

Humankind

Theological Anthropology – (The biblical study and doctrine of humans)

Introduction:

Anthropology, in general, is the study of humanity. Biblical Anthropology is the study of humanity from a biblical perspective.

It's vitally important to know in whom or what is the basis of your beliefs. As Christians and followers of Jesus, our source book is **God's word, the Bible**. It alone is the basis of spiritual truth and answers the most important questions of humankind. This is the reason we stated in our Bibliology study, the 1st of our Foundations series, that our final authority for questions concerning our faith and our Christian walk are the 66 books of the Holy Bible.

How did human life begin?

Did humans evolve from nothing?

Does life have meaning beyond personal experience?

Why is humanity so broken and is there a fix?

Is this life all there is or is there something beyond death?

The Bible answers these questions precisely. It claims there is a creator God and He reveals truth concerning these questions and more. Every other theory and opinion of man must yield to God the creator and His description and account of humankind, our purpose and destiny. God's word alone has stood the test of time and gives us a firm foundation to weather the storms of changing opinions and every wind of doctrine.

"The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple"

Psalm 119:130

I. So What is Anthropology?

Anthropology as the Latin term *anthropologia*, which means "the study of mankind or humanity." Although the term dates back to the late 16th century, it was not until the late 18th and 19th century that it found common use.

It shares its root in the Greek bible words *aner*, which means "man" and *anthrōpos*, which means "human being." *Anthrōpo*. is shared by other words in English such as *philanthropy*, love of humanity expressed by giving or *psilanthropy*, a dislike or hatred of humanity. The Hebrew word for man, or mankind, is "adam" which means "red." (Strong's says, "to be red in the face") and also the word *iysh*, which means "man."

Anthropology is often divided into four distinct branches:

1. **Physical** or biological anthropology.

2. **Archaeological** (material remains) anthropology.
3. **Cultural** or social anthropology.
4. **Linguistic** (word and language) anthropology.

II. Biblical Anthropology, Distinct from Secular Anthropology

Anthropology as a science is neither good nor bad. It is the intention of the science that determines its virtues. If it is used to disprove or eliminate our belief in God, then it is no better than the intent of the serpent in the garden. If it is used to verify God's creation, then it is a noble pursuit.

G. C. Berkouwer, the great Dutch Systematic Theologian stated, "man can never be fully understood unless he is seen in his relation to God."

Billy Graham, in June 1943, graduated from Wheaton College with a degree in biblical anthropology. It served him well as he took the truth of the bible to people groups around the world.

Secular approaches to Anthropology, including one distinctly atheistic approach, are fields of study of humankind based primarily on what can be observed (and imagined) from a natural or a human point of view. Often what humans see concerning humans past is determined to be stages of development from primitive savage to sophisticated urban hipster.

Biblical approaches to Anthropology are theological fields of study that have to do with humankind from God's point of view in the context of the bible, what God says about humans. The bible states that human creation was "very good" and describes humans as complete from the beginning, with high intelligence and creativity.

Anthropologist **Thor Heyerdahl** of *Kon-Tiki* fame, an anthropological adventure voyager, in one interview, told People Magazine: "We have the egoistic idea that we in the 20th century are the civilized ones. That people living 1,000 years ago, not to mention 5,000 years ago, were greatly inferior to us. I am opposed to that. The people back then were physically and mentally our equal-if not in many ways better."

Merriam-Webster defines anthropology as:

1. The study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.
(as a natural science)
2. Theology dealing with the origin, nature, and destiny of human beings.
(as a spiritual science)

It is the second, "Theology" definition that we use for our study.

Finally, It's important to know as we study **humankind** that we will touch on elements of **"Sin" and "Salvation."** It is difficult to study the past, present and future of man without dealing with sin and salvation to some extent. Both **Hamartiology**, the doctrine of sin and **Soteriology**, the doctrine of salvation, will be covered at length individually later.

This is the true account and History of Humankind's creation into a complete "very good" world; an intimate relationship with their creator, where they are given the most incredible job one could imagine, indefinitely. With the gift of choice and only one negative stipulation and limitation, Adam chose to disobey that stipulation and lost it all, thereby affecting every human being right up to our present time. A broken world! **But it's not the end of the story.**

A. The Origins Of Human Life.

The bible gives us plenty of information concerning Humankind's beginnings. The bible says over 1000 times humans were formed created or made. God is making very clear.

1. God Created Us.

The bible tells us in Genesis, "the book of beginnings", that God created everything, Genesis 1:1-27. When all else was created, then finally God created humans. Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; 5:1-2

2. God Created Humans as Either Male or Female

God's design from the very beginning was two distinct sexes and only two sexes. Genesis 1:26-27, 5:2; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6

- a). God created man first and said it was not good for him to be alone. So God made woman from man. Genesis 2:18-23; 1 Corinthians 11:7-9

- b). The creation of humans as male and female shows God's triune image in:
 - 1) The ability to have interpersonal and harmonious relationships (Matthew 19:4; Ephesians 5:21-28; 33)
 - 2) Individuality yet equality in personhood and importance (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:19)
 - 3) A common purpose yet differing responsibilities and realms of authority (Genesis 2:18, 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23, Proverbs 31:10-31)

*There is great confusion currently in this regard. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33) so the further humans drift from God's Revealed Word the more confusion there will be.

3. God Created Us in His Image and His Likeness.

Even though humans were created last, they were first in importance. They alone, among all that God created, bear the image of God. Since humans are made in

God's image, humans are like God and represent Him. Genesis 1:26-27; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9; Psalm 144:3)

a) As humans, how are we like the image of God?

- 1) God does not have a physical body like ours. We know this because the bible says God is Spirit (John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17) and invisible (Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17).
- 2) We are like God in that we are spiritual. God is Spirit and He created us with a spirit. 1 Corinthians 2:11
- 3) God has intellect, a mind and rational abilities without flaw. He has also given Humans intellect and a mind for rational abilities. Romans 11:33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:16
- 4) Just as God is able to create in His image, so also He gave humans, within the sanctity of marriage, ability to **pro-create** in their own image. Genesis 1:28; 4:1-2, 25
- 5) Humans were also given a **free will** with the ability to choose.
*This will be seen clearly in the next section.

*There are other facets of God that He has given us so that we may display and manifest His image. We will save those for another study.

B) What else can we say about the created makeup of Humans?

Humans were created as both **material** (having a flesh body) and **immaterial** (having a soul and spirit) beings. Put another way; part of us is visible and part of us is invisible.

- 1) Some see this as simply two parts, **flesh** (Greek *sarx*) and **spirit** (Greek *pneuma*). This is referred to as **dichotomy or a dichotomist**. 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Matthew 10:28
- 2) Others see a third aspect, that being the soul (*psychē*), made of our **mind** (Greek *nous* or *dianoia*), will and emotion, plus our **body** (flesh), and **spirit**; thus making humans a tri-unity, referred to as trichotomy or a trichotomist. This is interesting because it sees human beings as a trinity, exemplifying the Triune God. 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12

* **Believers remain divided on this topic.**

4. God Breathed the Breath of Life Into Man.

After God created Adam, he breathed life into him. Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4

This life was both physical and spiritual.

5. God Gave Responsibility to Humans

God's intention was not to have humans as passive observers of His Creation, but instead to be actively engaged in the world they enter into. Genesis 1:28; 2:15

6. God Gave Humans a Common Language

- a) In the beginning of human history on the earth there was a common language. Genesis 11:1
- b) In time it was God who caused the diversity of language. Genesis 11:6-7

7. God Did Not Need To Create Humankind

Yet God does create humans, "blesses them" and calls their creation "very good" on the last day of creation when they were made. Genesis 1:28, 31; Psalm 100:3; Isaiah 43:7

B. The Fall and Failure of the First Humans.

1. The Failure of Disobedience.

The bible describes the "very good " of Genesis 1 and 2 being disrupted when one of the most consequential decisions ever made took place. Look at the event in Genesis 3:1-7.

- a) God had given a clear command. Genesis 2:16-17
- b) God's word is questioned. Genesis 3:1
- c) God's goodness was called into question. Genesis 3:4-5
- d) Eve's will and obedience is tested. Genesis 3:6
- e) Adam also chooses to disobey. Genesis 3:6

2. The Terrible Consequence of Disobedience

Everything that had been "very good" became very bad immediately. The terrible consequences of Adam and Eve exercising their **free will, choosing to disobey** and **making a horrible decision** changed everything in what was their perfect world. God calls it sin and it affects and contaminates everyone and everything in their pure environment. Genesis 4:7-8

- a) They are given a summary of the consequences of the sin. Genesis 3:16-19
- b) Physical death that God had warned of becomes a reality. Genesis 2:17, 5.5
- c) Guilt and shame became their experience. Genesis 3:7-8
- d) Their innocence is gone and now they understand the difference between good and evil. Genesis 3:22
- e) They were evicted from their garden paradise existence. Genesis 3:23-24

3. The Horrible End of Humankind

The degree to which human sin effects and engulfs all of Humankind is dire. Romans 4:12; I John 1:8; Isaiah 59:2; 64:6

- a) God is moved to destroy every living thing on the earth with a flood. Genesis 6:5-7, 11-13, 17; 7:4, 11, 21-23
- b) God allows only one man, Noah and his family, nine in all, to survive the flood that destroys everything on the face of the earth. Genesis 6:8, 13-14
- c) Noah is told to bring pairs of animals into the ark with him to preserve the species and repopulate the earth. Genesis 6:19-20; 7:2-3, 8-9, 13-16

C. Sin is Abated (Temporarily) and God Makes a Promise.

- 1. **God promises never to destroy the earth with a flood again.**
Sinful corrupted humankind has been purged. Genesis 8:20-21; 9:8-11
- 2. **God promises that the earth will continue as normal to the end.**
The earth will continue to serve it's purpose for Humans. Genesis 8:22
- 3. **God gives the rainbow as sign of His promise.**
The rainbows appearance will be a perpetual sign of God promise to never destroy the entire earth again with a flood. Genesis 9:12-17

D. A New Beginning With a New Prohibition .

- 1. **God commissions Noah** to be fruitful and multiply and (re) fill the earth.
Genesis 9:1-4
- 2. **There is a new prohibition.**
Do not eat or shed blood for **life is in the blood**. Genesis 9:4-7

E. Noah's Descendants, New Peoples and Populations.

- 1. **Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth**
Genesis chapter 10 gives an amazing account of Noah's three sons and their respective descendants, as they multiply into tribes and nations, indeed repopulating the earth. As they move outward expanding they become the great people groups of the earth. But sinfulness continues and must be dealt with.
- 2. **Shem's Descendant and the Promise of Redemption.**
In Genesis chapter 11 we trace the lineage of Shem down to one man in particular, Abram (11:26).
 - a) This Abram receives an important **commission**. Genesis 12:1
 - b) And an incredible **promise**. Genesis 12:2-3, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,..." Genesis 22:18
 - c) The promise of a "Seed" from Abraham, will in time bring about the **redemption** of God's fallen sinful creation. Jesus is that seed. Galatians 3:16
 - d) The first adam, by his sin brought death into the world, and that sin and death effected all of humankind. Jesus, the promised seed of Abraham, is the second adam, bringing redemption for fallen man (1 Corinthians 15:45-49)

Conclusion

God designed and created humankind in His image for His glory and purpose. Satan interfered with that purpose, provoking Adam and Eve to sin. God has dealt with sin in humanity in the past to control its effects, but now in this present age, He has sent His Son Jesus as the second Adam, the Seed of Abraham, a new man, dealing with sin once and for all. The offer of forgiveness, redemptions and are now made available to all who repent and put their faith and confidence in Jesus.

“And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:29

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” 1 John 3:1