Basic Christian Theology

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Anthropology: The Doctrine of Humanity (1)

1. Introduction

   a. **Definition**: The word "*anthropology*" is derived from the Greek word "*anthrōpos*" (human, mankind) and "*logia*" (knowledge, study of). Therefore, anthropology is the study of humanity.

      - **Scientific**: In terms of natural science, anthropology is the study of human origins, behaviors, languages, cultures, and ethnic interests. A major source of research and discovery is archaeology.

      - **Theological**: In terms of theology, anthropology is the study of human life as created by God. It seeks to understand what it means to be human, what God's purpose is for human life, why human life is so difficult and broken, and how humans should live according to God's will. It explains human significance, brokenness, and purpose. The primary source of understanding is Scripture.

   b. **Two Worldviews**: Just as the study of anthropology has two different perspectives, it likewise leads to two different worldviews.

      - **Naturalism**: The idea that human life is merely the result of a natural evolutionary process, with no existential goal or purpose. In other words, human life is the result of a cosmic accident, where everything, including humans, animals, and plants, appeared through natural means. Such natural means led humans to be more advanced and intelligent than all other life forms, allowing humans to set rules and laws, and do whatever leads to the greatest enjoyment. However, when the human body is no longer capable of life, it dies, turns to dust, and ceases to exist. Naturalism is the basis for the philosophical study of "nihilism," which teaches that life has no goal or purpose, and is therefore meaningless. In the minds of nihilists, "life is a cruel joke."

      - **Creationism**: The biblical truth that human life is the result of an intelligent Creator, who designed the universe and all lifeforms for his glory. God has given human life the highest value and privilege, along with the capacity to know him, serve him, and be with him forever. In addition, God has given humans other humans to love and serve with.

c. **Purpose:** The main purpose of biblical anthropology is to answer the question posed in Psalm 8:4 — "*What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*"

- **Important Questions**: "What is man?" What does it mean to be human compared to other living creatures? What is gender? How does it make a difference in God's design? How should we understand human relationships like marriage and family? Why is God "mindful" of man? Why does God care about humans so much that he would sacrifice his own Son to redeem them? What is God's purpose for human life?

2. Creation

a. **Genesis 1:1** – "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*"

- **Point**: This statement indicates that everything that exists in the universe was created by God for his purposes and glory. Therefore, the first verse of the Bible rules out a naturalistic worldview. This verse gives the ultimate answer to the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Naturalism has no reasonable answer.

b. **Genesis 1:26-27** – "*Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*"

- **Significance:** On the previous days of creation, God said, "*Let there be…*," referring to the sun, moon, land, animals, etc. However, on the sixth day, he said, "*Let us make…*," referring to humans. John Hammett explains, "The creation of humans was the feature the author of Genesis selected for special emphasis" (Akin, 342). Therefore, there is no coincidence that God created man and woman last. It was God's way of saying that humanity is the "apex" of creation, "the crown of creation," or the most important part.

- **Apologetics:** Since all Scripture was written by the inspiration of God, and since the book of Genesis was written in the genre of historical narrative (not legend, myth, poetry, etc.), we must affirm that Adam and Eve were literal, historical figures, the first humans. Both the Old and New Testaments treat the book of Genesis as a literal history of origins.

  - **Quote**: "The books of the New Testament rely heavily on the Genesis account for both creation and the early history of the human race. It has been pointed out that some 165 passages in Genesis are either directed quoted or definitely alluded to in the New Testament. Nearly every writer of the New Testament refers somewhere to the first eleven chapters in Genesis, and nowhere is there the slightest suggestion that

any of them regarded the teaching of these chapters as mythical or allegorical. Christ himself referred on at least six occasions to matters related to these early chapters of Genesis, and he understood them to be truthful and relevant accounts that provided the background of the creation and fall of humanity he came to redeem." – Douglas Kelly

- Institutions: The creation of humanity led to major institutions in society. While we see these institutions mentioned or alluded to in Genesis 1-2, each are more fully developed throughout the Bible.

  - Marriage: By creating humans in two genders, God instituted marriage between one man and one woman (cf. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

  - Family: By creating humans with the ability to procreate, God instituted the family, where children are raised by a father and mother. (cf. Gen. 1:28).

  - Church: By creating humans with the ability to know him, worship him, and obey him (Gen. 1:27; 2:25, God instituted the Church (although no fully instituted until Christ).

  - Work: By calling Adam to work and keep the Garden (cf. Gen. 2:15), God instituted work and industry, establishing the humanity will work for their living (cf. 2 Thess. 3:10).

  - Government: By calling Adam to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion" over creation (cf. Gen. 1:28), God instituted human government (cf. Rom. 13:1-7).

c. Genesis 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.*" The Bible indicates that God created humans with two natures.

- Physical: God created humans with a physical nature, which is represented by the human body consisting of bones, skin, organs, muscles, nerves, hair, etc. These body parts were designed to work together so that humans can think, move, see, hear, smell, taste, eat, reproduce, and other functions. Our physical bodies and mental capacities were given to enable humans the ability to glorify God through worship, service, and interactions with others (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20). The human body was originally created "*very good*," which means that it had no weaknesses, disabilities, or death.

- Spiritual: God created humans with a spiritual nature, which is often referred to as the human "soul" or "spirit." The soul enables humans to have desires, emotions, determined wills, and spiritual life. In essence, the soul is what makes humans different

from animals. Only humans can know God on a spiritual level, engage in worship, and continue on with God for eternity.

d. Genesis 1:27 – "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.*" This verse reveals that the most important element of creation is that God uniquely created humans in his own image (i.e., Imago Dei). The word "image" or "likeness" ("*eikon*") refers to something similar but not identical. Wayne Grudem states that the "image of God" means that "man is like God and represents God." While it doesn't mean that humans are divine, it does mean that humans are like God in certain ways.

- Morality – Humans have the ability and responsibility to reflect God's holiness through obedience and love. By being created in God's image—having his image placed in the heart—humans have an internal sense of right and wrong, which separates humanity from all other living creatures. Even though animals can be trained to make good choices, it's solely based on being rewarded with good or bad consequences, not because it's the right thing to do.

- Spirituality – Humans have a physical and spiritual nature with the capacity to relate to God personally. Humans have the ability to know God, worship God, speak to God, and understand God's will. While the human body will die, the human spirit lives on in eternity, with or without God. In this sense, God has "put eternity into man's heart" (Eccl. 3:11).

- Mental Capacity – Humans are like God in the sense that they can think, reason, create, communicate, and respond. While animals can also think and reason, humans are far advanced, even thinking about the distant future and making important decisions.

- Relational Abilities – Humans are like God in being able to relate to others in deep, personal ways. Through personal interactions, humans can express love, develop friendships, communicate feelings and desires, enjoy community with family and friends.

- Dignity and Worth – Because humans are made in the "*image of God*," human life is more valuable and unique than any other lifeform in creation. God created humans for the purpose of knowing him and glorifying him, so humans are incredibly cherished by the Lord. Therefore, human life should always be honored and protected, which includes strictly opposing abortion, euthanasia, suicide, murder, sex trafficking, slavery, and other lethal and dishonoring practices. Also, human worth should never be defined by gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, education, or any other dividing factor.