

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 9 | Doctrine of Humanity

WHAT IS A HUMAN?

Common answers today to “what is a human?”:

- Material - just star dust
- Means to an End - economic, social, ecological, etc. defines our work.
- Equal to an animal
- Equal to a computer
- Others?

What is a human? Look to Jesus first!

- The Image of God - *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation”*
- His entire life and death was fully human yet without sin!
 - Lived in communion with God
 - Died to himself that he may glorify God and save others
 - *“The unassumed is the unhealed”* - an ancient church statement that means whatever Christ did not “assume” to his human nature is not redeemed. Ours is a holistic salvation.
- We are (re-)created in Jesus - *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* (Eph. 2.10)
- Made to be “blessed” according to Jesus’ words, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit... those who mourn . . . the meek . . . those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. . . the merciful . . . the pure in heart . . . the peacemakers . . . those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake”* (Matt. 5.3-10).

What is a human according to our given essence?

WCF 4.2 - After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female (Gen. 1:27), with reasonable and immortal souls (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7; Luke 23:43; Matt. 10:28), endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness,

after his own image (Gen. 1:26; Col 3:10; Eph. 4:24); having the law of God written in their hearts (Rom. 2:14-15), and power to fulfill it (Gen. 2:17; Eccl. 7:29): and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change (Gen. 3:6,17). Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God (Gen. 2:17; Gen. 2:15-3:24), and had dominion over the creatures (Gen. 1:28; Gen. 1:29-30; Ps 8:6-8).

1. A Human is Created

1. Not self-sufficient or self-made
2. Derivative in our essence
3. Dependent from the start

2. WITH. A Human is Created With:

1. Reasonable and immortal souls
2. Knowledge, righteousness, and holiness
3. The law of God written on their hearts
4. Freedom - WCF 9.1-2 - "I. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it."
 1. We were people on trial, not yet either sinful or confirmed in righteousness, but the devil is introduced as a test – *this is never again true of humans*
 1. ***Covenant of creation*** - WCF 7.2, "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."

3. FOR. A Human is Created For Communion with God

1. Pre-Fall we had an intimate, but conditional presence with God – it's God's garden and He walks there
2. WSC 1 - "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

3. Created for relationship and mutual love - we cannot define humanity without also at the same time including God.

4. **IN. A Human is Created in the Image of God**

1. What is an "image"? Remembering back to the creation story, and Eden as a special Temple presence of God, what is present in every temple?! Thus, our calling is to reflect, mirror, or image our Lord and Creator!
2. *Image includes purpose and worth* - to spread God's glory, care for the earth, and reflect the Creator.

5. **TO. A Human is Created to Work**

1. **Kingly** (ruling the land) and **priestly** (serving and guarding the Temple; and reflecting God's glory) role over the land
 1. *Gen. 1.28, 2.15 - "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth. . . . The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."*
 2. Specific words used for "work it and keep it" of the Garden are only ever used again in combination with the duties of the Levite priests in Num. 3.7-8, 18.5-6.
 3. "Royal priesthood" is what humanity is made to be and is precisely what the new humanity in Christ becomes - *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1Peter 2:9); "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." (Rev. 1.6)*
 4. "Humanity is presented not merely like God but as his chosen stewards who are to carry out 'the royal-priestly vocation of representing God's rule on earth by their exercise of cultural power.' They function like 'idols' of God himself, that is, to cause those who see and dwell with humans to have a vision of the Creator King." - Kelly Kapic
2. Adam and Eve had work to do! So the original creation and Garden of Eden were without sin, but not "perfect" in the sense of being complete.
 1. We'll expand on this when we get to vocation and our callings, but we are all "called" to this calling as a king and priest.

6. AS. A Human is Created as an Embodied Soul

1. *Gen. 2.7 - "The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."*
2. Unique to humanity - breath of life from God himself, and the designation "living creature", or "living person," "living soul", "living being."
3. Hard to distinguish where our soul stops and body starts and vice versa. Rather than "having" a soul, we are embodied psychosomatic souls.
4. Male or Female
 1. Sexuality is clearly embedded into our created nature, bestowed upon us
 2. Not something to be denigrated or discarded
 3. Though we know the animals are also male and female, it's only mentioned with respect to humans

General Implications:

1. Dignity

1. Every human has a dignity that cannot be taken away or discarded
 1. Hundreds of social, political, and other implications
 2. Basis for modern human rights

2. Purpose

1. We don't have to discover it or create it, but simply receive, recognize, and follow

3. Framework

1. This doctrine gives our whole lives a way to interpret our lives and make decisions

4. Natural world and physical bodies

1. This doctrine, plus the bodily resurrection of Jesus, informs how we view the physical world and our physical bodies. Since they are created by God, and seen by Him as good, we should care for them.

How else ought this to impact our prayer, character, and community?