

LESSON ESSENTIALS

UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

LESSON 3: KNOWING MAN ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE

In trying to understand man according to the Bible, you will get a clearer understanding of yourself and God's purpose for you.

Read on to find out how you can glorify your Creator through your life and choices, and how – unlike Adam – you can take responsibility for your actions.

While some may believe that man evolved from animals, and others believe that he descended from the body of a god, the Bible clearly explains that man was created in God's own image and for His purposes.

REFLECT

God wasn't trying to create beings that were identical to Him when he gave us his characteristics. He just wanted to relate to man, so that he could fulfill His purpose. In Isaiah 43:7 God says that He created man for Himself.

We take pride in the fact that we know ourselves. But then we surprise ourselves by doing something that seems contrary to our nature. While we might like to believe that we're well-acquainted with ourselves, we have to admit that God knows us better. After all, He's the one who created us. Part of understanding salvation is understanding how it changes us. So, as we embark on the journey of rediscovering ourselves, let's turn to the Bible to find our answers.

While some might believe that man evolved from animals, and others that he descended from the body of god, the Bible clearly tells us in Genesis 1:26 that God made man in His own image and likeness. If we look at Genesis in context, we see that God simply spoke the rest of the world into existence. Let there be light, let the earth, waters bring forth... etc. But for man, He brought about a discussion, saying "Let us make..." This means that he set us apart from the rest of creation by making us especially like Him. This is not to say that He created us to be gods, or that He made us to look like Him physically. However, when He 'formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul' (Gen 2:7), God gave man His moral character of love, truth, holiness, righteousness, wisdom.

God wasn't trying to create beings that were identical to Him when He gave us His characteristics. He just wanted to relate to man, so that he could fulfil His purpose. In Isaiah 43:7 God says that He created man for Himself. "Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." God wasn't doing an experiment when He created us. He had a distinct purpose for our lives – to 'have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air...and over everything that moves upon the earth.' (Genesis 1:26). In other words, God made Adam a caretaker for creation.

Unfortunately, Adam disappointed God by abusing his power and the generations that followed did even worse. Man, who was created for God's glory, today questions the very existence of his Creator.

While many scientists believe that man is just another organism resulting from natural evolution, it can't convincingly explain the body, mind and soul. An important part of God's design, these three components of humanity make man who he really is. Man's body is like a tent, an outer shell to the being of the

person. It is merely the physical representation of his mental soul and spirit. The soul is called the location of the self-consciousness, while the spirit is called the location of the person's God-consciousness, or the part of us that is aware of spiritual things and the spiritual longings of our soul. Our soul or spirit is the inner part of us that can't be seen but is deeply felt. Apart from these three components, man also has a 'heart' that is the seat of all emotions and the inner voice that helps man differentiate between right and wrong. It's also known as the conscience. Haven't you felt that a warning deep inside you when you were about to do something wrong, or that sudden feeling of excitement when you were going to do something right? Even the Bible teaches us in 1 Corinthians 8:10 to follow our conscience, and therefore make morally right decisions.

Unlike other parts of creation, God has given us a conscience so that we can make a definite choice to follow His ways in our life. The freedom for us to choose is something God created us with. And this right also comes with a huge responsibility. We are responsible for our own choices, so we must be careful how we choose. We might try to disregard our poor choices, blaming them on society, on someone else, or on our parents, but in the end, it is our responsibility to live up to God's standards. While this is a huge responsibility, it is also a gift that God has given us, that we may choose to love Him and follow Him out of our own free will.

Our fallen nature pulls us away from God by causing us to sin. Without relying on God, many are drawn into the sins of this world. Sin breaks us and destroys the part of us that is sensitive to God's call. The Fall mentioned in Gen 3 has led to further depravity, making the heart selfish and deceitful and causing wars, rebellion, oppression and poverty around the world. While many people might like to believe that they are in control of the world and not accountable to anyone, they will be shocked by the truth one day. Isaiah 42:5 says "Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk in it. Romans 14:12 says, "So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" and Hebrews 9:27 also affirms, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

We fool ourselves into believing we can choose anything we want, and we are in control of our fate. While everything might seem easy and carefree in this life, each man's world will change

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Isaiah 42:5



when he faces God before His judgement throne. However, it is not too late for him to make a choice. Even today, he can believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who saves people from the punishment of sin (John 3:36). Or he can spend eternity in punishment. Have you made your choice?

IN REVIEW

- Some people believe that mankind consists of a bunch of organisms that have evolved from simpler organisms, or they believe that man descended from gods, while other people do not reflect on the origin of man.
- The Bible says that mankind was created by God in His own image. He has made us in his likeness and given us His characteristics, and has also put us in charge of all other living creatures on earth.
- Man has three main components - body, soul and spirit. The body is like a physical outer shell that is seen physically and gives representation to the soul and spirit. The soul is the object of emotion and thinking, giving man his ability to understand himself. The spirit, is otherwise known as the conscience, inspired by God, showing us the right way morally.
- Man is accountable to God for the life given to him on earth. One day when he dies he will have to face God and give an account for all his actions.
- God gives man two choices - to believe in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved from the penalty of sin or to face the eternal punishment for his sins. It is our duty, as people made in the image of God, to follow our conscience and therefore do God's will.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- Does your perception of man agree with that of the Bible?
- What can you do to help your friends and family see God's purpose for their lives as is written in the Bible?
- If you knowingly make a wrong decision, do you instinctively blame others, or take responsibility for your action and turn to God for help?
- How can you help your friends choose between eternal life and eternal punishment?

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