freed them from their chains. The jailor

assumed they had fled, and was about to kill himself, when Paul shouted for him to stop because the prisoners had chosen to remain. The jailor was so impressed by their concern for his life that he immediately wanted to convert to Christianity. Listen to the conversation between the jailor and Paul and Silas in Acts 16:30-31:

[The jailor] brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:30-31).

Christ’s mediation in the covenant of grace is so effective that it fulfills all God’s covenant requirements for us. Even our faith doesn’t count as a positive work that we’ve done. Our faith is just the means God ordinarily uses to credit Christ’s righteousness to us. But that doesn’t mean that God has lessened the requirements of his covenant. And he certainly doesn’t tell us that we’re free to sin. On the contrary, as Jesus told his disciples in John 14:15:

If you love me, you will obey what I command (John 14:15).

The English Puritan pastor Walter Marshall, who lived from 1628 to 1680, addressed this matter in “direction” or “chapter” 8 of his book, *The Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification*. Listen to what he said:

It is, indeed, one part of our salvation, to be delivered from the bondage of the covenant of works; but the end of this is, not that we may have liberty to sin (which is the worst of slavery) but that we may fulfil the royal law of liberty ... What a strange kind of salvation do they desire, that care not for holiness! They would be saved, and yet be altogether dead in sin, aliens from the life of God, bereft of the image of God, deformed by the image of Satan, his slaves and vassals to their own filthy lusts, utterly unmeet for the enjoyment of God in glory. Such a salvation as that was never purchased by the blood of Christ.

There have always been Christians who believe that as long as we profess faith in Jesus, we don’t have to worry about obeying God. But Scripture makes it clear that true believers are still required to demonstrate loving, sincere loyalty to God. We do this partly by continuing to have faith in Jesus, and partly by obeying God’s covenant law. We see this in places like James 2:22-25; and Revelation 14:12.

Now, it’s true that if we really believe the gospel, we can’t fail to be saved. Jesus’ sacrifice ensures that we’ll never fall under God’s curse. And his perfect loyalty ensures that we’ll receive many covenant blessings as gracious gifts — things like forgiveness and eternal life. But our actions still have covenant consequences for this world and the next. For example, Hebrews 12:5-11 teaches that God lovingly disciplines us in this world when we sin. Moreover, our personal loyalty — even though it’s imperfect in this world — earns rewards from God in the next world. We see this in Matthew 6:20; Mark 10:21; and Luke 12:33, 34.

So, when we think about human loyalty in the covenant of grace, it's critical to remember that Jesus has entirely taken away our curse. As long as we remain faithful to him, we can never suffer the everlasting negative consequences of God's covenant. But we're still obligated not to sin. In a similar way, many of our blessings are purchased by Christ, and aren't dependent on our personal loyalty. Even so, the covenant still obligates us to obey him.

We're saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus — no other way to be saved. Some might ask, "Then what motive do you have to obey him? What motive do you have to love?" I think the motive actually comes in the next couple verses. This all comes out of Ephesians 2, of course, where it says, well, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works." So, if we're saved by grace through faith — I think you just keep on tracking that down — we're going to be doing good works. Now, the question comes, if we're *not* doing good works, what are we? I think it's a fair question: Are we really saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus?

— Dr. Matt Friedeman

Now that we've looked at the elements of divine benevolence and human loyalty, let's address the consequences of the covenant of grace.

CONSEQUENCES

From a legal perspective, the covenant of grace includes and expands on all the consequences of the covenant of works. As Paul taught in Romans 5:12-14, death is still a corporate result of Adam's sin, just as it was in the covenant of works. And we still have to suffer for our personal sins, too, just as Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3:16-18. Moreover, the covenant curses have been increased now that Christ has come. As we read in Hebrews 10:28-29:

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:28-29).

In the same way, the blessings of the covenant of works have also been included and expanded in the covenant of grace. In the covenant of works, Adam and humanity would have received everlasting life on earth if they had obeyed God. In fact, their banishment from the Garden of Eden was designed to keep them from the Tree of Life, to make sure that they *wouldn't* live forever. And the covenant of grace restores this

blessing in the form of eternal physical and spiritual life. It promises that ultimately we'll live in the earthly paradise of the new heavens and new earth. We'll even have restored access to the Tree of Life, just as John foresaw in Revelation 21:1–22:5.

But more than this, our redemption under the covenant of grace increases our blessings beyond those offered in the covenant of works. For instance, in our final state of redemption, the possibility of sin and its consequences will be completely removed.

In an earlier lesson, we referred to the teaching of Augustine, the bishop of Hippo who lived from A.D. 354 to 430. He described humanity's original, sinless state as *posse non peccare*, meaning that humanity had the ability not to sin. But under the covenant of works, they also had the ability to sin, or *posse peccare*. Augustine taught that, through our redemption in Christ, we'll eventually reach the state of *non posse peccare*, which is Latin for the inability to sin. This state will be far better than even our best condition under the covenant of works, because it will secure us forever in God's blessings.

Moreover, under the covenant of grace, our blessings now include union with Christ. Paul was so engaged with this idea that he referred to it constantly throughout his writings. Phrases like "in Christ," "in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord" and "in him" appear well over a hundred times in his works. Some theologians understand this union with Christ to be a matter of covenant representation. Others understand it in terms of a spiritual union. And others believe it includes both. But in all cases, our union with our mediator Jesus Christ creates a personal relationship that transforms every aspect of our lives for the better. And its blessings far exceed anything we would have received in the covenant of works. After all, now we receive the blessings that Christ himself earns as God's perfect Son and king over his kingdom, instead of just the blessings we could have earned ourselves.

And of course, we can't forget the blessing that if we have faith in Jesus, he bears the covenant curses in our place. When we sin, we still violate God's covenant and earn its negative consequences. But instead of punishing *us*, God assigns our punishment to *Jesus*. And Jesus already dealt with it on the cross. So, for believers, the covenant of grace has no curses; it only has blessings! Because of this fact, older theologians sometimes referred to Adam's sin as a "fortunate" or "happy" event. Certainly his sin was evil, and God rightly condemned it. But redemption in the covenant of grace is so much better than humanity's original condition that we're actually better off for Adam having sinned.

The scholastic theologian Thomas Aquinas, who was born around 1225 and died in 1274, described this fact in his *Summa Theologica*, part 3, question 1, article 3, reply to objection 3. Listen to how he put it:

There is no reason why human nature should not have been raised to something greater after sin. For God allows evils to happen in order to bring a greater good therefrom; hence it is written: "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound." Hence, too ... we say: "O happy fault, that merited such and so great a Redeemer!"

The covenant of grace adds so many wonderful elements to God's relationship with his people that its blessings are nearly limitless. God's benevolence is tremendously increased by his offer of redemption and his appointment of his own Son as our mediator.

The covenant requirement of human loyalty is met by our mediator on our behalf, and we receive his Holy Spirit to strengthen our growth in faith, obedience and holiness. For those who believe, the covenant curses are completely erased, while the covenant blessings are magnified by our share in Jesus' own inheritance. Adam's failure in the covenant of works placed humanity in a terrible position before God. But the redemption that we receive through the covenant of grace far more than makes up for it.

So far, we've discussed the covenant of grace in terms of its relationship to God's eternal counsel, its origin in divine providence, and its elements. Now let's turn to our final major topic: its historical administration.

ADMINISTRATION

The covenant of grace was governed, or administered, by various covenant representatives. As we consider the historical administration of the covenant of grace, it's important to recognize that different theological traditions define these administrations in different ways. And often, these differences revolve around how they define God's covenant people. For instance, some believe that only believers are included in the covenant of grace. Others believe it includes believers and their children. Others approach this topic from a different perspective. They describe a cumulative sequence of covenant administrations that initially included all humanity and became more exclusive with each successive covenant. And there are other views as well.

When we think of the kingdom of God across the canon of Scripture and across redemptive history ... there's changes in the administration of it as you work through the biblical covenants and reach their culmination in Christ. So, for instance, particularly in the Old Testament, as God brings his salvific plan through the nation of Israel into the old covenant, he's working primarily with a nation, he's working primarily in terms of a theocracy, a visible representation in terms of that nation, where, through them, they will bring about the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the Lord Jesus, and you see a lot of the administration of that kingdom tied to them in a particular place, location, land, under particular rule and government and so on. And then, as you think of its fulfillment in Christ, as you bring the kingdom to pass in the new covenant, there are some changes. Christ obviously is the king. He is the one who fulfills the type and shadows of the Old Testament. He fulfills the role of David and Moses. And he's the one who, in his life and death and resurrection, inaugurates the kingdom, brings God's saving reign to this world, and then brings about an international community — what we call the church, the “one new man,” Jews and Gentile together — so that he now rules in and through the church. Even though he's ascended back to heaven, he rules in and through the

church but not in a kind of theocracy in the same way that it was with Israel... And so, some of those are the changes that have occurred as God's rule breaks in through the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, culminating now in Christ in the church as the church now takes the gospel of kingdom to the uttermost parts of the world, announcing that, "The King has come! Enter his saving reign now before he comes again and will finalize salvation and also will execute judgment."

— Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

For our purposes in this lesson, we'll focus on those areas of the covenant's historical administration where Evangelicals generally agree. Specifically, we'll look at the development of God's covenant under its prominent representatives or heads — Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. We'll also look at the way its historical development pointed toward the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity.

ADAM

As we've already seen, the covenant of grace was instituted with Adam in Genesis 3:15, immediately after he fell into sin. Because Adam was the covenant head at this point, theologians often refer to this as the "Adamic administration" of the covenant. This administration provided human beings with the immediate opportunity to reconcile our relationships with God. Through this reconciliation, we could once again focus on building God's kingdom throughout the world. This goal is evident not only through God's refusal to destroy us, but also in the subsequent account of Adam's faithful descendants in Genesis 4:25–5:32. Listen to how this passage begins in Genesis 4:25-26:

[Adam's wife] gave birth to a son and named him Seth ... Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:25-26).

That humanity "began to call on the name of the Lord" shows that they were determined to fulfill their covenant obligations to him. And the genealogy that follows demonstrates that they were fulfilling their obligation to multiply and fill the earth with images and likenesses of God. In fact, the very words "image" and "likeness" are used in Genesis 5:1, 3.

NOAH

Following Adam, the covenant was confirmed with Noah after the flood. The Noachic administration is mentioned in Genesis 6:18 and 8:21–9:17. As we saw in an

earlier lesson, this administration explicitly incorporated all the terms of Adam's administration. You'll recall that, in Genesis 6:18, God told Noah:

I will establish my covenant with you (Genesis 6:18).

Here, the word establish translates the Hebrew verb *qum*. This is the normal word for confirming an *existing* covenant.

The Noahic administration also expanded the covenant blessings by adding God's promise never again to destroy the earth with floodwaters. God even provided the rainbow as a sign of this covenant. In this way, he guaranteed there would always be a platform for life on earth, so that his faithful people could pursue his covenant blessings. God also reaffirmed his kingdom purposes for humanity by giving Noah and his family the same command he had given to Adam and Eve. In Genesis 9:1, he told them:

Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1).

ABRAHAM

After Noah, Abraham was the next prominent representative of God's covenant people. The Abrahamic covenant administration is mentioned in Genesis 15:1-21 and 17:1-21. Under Abraham, the covenant included the terms from the Noahic administration. And it added things like God's promise to turn Abraham's descendants into a mighty nation, and to bless all nations through them. During this administration, God revealed that he would fulfill his purpose for humanity through Abraham's descendants — especially the nation of Israel. Specifically, they would be charged with expanding God's kingdom throughout the earth. As Paul wrote in Romans 4:13:

Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world (Romans 4:13).

The words of Paul — that the promise or that the inheritance of Abraham would be taking the whole world — is really, I don't think, anything new. He's not offering a new interpretation. He is continuing the story that God began with Abraham. And the redemptive covenant work that God starts with Abraham encapsulates the whole program, really. And I think you can find it all in a kind of a seed-form in Genesis 12, in the first three verses. And you see specific promises made to Abraham for his own person: he would be a great nation; his seed would become this nation; his name would be great. And then finally, it extends in verse 3 to encompass the whole world: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed." And so, we see Abraham kind of setting the contours of the whole program that would spread to the whole world at one point. And so, Paul, with the

beginning of the new work of God by a pouring out of the Spirit in the church, we have seen a new phase or a new piece of this redemptive plan come to fulfillment.

— Dr. Mark Saucy

MOSES

The next major covenant representative after Abraham was Moses. The terms of the Mosaic administration are summarized in places like Exodus 19–24, and described in great detail throughout the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

With Moses, God built on the Abrahamic administration, confirming his promises to Abraham in places like Deuteronomy 4:31 and 7:8-13. He also provided structure for the nation of Israel, and gave them the first extensively codified version of his law. And of course, he redirected them to the task of building his kingdom throughout the world. As Moses told the people in Deuteronomy 28:1:

If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth (Deuteronomy 28:1).

In Moses' day, much of the earth had been filled with human images of God. But it wasn't yet ready to serve as God's kingdom because humanity was in rank rebellion. So, under the Mosaic covenant administration, Israel was to bring redemption to all nations through its message of God's truth. And if they were successful, God's faithful people would rule over the world on his behalf.

DAVID

Following Moses, the next major covenant development occurred with David. The Davidic administration is described in 2 Samuel 7, and Psalms 89, 132. In David's day, God confirmed the Mosaic administration. But he also revealed that the greatest covenant blessings would be fulfilled under the kingship of David and his dynastic heirs. As we read in Psalm 89:3-4:

I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, "I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations" (Psalm 89:3-4).

JESUS

After David, the next and final covenant representative was — and still is — Jesus. Unlike the prior administrations of the covenant, which are named after their representatives, Jesus' administration is typically referred to as the "new covenant." This

name originally comes from Jeremiah 31:31, which is quoted in Hebrews 8:8. Jeremiah taught that God would eventually establish a permanent, unbreakable covenant in which his people would receive all his covenant blessings. And on the night Jesus was arrested, during the Last Supper, the Lord himself said that his crucifixion would ratify this new covenant. Luke 22:20 records Jesus' words to his disciples:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20).

The Hebrew and Greek words for “new” in the phrase “new covenant” — *chadash* in Hebrew and *kainos* in Greek — can also be translated “renewed.” And “renewed” is certainly the meaning intended when Scripture speaks of the new covenant as an administration of the covenant of grace. The idea is that God is renewing or reaffirming his covenant with his people through a fresh covenant administration, not that he's abandoning the covenant he's sworn to keep.

The renewed nature of this covenant administration is evident throughout the book of Hebrews, which contrasts the old Mosaic administration of the covenant of grace with the new and final administration under Christ. For instance, Hebrews 5–7 contrasts the old Levitical priesthood with Jesus' new priesthood — a priesthood that revives the tradition of the Old Testament priest-king Melchizedek. Hebrews 8 quotes Jeremiah 31 to show that the new covenant will be better than the old covenant. And the context of Jeremiah 31 makes it clear that the original prophecy referred to the restoration and renewal of the blessings of the Mosaic covenant administration.

In Hebrews 8, the author finally introduces the term “covenant,” the covenant ensured by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Notice that what he says is that Jesus has done a great ministry, because now he is the mediator of a better covenant, which means that the covenant itself is better. This can be understood as a discontinuation of the previous covenant and, therefore, understood as a completely new covenant. But others believe it is a continuation, a fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant. The author talks in chapter 8, and following, about the covenant that Jeremiah the prophet mentioned in chapter 31. He says that there will be a time when the Lord establishes a new covenant. Let me make it clear that, for Jeremiah, the new covenant would take place in the future. So, here we are looking at a contrast: Is it a continuation or something completely new? There's the dilemma. As Christians, we think differently about this issue. My personal opinion is that the new covenant is a continuation because, as I see it, the Lord has always worked in his people — in his Jewish people and later in his Gentile people — throughout the history of mankind. Salvation has always been by grace. The difference is that, in the Old Testament, Jesus had not made his sacrifice yet, so the people of the Old Testament could not look back at it like we can. We have a better covenant now because salvation is already accomplished, and we should not be afraid to fail, because Jesus has already

achieved forgiveness for our every sin. Therefore, the covenant is better but it is also new in the sense that now there are no barriers or limitations imposed by the law. We don't need the same sacrifices; we don't need the same laws about food; we don't need to have the same celebrations, etc. Now *everything* is through faith, trusting in Jesus. So at the end of chapter 8, the author says that the new covenant has made the last covenant obsolete and that that which is obsolete and aging will soon disappear. Therefore the old covenant is over and the new covenant is its continuation.

— Dr. Alvin Padilla, translation

The renewed nature of the new covenant is also evident in Hebrews 9:15, where the author said:

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance — now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (Hebrews 9:15).

As this verse indicates, the “new” covenant administration maintains continuity with the “first” or “old” administration. Specifically, the new administration pays the old debt of sin and fulfills the old promises of inheritance. And it accomplishes this through its mediator.

The great expansion presented in the new covenant is that the mediator finally fulfills the terms of the covenant on behalf of his people. For instance, he underwent Abrahamic circumcision in Luke 2:21. He affirmed and kept the Mosaic Law, as we read in Matthew 5:17-19, Luke 24:44, and Romans 8:4. And he inherited the Davidic office of Messiah, as demonstrated in Matthew 1:1-25.

Moreover, by keeping all these covenant terms, Jesus inherited all their associated blessings. We see this in Romans 4:3-25, Galatians 3:14-16, and many other places. But the most remarkable part is that Jesus obtained these blessings in order to share them with us, his faithful covenant people. In Christ, our covenant mediator and covenant head, *all* the human loyalty required by *every* covenant administration is fulfilled, and we receive every blessing of every administration.

Christ hasn't shared all his blessings with us yet. But as Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:13, 14, he *has* given us the Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing our future inheritance. And when Jesus returns, he'll share all his blessings with us in God's earthly kingdom. This will happen when humanity's task of kingdom building is finally completed in the new heavens and new earth described in Revelation 21:1–22:5. In the meantime, the Spirit empowers us to build God's kingdom, and to prepare our hearts to enjoy his presence forever.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on the covenant of grace, we've explored God's eternal counsel by looking at its timing, the roles of the persons of the Trinity, and the fulfillment of God's counsel in the covenant of grace. We've considered the covenant as a work of God's providence by focusing on human sin, and on Christ as our mediator. We've described the elements of the covenant of grace as consisting of divine benevolence, human loyalty, and the consequences of blessings and curses. And we've surveyed the historical administration of the covenant of grace under Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus.

Throughout this series on theological anthropology, we've traced humanity's condition from our original state as sinless images of God, to our cursed state as fallen sinners, and to our gracious redemption in Jesus Christ. We've also seen that God's purposes for bringing us through these stages are good and benevolent — he didn't allow us to suffer the consequences of sin without first determining to rescue us. And in our redeemed state, we're in just the place he wants us so that he can complete that plan. We've been spiritually empowered to continue the kingdom-building commission of our first parents. We've been forgiven for every transgression, reprieved from every covenant curse, so that now all that's left to do is to praise him for his benevolence, to live in loyalty to his covenant, and to await our final blessings in the new heavens and new earth.

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What Is Man?

LESSON
FOUR

The Covenant of Grace Faculty Forum



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What Is Man?

Lesson Four: The Covenant of Grace

Faculty Forum

With

Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

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Dr. Mike Fabarez

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Dr. Matt Friedeman

Dr. David B. Garner

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

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Question 1:

In God's eternal counsel, what plans did he make to redeem sinners?

Dr. David VanDrunen

Of course there's a great mystery when we speak about God's eternal counsel. We, as finite, temporal creatures, can't even imagine what it is to exist outside of time. And yet, Scripture does tell us some things about God's eternal plan, especially his eternal plan regarding our salvation. And I think the place to start when thinking about this, is to turn to the opening of Ephesians, and Ephesians says that God elected us "*in Christ.*" And that really gets to the heart of God's eternal counsel for us, that God planned to save us through his Son. And even that term "Christ" is, that's a term for the Son as he has become incarnate. And that gives us a clue that even from eternity God has willed to save us through his Son becoming a man like us. And so, for that and other reasons we confess that, even in eternity, God willed Christ to come, to go to the cross, and to accomplish the things that he has... And this makes sense with what we find in the Gospels. How many times in the Gospels does Christ speak about coming to do his Father's will? Christ didn't just show up on the scene and do what he wanted. He came into this world in order to fulfill what had already been established long before he came, even from outside of time, from all eternity. And Jesus prays — I think of his great High Priestly Prayer in John 17 — he says that "Father, I have glorified you by finishing the work that you gave me to do" and now he asks that the Father would glorify him again with that glory he had from the beginning of the world. So, there we see that God, from all eternity, God's counsel for our salvation was centered in Christ, centered in him coming and fulfilling the work which he did, and then being glorified because he fulfilled it so faithfully.

Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

The book of Ephesians is such a wonderful letter that we have of the apostle Paul. It's a letter that captures so much of God's plan right across redemptive history and the fulfillment that has come in Jesus Christ. Particularly in Ephesians 3, he speaks of the mystery that has been revealed... A mystery is that which was hidden in ages past, part of God's eternal plan, that as history unfolds it becomes disclosed; it becomes known. And, of course, in Ephesians 3, what he is speaking of in terms of that which was hidden in God's eternal plan which is disclosed is the relationship of the Jew and Gentile into the church. As you go back into the Old Testament era, we begin with Adam and see the universal effects of God's plan. God has made us image bearers, he has tied us to creation. In light of sin and the Fall, there is a separation of those who are God's and those who are not. And in the Abrahamic covenant, especially, you see the redemptive purposes, where through Abraham and his seed, he is going to be the means by which salvation will come to the world, and it will bring a blessing to all nations. So "the nations" picks up that universal focus of God's purposes, but through a man, a nation, ultimately through the Lord Jesus Christ. As you walk through the Old Testament, there is many, many Abrahamic passages that are picked up, that Israel as people, who are a means by which the Savior will come, will also incorporate the Gentiles, that in God's purposes Jew and Gentile will be brought together in Christ in one new man, the church. And that's what Paul is speaking of in Ephesians 3, so that in Christ now, in this place in redemptive history we see more clearly God's eternal plan.

Rev. Jim Maples

The free and immutable counsel of his will motivated God to redeem fallen mankind as Paul said in Ephesians ... "according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with his will." We can say that God's plan to redeem fallen humanity was eternal, even. Ephesians 3:11, Paul says according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus. And thus God's motivation to redeem fallen humanity does not depend upon any other thing or any other condition than his goodness alone.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

The agreement between the Father and the Son occurred in eternity past. It was an agreement in which the Father plans the work of salvation on behalf of his people. He also determines that he will provide for the Son a body, a physical body in which the Son will come and be incarnate. And the Son agrees to come to this earth, lay down his life on the cross — a perfect life — lay that perfect life down on the cross, and be a substitute for God's people. Also, part of that covenant of redemption is the sending forth of the Holy Spirit who takes the work of Christ and then applies it to God's people.

Question 2:**Which persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation?****Dr. David VanDrunen**

Salvation is a thoroughly Trinitarian action. And I think we can see this from various angles. One rather simple way to see it is to think of the Father especially as the one who has established the plan of salvation and from all eternity has set apart his Son to be our Savior. We think of the Second Person of the Trinity as the one whose special work was to come in the fullness of time to become incarnate, to be obedient unto death, to offer himself up as a sacrifice for sins, to rise, and to be exalted on our behalf. And then, the Holy Spirit is the one whose special work is the application of what Christ has done for our benefit. Christ has accomplished salvation; he's earned our salvation. The Spirit is the one who has the special work of opening our hearts and applying all the benefits of Christ to us in our lives. But there's even a sense in which that's not sufficient. It's even richer than that, because all of those things that I mentioned, each of those individually are really Trinitarian works. It wasn't just the Father who planned our salvation from all eternity. Father, Son and Spirit together willed our salvation. When we think about Christ coming, it wasn't Christ acting all alone, but he was acting according to the will of his Father. And, you think of Hebrews 9 says that he went to the cross by the Spirit. And even as we think about the application of salvation by the Spirit, what is the Spirit doing? The Spirit is applying Christ to us. So, whatever aspect of our salvation we're thinking about, we have to say that this is a Trinitarian act and that Father, Son and Spirit work together in this marvelous unity to accomplish all these great benefits for us.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

If you can understand how the Trinity works in achieving our salvation, it will — even those who are skeptical of the Trinity — put them at ease. First, we hear throughout Jesus' missions talking about obedience to the Father. And you see the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane crying, "Father, let your will be done, not my will." So, we can see that in our salvation we have the Father actually sending the Son, the Father actually giving the Son over to die on the cross for our sins, but linked to that we have the Son obeying the will of the Father. We have the Son dying on the cross for our sins, and we get that picture again on the cross when the Son cries, "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*" — "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" — when the Son experienced the full wrath of God, when the Son has the sins of the world on him. So, you see there again, the Father is involved in our salvation, the Son is involved in our salvation, but you also have the Holy Spirit involved in our salvation, because unless the Holy Spirit works in changing our hearts, in actually bringing us to faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot really come to believe in him. Therefore, we have all three of the persons of the Trinity involved in our salvation.

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

Irenaeus spoke of the two hands of God, the Spirit and the Son coming forth. Ephesians 1:3-14 really most magnificently sets that forth, that the Father elected those who believe before the foundation of the world. In a sense, in that way, he predestined all things. And yet he did so in the Son. He loves the world, and he's — through his beloved Son — made that possible... And so, we see the Father and then the Son effectuating that substitution we need. That's why he's worshiped as the Lamb who was slain who purchased by his blood those from every tribe and language and nation and people — something of that order. And then, of course, comes the promise of the Holy Spirit... We are baptized and sealed, and we have this down payment — I love that phrase, “down payment” — the Spirit who comes into our life, and we've had some joy and wonderful relationship with God in our life, and that's just a tiny bit of what's to come. So, Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, effectuating as the two hands of God, these missionary arms of God, drawing us to himself. It's precious.

Question 3:**How did the Fall affect the image of God in mankind?****Rev. Ric Rodeheaver**

Okay, we're made in the image of God, but we understand that man is in a fallen state, so how exactly did the Fall affect that image of God in man? And again, throughout the history of the church there's been varying views on this. Luther, for example, believed that the image of God was completely decimated, that there is no image of God. We know from Scripture that that's clearly not true: you have Genesis 5:1, 3; Genesis 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9, all of those referring to the image of God in man *after* the Fall... The Reformers, John Calvin in particular, he recognized that the image of God is completely retained in human beings even after the Fall, but even though it's completely retained, it's completely corrupted. And so, all of humanity still has the image of God, but it's corrupted in every way and shape possible... So, rather than all of creation imaging and bringing glory and establishing the rule and reign of one sovereign king, we are now a planet populated by billions of mini kings all trying to establish their own authority and establish their own sovereignty. That right there in itself goes a long way to explain all the conflict and selfish competition in individuals and families and communities and nations.

Rev. Xiaojun Fang, translation

How did sin affect God's image? As the book of Romans puts it, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” The most direct consequence of that sin is that the image of God in man has been destroyed. What was once perfect no longer exists. As a result, man's thoughts, will, and emotions experienced a change. Though man still lives, the image he bears is now fractured. In other words, no matter how hard we try, we cannot return to the image God gave us at creation through thoughts, emotions, or will. This restoration is only possible in Christ. It is only through the salvation of our

Lord Jesus that someone can truly know the truth, can truly love God and love others, and make the right judgments and decisions in their will.

Dr. Philip Ryken

Imagine a picture of person that then someone comes along with a pen and draws in a little mustache or puts some other marks on that person to alter their physical image. You can still tell who the person is, and the person is still there, but some damage has been done to that person's face and to their image. And I think we see something similar with the image of God in people. There's something that needs to be restored in us because of sin, and that's part of the work of Jesus Christ. He restores us in knowledge and righteousness and holiness. There is a perfection of the image of God in people that we see in Jesus Christ, and Jesus wants to give us, ultimately, that perfection. But the image of God has been damaged because of sin, and when you look at a person you do not see the full beauty of what God originally intended. Something really harmful has happened because of the fall into sin.

Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

The way the Fall affects the image of God in mankind is not that it gets rid of the image. I think one of the reasons we can see that for certain is in Genesis 9, when there is the first prohibition against murder. It says, don't kill anyone or don't murder anyone. Why? Because in the image of God humans were made. So, there's that fact that the image remains. That doesn't mean the image isn't affected, because you do see language, such as in the book of Colossians 2, where it does say we're being renewed in the image of God, really. So, you have texts that say something happened, or suggest something happened, but you also have texts that tell us, hey, humans are made in the image, therefore, they have a certain dignity, purpose and worth, and they should always be treated that way... An author named Anthony Hoekema, I like the way that he breaks it up; he says there's a structural dimension of the image that remains. There's just something fundamental to being human whereby we're made in the image, and it remains no matter how people act. And then there's the functional dimension that's distorted, and that's ways, we might say, that humans insufficiently express the fact that they're actually made in the image of God. So, we say that, for example, that to be in the image of God is to have a certain dignity. You might say that the dysfunction with the image is that people don't live up to that dignity; they live in a distorted expression of what it is to be human. Another way to think about it, another illustration I like to use, if you think about a mirror, it's one thing if you see a mirror and you see your image, your reflection, perfectly. It's another thing if that mirror is cracked or shattered. There's still a reflection there, but it refracts differently, so, there's something there, but it looks a whole lot different... There's all kinds of distortions that are there. I mean, I think that's a way of thinking about what happens with the image; distortions happen but the image is still there.

Question 4:

Does the fact that the covenant with Adam was a covenant of works mean that God did not give grace to Adam before the Fall?

Dr. Richard Phillips

One of the questions being dealt with in theology is the question of whether or not there was grace before the Fall. And the Bible presents God's covenant with Adam as a covenant of works. It was by violating the command of God that he fell into the curse of death, and he would have kept it through obedience to the word of God. And so, that covenant in the Garden of Eden was one of works. So, was there grace prior to it? Well, first we're going to define grace, and we need to define our terms. Now, in the New Testament sense, grace is God's unmerited favor towards sinners. And what happens is, if you have a theological term that has meaning, and then you expand the meaning of that, you lose the term for the particular thing you were talking about. And the word for God's favor extended towards sinners is "grace." And my concern about applying grace in a prelapsarian situation, or my concern about using grace in a pre-Fall situation, is that we lose the special aspect of the grace of God in our soteriology — our teaching of salvation — which involves God's kindness, not merely to those who haven't earned it, but to those whose demerit has actually earned condemnation. Now, a case can be made for grace prior to the Fall. I think "goodness" would be a much more serviceable way. You know, sometimes we just need to use theological terms, and even biblical terms, in a consistent way. That's how the early church solved the Trinity issue by just getting its terminology lined up. And so, I think it's better to speak of God's goodness prior to the Fall. Now, many people will take it that at the end of the Genesis 1 account, God blessed them, and they will see there's grace first. I think that's stretching it a little bit, that "God blessed them" is not a statement of what the New Testament calls "grace." So you see what happens. We start blurring the definition of what we're talking about to fit into a certain mode. Now, in the twentieth century there was a theological concern — Karl Barth is associated with it — that grace must precede law, and this is what's been driving this train. If law is first and grace is second, then God is mean. Well, no. Law is, law and lordship are derivative functions of being the Creator, and so there's nothing inherently wrong with the fact that the Bible presents a situation in which God deals by law, by works, and then later by grace. God knew what was going to happen; God had ordained all things. So, I think that we will serve ourselves better by keeping our theological terminology clear and consistent, and the use of the term "grace" prior to the Fall, I think it accomplishes little and ends up potentially costing much. The grace of which we speak in the Bible, the only time the Bible ever speaks of grace is a postlapsarian situation. It's a post-sin situation. The context in which the Bible speaks of the grace of God at work in his covenant dealings and then through Jesus Christ is a context among sinners who have earned the just condemnation of God. Well, let's preserve all of that. Let's not blur that at all. And I think we will be wiser to reserve the word "grace" for God's dealings after the Fall.

Dr. Guy Waters

When we talk about the covenant of works, what we mean is that that covenant that God made with Adam operated on a works principle: “Do this and you will live.” Or as God put it in the Garden: “You are not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil for on the day that you eat of it you will surely die.” That doesn’t mean that we could not speak of God’s generosity towards Adam in the Garden. Adam was not at that point a sinner, so if we mean by “grace” the grace that pardons sin and cleanses from sin, well, then no, God didn’t show grace. But if we mean by “grace” his generosity and goodness, well there was ample evidence of that to Adam. He placed him in a garden, he gave him run of it to eat of all the trees save one. There was the goodness of God abounding all around him. So, even as we speak of a covenant of works, we need to stress that that covenant of works was given to Adam by a God who was demonstrating in many ways, and at all times, his goodness towards him.

Question 5:**Were Old Testament saints saved on the basis of Christ’s future work?****Dr. Simon Vibert**

I think there’s a common misunderstanding about, namely, that people in the Old Testament were saved by works and that in the New Testament they’re saved by grace. Whereas, in fact, a careful reading of the Bible shows that people in both the Old and the New Testament are saved by grace through faith, and that it was always the expectation that God would provide a perfect sacrifice for sin, and that it is through trusting in that sacrifice and believing in it that God gives us the ability to grasp, by faith, the benefit of Christ’s sacrifice that we are saved. And that was always the expectation in the Old Testament, looking forward in anticipation to the coming of Christ. And that is the expectation of the New Testament writers that we’re saved by grace through faith. So, it is a consistent message that runs all the way through the Bible.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

Abraham was saved by faith, and we see that in Hebrews 11 that Abraham was always saved by faith, not by works. And it’s interesting because Paul takes a similar story in Romans 4. Let me read it for us, where it says,

What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Romans 4:1-3, ESV).

Now, you see clearly Paul sees Abraham as saved by faith, not by works. And in Hebrews 11, it’s made clear that the patriarchs were saved, looking forward to the

promises of God, and we know that the promises of God were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the patriarchs, the people of the Old Testament, were saved by looking forward to what Jesus Christ was going to do on the cross, while we are saved by looking backward to what Jesus Christ did on the cross.

Dr. John Oswalt

One of the issues that is so important for Christians to come to grips with is how the two Testaments fit together. Tragically, some branches of the church, at least tragically in my view, some branches of the church have *all but* taught that the New Testament has replaced the Old. I don't think that's true at all. In fact, they are complimentary, they fit together with each one connecting to the other, the Old Testament providing the base upon which the New Testament builds. The Old Testament teaches from start to finish that the only basis for our redemption is grace. There are those who would argue that the Old Testament believer was *intended* to be saved by obedience. I don't think that's correct. I think that just as Paul deals with Abraham in the book of Galatians and says, you know, grace preceded Torah; grace preceded the Sinai covenant with its restrictions. I think that's even true in Exodus. I've often said to people, "Did God say to the Hebrew people in Egypt, 'Here's my Torah; keep that perfectly for about four hundred years, and I'll come and deliver you'?" If he had, they would still be in Egypt. But no, he delivered them by grace. Then comes the Torah — "Would you like to be my people? Would you like to walk with me? Well, here's what that would mean..." So, I think just as the New Testament epistles in particular speak about people who have come into the covenant by grace, and now Paul says, now here's what the implications are for your life. I think the Old Testament is doing the same thing, that it is saying the only way anybody comes into a relationship with God is by God's grace. And having come in, then there is some implications from that.

Question 6:

What does Jesus do as the mediator of the covenant of grace?

Dr. Alan Hultberg

The mediatorial role of Jesus is especially laid out in the book of Hebrews, and in Hebrews we're told that Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, that is, that through the work of Christ ... the new covenant that was promised in Jeremiah 31 is initiated in the life of the church. And so, what did Jesus do to initiate that covenant? The author of Hebrews tells us that he offered his blood as blood of a better sacrifice for this covenant, that that sacrifice is not better only because it was the blood of Christ, but also because it was offered in the heavenly tabernacle, not in the earthly temple. His blood atones for sin once and for all, the author of Hebrews says. That is, it's only offered one time, and its effect is forever. And so, Jesus moves us from temporary and, maybe not corrupt, but imperfect sacrifices, imperfect atonement, to perfect atonement, to eternal atonement. And then, as our mediator, he stands as our high priest before the throne of God, interceding for us so that it's impossible to be

disconnected from the love of God when you have a Great High Priest — Jesus — standing, pleading our cause constantly before the Father.

Dr. Dennis E. Johnson

As the mediator of the covenant of grace, Jesus fulfills both the Lord's commitments to his people and his servant-people's commitments to the Lord. The Lord promises to bless his people, and in fact, God's promise to Abraham that he would bless Abraham, his children and the nations through Abraham, extends even in spite of the fact that Abraham and his children will themselves violate the covenant. But God promises to bring blessing. So, that poses the problem, how can God bless and remain just if he's blessing those who have violated his covenant, who have not been loyal and not been thoroughly obedient? Of course, God had the plan from eternity past in the covenant of redemption to establish a covenant of grace in which the Second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, would become our human brother and become the faithful servant of the covenant; he would faithfully fulfill the requirements laid upon us to be utterly loyal to the Lord and absolutely obedient through his whole obedient life. We speak of his active obedience and the imputing, that is, the crediting to us, of his righteousness. And then, as the climax, Jesus offered up himself to endure the curse of the covenant that we deserve. Paul speaks in Galatians 3:13 of Christ becoming accursed for us because though he deserved no curse, we do. And so, he frees us from the curses of the covenant, he bestows on us his righteousness; our sins are imputed, credited or debited to him as he endures. And so, he brings us together with God the Father. He mediates. He brings us together in peace and joy and blessing.

Question 7:

What is prevenient grace?

Rev. Canon Alfred Sebahene, Ph.D.

Prevenient grace refers to the grace of God in a person's life that precedes conversion. Its emphasis is in the fact that ... any spiritual life has no hope of a beginning without God's prior action on behalf of a sinner. In other words, it is all about the ways in which God's grace comes into our lives prior to conversion... Prevenient grace acts as a bridge between human depravity and the free exercise of human will.

Dr. Mike Fabarez

"Prevenient grace" is the title that we give, I suppose literally, to the grace that precedes conversion — prevenient grace. And everyone would believe in that. All theologians and pastors would look and say, of course, there's God's endowment of grace that leads up to conversion, but when people speak of prevenient grace in theological discussions, they mean something different. What they mean is that there is a kind of grace that enables someone to make a decision to follow Christ. Prevenient grace, they mean, is a kind of a removal of what Adam has done to blind

mankind to God, and it gives them opportunity to respond to Christ. And in that sense, the doctrine of prevenient grace for many means that they may or may not, with the endowment of prevenient grace, choose to follow Christ. That stands in contradistinction to effectual grace, or a kind of grace that not only opens eyes to the truth of the gospel, but brings them all the way to conversion. And so, when you hear the phrase “prevenient grace,” you need to know that what usually is meant is a distinction between a kind of grace that allows the human being now to choose Christ or the effectual grace that makes that process effective, that people come not only to understand the gospel but come to the place of regeneration.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Prevenient grace is the grace that goes before. It's not saving grace, but it's a grace that makes us capable of a decision for Jesus. So, if you believe that you're so naturally sinful, and there is no prevenient grace in your life, it's kind of hard to choose for the Lord. However, if you have prevenient grace that means that you can, by God's grace, make a choice for him or against him. Prevenient grace comes into our life, and we're thankful for it because it allows us to see light as it truly is and then make a decision for it... So, everybody has a measure of prevenient grace whereby they can choose right from wrong inasmuch as it's Jesus or not Jesus. Do I serve him? Do I not serve him? Am I his disciple? I don't want to be his disciple. Do I say “yes” to God and his will for my life or “no” to God and his will for my life? Prevenient grace allows us, gives us the opportunity to say “yes.”

Question 8:

What must we do to receive redemption and be saved?

Prof. Mumo Kisau

The covenant of grace means that we, in terms of acting, in terms of doing something, in terms of sacrifice, where sin, since it becomes a separation between us and God, there is nothing we can do to be able to be saved because salvation is by grace. However, we must do something. We must believe. Because when we believe, then it's by grace that then we are saved, because we believe that Christ died for us. Without his death, we cannot be saved. So, this is one thing we must do, even though we do nothing. But we must believe.

Dr. Steve Blakemore

We can receive redemption in only one way, and that is by trusting in what God has done. If you think about it, what is it that's lost in the Fall? It is a relationship of profound trust in God and reliance upon God. Adam and Eve refused to trust in God's word about the tree. They refused to rely upon the wisdom of God, and therefore, their loss of trust and reliance — what we might call “faith” — is that which devastates the human condition. We can't fix that. We can't fix the betrayal against God that we have acted out. We cannot undo the affront that our sin is to God. Only God can change that. We can't set ourselves free from the power of sin. Only God

can do it for us. So, how do we receive redemption? We receive redemption by understanding we can't do anything to save ourselves, to fix ourselves, and we throw ourselves completely upon the goodness, and the mercy, and the sovereign power of God to reach into our lives and redeem us by his grace.

Rev. Vuyani Sindo

Jesus was once asked the question: "Teacher, what must I do to be saved?" And of course, he looked at this young rich man and told him to sell everything he had, and we are told in the Scripture that he went away sad. And the disciples even marveled at Jesus' response that that teaching is hard. And Jesus makes an interesting comment where he says, "With man this is impossible, but with God it is possible." What that, to me, highlights is the fact that there's nothing really we can do to be saved. As human beings we are born into sin, and if you are born into sin, all you know all your life is sin. In fact, sin does not only separate us from God, but rather it clouds our judgment, it clouds who we are. It's impossible to choose God unless God takes an initiative and comes to you and actually reveals, himself, who we are... So, what can I do to be saved? I think, therefore, it has to be based solely on what Jesus has done for us, his death on the cross, and his work in our lives through his Spirit will enable us to believe in him.

Question 9:

If we're saved by grace through faith, what motive do we have to obey God?

Rev. Timothy Mountfort

The understanding of being saved by grace through faith is an occasion for some people to misunderstand what it really means. Some people understand this — and Paul addresses this in the Scriptures — that we could take that as a license to sin, we have an insurance policy, so to speak, and we can live our lives whichever way we want. But that's really not what being saved by grace means. Being saved by grace means that we have a special relationship with God. We have a relationship with God such that we are his sons; we are his daughters. We have a relationship with God like a father with his child. And so, our actions, our obedience, becomes the kind of motivation that is the motivation of a child who is secure in his father's love for him or her, a child who knows beyond the shadow of a doubt that their father loves them and cherishes them. So, our obedience and our good works are not aimed at gaining that approval from our Father. They're not aimed at winning that kind of a status with God. We have it already. The motivation behind being obedient, the motivation behind doing good works, is that we so cherish that relationship that we don't want anything to get in the way, that we don't want anything to block that or influence that negatively, and it becomes a desire to see God smiling at us because we're being obedient, because we're doing what he wants us to do. And we can only have that because we know that we're saved by grace.

Prof. Jeffrey A. Volkmer

One of the most important reasons to obey God is not so that we can earn any credit. He doesn't add our obedience and put it on one side of the scale and our disobedience on the other side of the scale and see if things balance out. God has set up, throughout salvation history, a method whereby his people has always been the primary means by which he makes himself known. So, that is true for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Even going a little bit further back, it was true for Abraham and his descendants, it's true for the nation of Israel, and then it's true for the New Testament believer. So, obedience to God doesn't earn us any sort of favor or merit with God, but what it does do is it impacts the way others view God because we are the way, we are the primary means — we are a kingdom of priests, both in Old and New Testament — and we are the primary means in space-time how others come to know God. We represent God in a profound way. So, it's very important that we act consistent, as the New Testament says, to walk worthy in our salvation. The other thing is that ... sin affects our relationship with God, so while we cannot be separated from God from a salvific standpoint, it does affect our ability to be led and influenced by God when we sin.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

One of the foundational truths of our faith is that we are saved by faith alone through grace alone. But then, what motivation is there to obey the laws of God and his guidelines for living full lives? Well, there is the nudge of the Holy Spirit, because, as the Reformers well understood, those who are saved by faith alone also receive the Holy Spirit. And so from that point onwards there is an inward nudge, an inner prompting to follow the will and ways of God so that we can begin to experience the firstfruits of our full salvation now. In the area of our personal motivation, one of the most important motivations is adoration. We fall in love with our Savior, and by this intrinsic principle of all religion, we become like that which we adore. Secondly, there's the motivation of gratitude, and it has been the audacious claim of the Christian Reformers that motivation of gratitude is more powerful than the motivation of fear. So, we live out of adoration, we live out of gratitude, and finally, we live out of trust, believing that though these principles and guidelines that call for our obedience go against our preferences or our better judgment, they are in fact, the way of life.

Dr. David W. Jones

I think, really, for any human being, you know, we're bent towards a works-based type salvation, and the gospel message that we're saved by grace through faith alone obviously brings up the question, well then, what of works? If works don't contribute to our salvation, what's their importance in the Christian life? And I think the answer to the question is that we're not saved by works, but because we're saved, therefore, we will work... It's not a matter of being moral in order to become a Christian, but being imputed with Christ's righteousness, as a Christian, we then should strive to seek to actualize that which we're already considered to be, that is, Christ-like. And through that process we naturally engage in good works.

Question 10:**Why did Paul interpret the Abrahamic covenant as including a promise that Abraham and his offspring would inherit the whole world?****Dr. Dennis E. Johnson**

We see in Romans 4 that the apostle Paul interprets the promise of inheritance for Abraham and his offspring to include the whole world. And that may surprise us at first. We think of the Promised Land as only a strip of real estate along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. But this is really of a piece of the way Paul understands the Abrahamic covenant to be global, to be worldwide. So often he will talk about the seed, the children of Abraham, including not just his biological descendants, but really those who follow in the footsteps of Abraham, that is, the footsteps of faith, who trust in the promises of God. In fact, Paul emphasizes that not only Jew but also Gentile who believe in Christ are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to God's promise — the end of Galatians 3. So when Paul says in Romans 4 that the promises that Abraham's children, by faith, will inherit the whole world, he's really just extending that same understanding, that in a certain sense what we call the Promised Land was just a microcosm of a new heavens and a new earth that God had promised to bring his people into; of course, promised through Isaiah's prophecy, Isaiah 65, 66. We hear it echoed in the New Testament. And the preacher, the author to the Hebrews, sees things the same way. He talks about the patriarchs, Abraham and his son and grandson, as looking forward to, longing for, not an earthly homeland but a heavenly homeland, something that far outstrips a physical inheritance that God has in store for his people in the new heavens and the new earth.

Dr. Chip McDaniel

It's pretty much recognized that when God gave the promise to Abraham it covered three areas: the land, the seed, and the blessing. When we trace these through the Old Testament, we see that there's very much a physical application to these promises. And so, the seed is seen in terms of the number of children — there's the sands of the sea and the stars of the heavens. The blessing is that anyone who honors the Israelite or honors the Israelite's God would be blessed, when we trace through the Old Testament. And then the land is very much a geographic part of the ancient Near East. And so, there's a physical focus to this promise. When we come to the New Testament, we have a paradigm shift in that we go from the physical to the spiritual. And so, for example, the concept of the seed is fulfilled in the singular Christ, and then anyone who is related to Christ, anyone who has the faith of Abraham, is a child of Abraham. And so, that fulfills the seed promise to Abraham; it's now not physical but it's spiritual according to Galatians 3 and 4. So, we have Sarah as our mother, for example, we're like Isaac, we're inheritors of the promise. That would be the "seed" — Christ and those who are Christ's. The blessing portion, Paul tells us in Galatians 3, is justification by faith that is preached among the Gentiles. That would be the blessing that would go throughout the entire earth. And so, what was promised to Abram in a very physical way is now expanded to be the seed, that is to be the blessing, rather, that is found in the gospel being presented throughout the entire

world... The promise of the land is also given a spiritual application in the New Testament. Jesus will say, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." That's usually interpreted to mean that in the future those who are believers will rule and reign with him and, in that sense, will rule over the earth. But I think Paul has a spiritual application as well today... Paul will tell the Corinthians that they're not to focus on individual particulars and quibble about those because everything is theirs, and it mentions the earth, it mentions the future, it mentions the present, but that whole idea of the entire world belongs to the Christian. And I would correlate this with the Great Commission, that Christ has all authority, he sent us into all the world; the whole world is his and, in that sense, the whole world is ours to serve in as well. And so, when we come to the promise of a land, again it's this shift from the physical to the spiritual, between the Old and New Testament, and we are possessors of the land at this time as well.

Question 11:

What benefits does Christ provide for us in the new covenant?

Dr. Mark Saucy

The benefits that we get from the new covenant from Jesus, I think, start to be enumerated right in the original passage of the new covenant, or at least where that term is used in the Old Testament, that's Jeremiah 31. In verse 33 and 34 there is an enumeration, or a listing, of the benefits that come in the new covenant that would be coming in the age to come. And it starts out with the law written in your hearts. And then you have, if you bring in other passages, about the law is going to be written by the Spirit that God is going to put within the individual in their hearts. Then it moves into questions of knowledge of God. And then it will move into, also, questions of the access that we have to God. And, I think in the Prophets, it also moves into things that are going to happen socially through a restored nation, and it's going to affect all nations and finally the world. And so, we bring these to Christ. Christ is the one who poured out the Spirit at his ascension. That's what Pentecost was about. That is what makes and activates the new covenant age finally for all people who will be found in it by faith. And so, what he does in regeneration, what he does on the heart, what he makes us with a new love, all of the language of the New Testament, that's new covenant promise that Jesus has already initiated. The knowledge of God, powerful demonstration of this is when the temple veil rent at the crucifixion that showed that the system that was mediating access to God by a cast, by a priestly cast, by calendar, by clean and uncleanness definitions of the old covenant, those are done now and access is now in a new open way. God welcomes us without a priesthood, without coming on a particular day. And so, this kind of knowledge of God is... And the most profound benefit — I would go back to that passage in Jeremiah — is in verse 34 where he says, "Because I will forgive your sins." There is the foundation of the new covenant, and there is where we see the interface of the crucifixion, the cross of Christ, to the new covenant reality in the life. The sin problem God solved, and so all of the other benefits could be poured out.

Dr. Charles L. Quarles

There are a couple of key Old Testament passages when it comes to understanding the new covenant; one is Jeremiah 31, the other is Ezekiel 36. Other texts discuss the new covenant, but these are the fundamental ones. And those texts show us that the new covenant has two primary foci. On the one hand, the new covenant promises the forgiveness of sins. Ezekiel 36 speaks of us being cleansed of our iniquities and our uncleanness. Jeremiah 31:34 speaks of God remembering our sin no more. So, obviously there's a big focus on the forgiveness of sin, and that's normally our focus when we speak of the new covenant. But the new covenant actually entails far more. Not only is there forgiveness of sin but there is a radical transformation of the person that results in a dramatic change in behavior. And Jeremiah says it this way; he says that God will write his law upon our hearts. And the idea is that the very heart is transformed so that we begin to naturally and spontaneously exhibit the righteousness of God's own character. Ezekiel said it a little bit differently, but the point is the same; he said that God would give us a new heart, and he said that God would grant us the Holy Spirit and that the Spirit would move us to keep God's commandments and fulfill his ordinances. And Jesus does both. Through his sacrificial death, he provides for us forgiveness of sin. But in addition to that, he fulfills the promise of John the Baptist where he says, "The one who is coming after me is mightier than I am... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," referring back to the promise of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36. And when Christ writes God's law upon our hearts, when he places his Holy Spirit in us, it changes our very identity, it changes our very nature so that we begin to naturally and spontaneously exhibit the character of the holy God.

Dr. David B. Garner

Paul recognizes that the heart of the gospel, as he articulates in 1 Corinthians 15, is that, according to the Scriptures, Jesus died, was buried, and on the third day, according to the Scriptures, he raised from the dead. And so, what we find in the New Testament is that the *events* of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ take center stage... So, what are the implications for us as we consider the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Well, Paul says that his resurrection *is* our resurrection. In fact, he will argue it the other way around. He will say that if we are not resurrected, then Jesus wasn't resurrected either. So sure is he about our solidarity with Jesus Christ, he will say that Christ's resurrection power is actually in our possession right now. The implications are astounding, because what we now have at our disposal by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ is the power, actually, to say "yes" to Christ, to say "yes" to God's expectations upon us. No longer is the law merely something that condemns, but by the outpouring of the Spirit in fulfillment of the new covenant realized in the resurrected Christ who is the life-giving Spirit, we are empowered, we are enabled, we are motivated now to respond in obedience to God in Christ. So, our union with Christ actually fleshes itself out in the way in which we walk in a delighted obedience, and knowing that when we sin, oh, we have an advocate with the Father who stands and lives ever to intercede for us. But in that reality, in that repentance, as we enjoy that forgiveness, we are compelled once again

to live in the dynamic of resurrection power because Jesus Christ is raised, and we are raised with him.

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