

BASICS OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
Theology 101
(Stephen McQuoid)

Areas to be covered: What is Theology
 Doctrine of God
 Doctrine of Creation
 Doctrine of Man
 Doctrine of the Fall
 Doctrine of Sin

Lesson 1

WHAT IS THEOLOGY

A basic definition could read '*the study of God*' however God is an active being therefore a definition must take into consideration what God does. It should therefore include God's creation, man in particular and the relationship between God and man which culminates in redemption.

Theology strives to give a coherent statement on each of these as revealed in scripture. Some statements could be made to encapsulate this idea:

1. Theology is Biblical: It's primary source is the Bible which it examines in order to discover the truth.
2. Theology is Systematic: It uses the whole Bible not just one particular part and draws together the totality on meaning.
3. Theology relates to the outside world: It helps the Christian respond to science and psychology.
4. Theology is contemporary: It expresses age old truths in modern ways.
5. Theology is practical: In the sense that the truth it reveals must be lived out not just held as a belief.

Various branches of theology can be identified as Biblical, Historical, Systematic, Philosophical and Dogmatics. This course is about **Systematic Theology**. We do, however, need to identify what we mean by the other disciplines.

Biblical Theology:

This refers to the theological content of a particular book of the Bible or to the content of a section for example Paul's writing or the Prophets. It could also refer to an element of truth which is unchanging. In this sense those truths are stripped of their immediate context and are not applied to today's context. It must be noted that there is a close relationship between Systematic and Biblical Theology.

Historical Theology:

This study of theology as it has developed through the centuries. This is further subdivided into synchronic theology (the study of a theologian or school of theology at a given time) and diachronic theology (tracing a particular doctrine throughout history).

Philosophical Theology:

This form of study scrutinizes theology, in particular it's concepts and arguments to see if they are logical. It gives theology a sharper focus and clarity.

Dogmatics:

This is the study of theology from a particular denominational perspective. It would also include theology from a particular thought branch of the church (ex. Reformed, Arminian, Charismatic, Catholic, Lutheran). It is important to discover whether a particular theological view is universally held or is 'biased' in this way.

Theology must be seen in contrast to Doctrine. A Doctrine is the result of doing Systematic theology. After we have worked through the issues we end up with a doctrine (For example the Doctrine of God).

Do We Need Theology?

This is a frequently asked question. Surely loving Jesus is sufficient. Some even surest that theology makes Christianity difficult to understand, it divides Christians and it saps us of spiritual zeal.

There are powerful reasons why theology is essential:

1. It is important because correct doctrines are an essential element in our relationship with God. The deepening of a relationship is only possible where knowledge is involved.
2. It is important because truth and experience are related. We cannot experience all the benefits and beauties of Christianity if we have no knowledge of them. Likewise, knowledge of how not to live will also

warn us of the unpleasant consequences of sin in our lives.

3. Theology is important because of its rival world views. The solution to the confusion that is caused by the world of ideas is not just to refute falsehoods but to affirm positively the truth.
4. Theology enables us to marvel at the wonder of God and his wonderful creation.

THEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

How do we develop our theology? This is an important question because our theology will affect every aspect of our Christian lives. We may as well be asking why do we believe what we believe? Though the Bible is not a science text book, there are still good ways and bad ways of constructing a theology. The following points would seem to be essential:

1. Collect the Biblical materials

If your theology is to be faithful to scripture all the relevant passages on a particular doctrinal theme must be assembled. These passages must be studied using the tools of interpretation.

2. Unify the Biblical materials

Rather than just having a theology of Paul, or John, or Luke, their various emphases must be unified into one whole. This process assumes that there is a unity.

3. Analyse the meaning of the Biblical Teachings

Once all the material is together we must ask 'what does this really mean?' The statement 'you must be born again' must be unpacked. Statements like this cannot be read literally.

4. Examine Historical Theology

It would demonstrate a lack of humility to think that we will get it right without ever consulting the thinking of Godly men and women over the centuries. This cannot be our primary source of authority, the Bible is, but if we find situations in history similar to our own and learn what Christians

believed then, we find both confirmation and thought models which we ourselves can use.

5. Identify the Essence of the Doctrine

We need to identify the unchanging content of the doctrine and separate it from its cultural context. In other words throw out the cultural baggage.

6. Illumination from Sources outside the Bible

The world around us can help us define theological terms. For example God created us unique and in his image. The Bible however does not tell us what these unique features are. A study of anthropology, however, may give some clues.

7. Express the theology in a Contemporary Way.

The doctrine itself is timeless and unchanging. We need to learn, however, to communicate it in a way that is understood by modern people. Culture must be carefully analysed and contemporary models of thought used. Another term we could use is that of contextualization.

8. Stratification of Topics

It is important to finish off by listing the topics on the basis of their relative importance. This will help us differentiate between major areas of belief and beliefs which are sub-topics, those beliefs which are fundamental to the faith and those which are negotiable. For example the doctrine of the atonement of the unity of the body of Christ are of higher importance than whether or not women wear head coverings.

Lesson 2

WHAT IS GOD LIKE

Even before we deal with the issue of what God is like, it is necessary to ask the question, how do we know God exists? This is really an apologetics question, though apologetics is a branch of theology and therefore has a valid place in the discussion.

There are two ways of thinking about Gods existence. Firstly there is the inner sense, and secondly there is evidence for the existence of God.

Inner Sense

The bible indicates that every human being has an inner God awareness (Rom.1:19 ; 21). This can be suppressed (Rom.1:18 ; 25) as it has be by western society at large, but it is there never the less. As people become Christians and grow in their faith, they enjoy an inner affirmation of their relationship with God (Rom.8:16). This inner sense is so strong that it leads to a love for God (1Pet.1:8).

Evidence

There are three lines of evidence that can be used to suggest the existence of God. These are:

1. Nature

Paul tells us that the evidence for God can be clearly be seen in the things that have been made (Rom.1:20). This has been described as natural theology. The sheer complexity of life as we know it suggests the existence of a designer.

2. Scripture

Scripture make the assumption of God existence. The very existence of a book like the bible which has a unified message, contains fulfilled prophecies, and describes the miraculous works of God in history, strongly suggests that there is a creator behind the book.

3. Traditional Proofs

There have also been a number of arguments that Christians throughout the ages have come up with that support the view that there is a God. The most popular arguments are as follows:

1. Cosmological: every thing in the universe must have a cause for its existence, but there must logically be something that causes everything to happen but that is itself uncaused. Just like a train carriage has an engine making it move, so the universe must have a cause.
2. Teleological: there is clearly harmony and coherence in the universe. The design that is implicit suggests a designer. William Paley developed this idea by telling a story of a man who was going through a field on horse back and his watch fell off. The next day someone found his watch in the mud. The person who found the watch did not assume that the watch merely appeared in the mud, or that it had been eternally there, rather its complexity suggested an intelligent designer.
3. Ontological: there must be a being who is the greatest, and this being must exist because existence is greater than non existence. That being by definition is God.
4. Moral: man has an innate sense of right and wrong. This is not a mater of instinct, it is something much more profound and wonderful. The presence of morality in humans can only be

explicable by the presence of a moral being in whose image we are made.

Having thought about theology we now come to the basic building block of theology which is the person of God Himself. How we understand God affects everything else.

Attributes of God

These attributes are the qualities which constitute what He is. That is not to say that God is the sum total of all His attributes. Just because we understand his attributes it does not follow that we fully understand God. Neither are these attributes something external or tagged on to His personhood, he is all these things in their completeness and perfection. They are, however, the characteristics of His nature. They are intrinsic and cannot be lost.

There are different ways of classifying God's attributes. Here are some classifications:

1. Communicable and Incommunicable

That is to say those attributes which can be seen in a limited way in human beings, and those which God alone possesses.

2. Immanent and Intransitive

That is those that remain within the character of God (spirituality) and those which operate outside of himself (mercy).

3. Absolute and Relative

That is those which God has within himself and has had throughout eternity (infinity), and those which are seen in relation to His creation which is not eternal (grace).

4. Natural and Moral

That is those which demonstrate God's greatness and power, and those which demonstrate God's goodness.

For these lectures we will use the fourth category:

Natural (greatness): describe the awesomeness of God's being

Moral (goodness): describe the moral qualities of God

The Greatness of God

Spirituality

God is spirit rather than physical (Jn.4:24 ; Jn.1:18 ; 1Tim.1:17 ; 6:15,16). He is therefore not limited to one particular location (Jn.4:21 ; Ac.17:24). Jesus himself said that spirit does not have flesh and bone (Lu.24:39)

[When physical features are mentioned like hands and feet we call them **anthropomorphism**. Physical appearances in the Old Testament are theophanies]

Personality

God is an individual, self-conscious being with will and feelings. God has a name (Ex.3:14) by which he is to be referred (Gen.12:8). In Hebrew culture a persons name is the embodiment of his character. God relates to people (Gen.3) and can love and be loved.

Life

The Bible assumes that God exists. Jer.10:10 pictures Him as a *living* God in contrast to stone idols. In John 5:26 we are told that God has life *in Himself* . That is to say that He is self- existent. His life is not generated or maintained by any outside force. The adjective *eternal* is also used frequently of God.

Infinity

Not only is God unlimited but He is also unlimitable. He is therefore utterly different than anything else that exists.

He is omnipresent. The Lord of heaven and earth (Ac.17:24-25) who is not confined to geographical locations but who fills the universe (Jer.23:24) and the

being from whom no one can hide (Ps.139:7-12). A question that arises at this stage is whether or not God is also in hell.

He is omniscient. He knows everything about everything (Rom.11:33). He is never wrong and has never experienced what it means to learn something.

He is omnipotent. He is *el Shaddai* the Almighty God (Gen.17:1). The one who can perform the impossible (Gen.18:10-14).

Constancy

Ps.102:26,27 remind us that God is unchanging. This is repeated in both testaments (Mal.3:6 ; Jas.1:17). He does not need to mature or develop. Questions must be asked therefore as to whether God can change his mind.

The Goodness of God

We now turn to the qualities which make God the yardstick of morality.

Holiness

Two aspects: uniqueness (Ex.15:11). God is utterly other or different and that is what Holy means. Isa. 6:1-4 (qadosh) lit. *withdrawn from common use*.

Purity (Hab.1:13 ; Job.34:12) The Levitical Law ensured that sacrifices and the priests who offered them were to be without flaw. The people were also to live lives of moral purity unlike their neighbours.

Righteousness

Holiness when applied to relationships. The way in which God deals with others.

1. The law of God is perfect as He is (Ps.19:7-9).
2. God will always act according to His law (Gen.18:25).

Justice

All sin must have its consequences. The justice of God means that he deals out the administration of justice with complete fairness and without favouritism. In the Old Testament God criticizes judges who accept bribes (1 Sam.8:3 ; Amos 5:12).

Integrity

This can be further sub-divided into three other sections.

1. **Genuineness:** God is genuine in the sense that He is the real God in contrast to the false gods of the pagans. Jer.10 describes with satire the idols that some men worship but in v.10 he tells us that the *Lord is the true God*. The New Testament pictures God in similar ways (Jn.17:3 ; 1Thess.1:9 ; 1 Jn.5:20 ; Rev.3:7 ; 6:10).
2. **Veracity:** Not only is God real but what he says is the truth. 1 Sam.15:29 states that in this regard God is different from men. Again the New Testament repeats this assertion (Jn.17:17,19 ; Tit.1:2 ; Heb.6:18). This attribute means that we can utterly trust God and there is no error in anything God says. This includes error due to ignorance because God knows everything.
3. **Faithfulness:** God not only tells the truth but He proves to be true by keeping all His promises (Num.23:19 ; 1Thess.5:24)

Love

Love is at the very heart of what God is (1Jn.4:8,16). In order to understand God's love, however, we also need to subdivide this attribute into four parts.

1. **Benevolence:** This word means that God seeks the welfare of others as described in Jn.3:16. It is an unselfish love which is at the heart of a friend to friend relationship (Jn.15). This love is proved by God's actions (Ps.45:16) especially in Christ (1Jn.4:10).

2. Grace: God deals with people not on the basis of their merit but on the basis of His goodness. He cares for us even though we do not deserve it and He requires no excuse for treating us with love. This is born out when we compare how God treated His people (Ex.34:6 ; Eph.5:1-8) with how they treated Him.
3. Mercy: In grace God gives us what we do not deserve, in mercy He withholds what we do deserve. We are sinful, helpless and fallen and deserve punishment (Eph.2:4,5).
4. Persistence: This is God's patience in the face of extreme provocation (Ex.34:6 ; Ps.86:15 ; Rom.2:4 ; 9:22 ; 1Pet.3:20 ; 2Pet.3:15).

There are clearly some tensions in God's character that we have to reverently understand. For example how do love and justice work together?

Lesson 3

THE TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is distinct among all the religions of the world. Despite the word not actually appearing in scripture it is a doctrine that is explicitly stated.

It is a crucial question because it not only impinges upon who God is but also what He does. It is a complex issue because it is neither strictly logical nor can it be fully comprehended by the human mind. So much rests on the doctrine, however, that it must be tackled.

We first begin by looking at the oneness of God.

One God

The ancient Jews were rigidly monotheistic. The Ten Commandments begin with the charge that there should be no other gods (Ex.20:2,3). From an early age young Jewish boys were taught the *Shema* of Deut.6:4 that the Lord God is one. They were to commit themselves to this teaching (v.6,7). This belief was carried on to the New Testament (Jas.2:19).

Three Persons

The deity of the **Father** is beyond dispute but the question arises what about Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

The Old Testament hints at other persons in the Godhead by using the plural form 'us' (Gen.1:26 ; 3:22 ; 11:7). There are also references to the Spirit of God (Ex.31:3 ; Jd.6:34 ; Ps.51:11 ; Isa.42:1). There are also hints of another person (Jd.13:2-22 ; Jn.12:41,42 with Isa.6:10).

Jesus is also ascribed full deity in the New Testament (Jn.1:1-18 ; Rom.9:5 ; Col.2:9 ; Tit.2:13 ; Heb.1:8-10). The **Holy Spirit** is also linked with the Godhead (1 Cor.3:16,17 ; 6:19 ; Mtt.28:19 ; 2 Cor.13:14 ; 1Pet.1:2).

This doctrine appears to be self contradictory and has therefore caused great discussion throughout church history. The following are various views which have been expounded:

Economic Trinity

Tertullian believed in three manifestations of a single power. There is distinction but not separation. The one substance is extended into three manifestations but they are not distinct.

Dynamic Monarchianism

Theodotus believed that prior to baptism Jesus was just a good man. Once the Spirit descended on him he performed divine works. In other words he became God at that point.

Modalistic Monarchianism

Sabellius believed in one Godhead variously designated as Father, Son and Spirit. Successive revelations of the same person. In other words one person with three names and roles, not three persons.

The Orthodox Formulation

Athanasius argued successfully for one (ousia) substance and three (hypostases) persons. One Godhead, three modes of being. Each individual hypostases is the ousia of the Godhead

There are certain statements which have to be made that are non-negotiable:

1. God is one.
2. The deity of Father, Son and Spirit must be affirmed.
3. Any apparent contradiction is not real.
4. The trinity is eternal.
5. Though one member may be subordinate to another for a time He is not inferior in essence.
6. The Trinity is ultimately incomprehensible.

Sometimes analogies are useful in helping us to understand this doctrine, but all have their limitations (eg. the egg, water/ice/steam)

Again questions arise. When Jesus became a man what did he 'empty himself of'? Did the Father suffer on the cross? How could the Father and Son be separated?

Lesson 4

CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

Reasons for studying the doctrine of creation include the following:

1. The bible places great significance upon it.
2. It is a significant part of the churches faith.
3. It affects our understanding of other doctrines.
4. It separates Christian theology from that of other religions.
5. It is a source of dialogue with the natural sciences.
6. It is an area of potential conflict between Christians.

Creation needs to be defined:

Creation From Nothing (*ex nihilo*)

When we say that God created everything we do not mean that he created using some original substance, or even from himself. These are the views of Hinduism and the New Age Movement. Rather everything that exists came into being by God's power from nothing (*ex nihilo*). This idea is hinted at in the Old Testament and stated overtly in the New:

Firstly, there are the 'from the beginning' references which demonstrate that there was a time when nothing existed. Secondly, Paul overtly referred to an *ex nihilo* creation (Rom.4:7).

Creation of Everything

When Genesis states that God created the heavens and the earth, this was a term that includes everything that exists. This is confirmed in the New Testament (Eph.3:9 ; Col.1:16 ; Rev.4:11). Jn.1:3 also makes the point emphatically.

The Creation/Evolution Debate

The issue of creation has caused much friction especially with the advent of modern science. Three basic views exist though they can be further sub-divided:

1. Evolution as a random, un-caused event within a closed system.
2. Creation directly by God.

3. Theistic Evolution in which God used the process of evolution to create the universe.

Christians hold to both 2 & 3. Caution must be exercised in this debate. Much of the scientific evidence is uncertain and it is also difficult to be dogmatic about how literally the early chapters of Genesis are interpreted. It is wrong to treat Genesis like a scientific text book and it is wrong to discount what the bible says in deference to the apparent claims of science. However in recent years the arguments against evolution and in favor of intelligent design have grown and are being powerfully expressed as they gain momentum.

The Problem with Evolution

Those Christians who insist on a theistic evolution theology, still have to reckon with the many problems associated with the theory of evolution. Scientifically it is not cut and dry even though it is taught in most schools and colleges as scientific fact.

Among the criticisms of evolution are the following:

1. Evolution has never gone beyond the theory level.
2. Evolution has yet to explain the origin of matter.
3. Evolution has yet to explain the origin of life.
4. An increasing number of scientists are rejecting evolution as a theory.

Creation of the Spiritual Realm:

Good Angels

In addition to the physical creation that can be seen, there are also spiritual forces. These are often referred to as Angels, a word that means messenger. The creation narratives do not mention their creation though it is mentioned in Ps.148:2,5, Neh.9:6 and also Col.1:16. We can presume that they were created before the seventh day of creation (Gen.2:1 ; Ex.20:11). Job 38:6,7 might even suggest that they were created on the first day of creation.

These angels are moral beings, knowing good from evil (Mtt.25:1 ; Mk.8:38 ; Lu.1:26 ; Ac.10:22 ; Rev.14:10 ; Rev.22:9). They are capable of sinning as was evidenced by the angelic rebellion (2 Pet.2:4 ; Jude 6). They are also intelligent beings with the capacity to communicate (2 Sam.14:20 ; Mtt.28:5 ; Acts 12:6-

12). They also grow in knowledge by observation (Lu.12:8 ; 15:10 ; 1Cor.4:9 ; Eph.3:10).

Many references indicate that they are large in number (Deut.33:2 ; Ps.68:17 ; Mtt.26:53 ; Heb.12:22 ; Rev.5:11). There seem to be different ranks of Angels (1Thess.4:16 ; Jude 9 ; Isa.6:2,3). Michael, for example, is called an ‘archangel’

In most cases they are invisible (Num.22:31 ; 2Kg.6:17 ; Lu.2:13). This is because they are spirits and have no bodies. But when they are seen they can be mistaken for men (Gen.18:2,26,22 ; 19:1,5,10,12,15,16). There is no mention of female angels nor do they always have wings, though they seem to fly (Dan.9:21 ; Rev.14:6).

There are other names by which angels are known. These include ‘sons of God’ (Job.1:6 ; 2:1), ‘holy ones’ (Ps.89:5,7), ‘spirits’ (Heb.1:14), ‘watchers’ (Dan.4:13, 17, 23), ‘thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities’ (Col.1:16) and ‘powers’ (Eph.1:21).

Angels have jobs and activities to fulfil:

1. Praise and glorify God (Job38:7 ; Ps.103:20 ; Rev.5:11-12).
2. Communicate God’s message to man (Ac.7:53 ; Gal.3:19 ; Heb.2:2).
3. Minister to believers (Ac.5:19 ; Ps.34:7 ; 91:11 ; Heb.1:14).
4. Execute God’s judgment (2Kg.19:35 ; 2Sam.24:16).
5. Involvement in the second coming (Mtt.25:31).

Evil Angels

Genesis 1:31 states that all of creation was good. This almost certainly means that the evil angelic world did not exist. By Genesis 3 Satan appears in the form of a serpent. This gives us a time frame for the fall of angels.

Both Peter and Jude mention the fall of the angels (2 Pet.2:4 ; Jude 6). Isaiah14:12-15 also hints at a fall. Evil spirits are fallen Angels. The head of the demons is Satan and he is mentioned in several places (Job.1:6 ; 1 Chron.21:1 ; Zech.3:1 ; Lu.10:18). The name Satan means ‘adversary’. He is a deceiver and

tries to hinder God's work (2 Cor.11:14,15 ; Rev.12:9 ; 1Thess.2:18). But with help from the Holy Spirit Christians can resist him (Jas.4:7 ; Rom.8:26).

The Bible mentions a number of important things about Satan and his minions:

1. Satan was the originator of sin

Satan sinned before any human being did. He also tempted humans to sin (Gen.3:1-6 ; 2 Cor.11:3). He is described as having sinned from the beginning (1Jn.3:8).

2. Demons oppose the work of God

Satan tempted men to fall and also tried to get Jesus to sin (Mtt.4:1-11). He uses lies (Jn.8:4), deception (Rev.12:9), murder (Ps.106:37) and any tactic that will hamper the work of God. In particular he will try to prevent people from becoming Christians (2 Cor.4:4).

3. Demons are limited

In the book of Job Satan could only go as far as God allowed (Job.1:12 ; 2:6). Demons are kept in chains and can be resisted by Christians (Jude 6 ; Jas.4:7). There is no indication of angels or demons knowing people's thoughts.

It is important to get a balanced view of the demonic world. To deny the reality of the demonic is as foolish as to see demonic activity behind everything that goes wrong.

Providence

Not only did God create the universe but he keeps it going and this action is called providence. It comes from the Latin *providere* which means to foresee.

Providence must be viewed in different ways:

1. Providence as preservation

This is when God keeps the universe from harm (Neh.9:6 ; Col.1:17 ; 1:3). Clearly no part of the universe is self-sufficient.

God also preserved Israel as a nation through the Exodus plagues and many battles. Daniel and his friends experienced this in a personal way.

Both Jesus and Paul talk about God preserving the spiritual health of Christians (Jn.10:27-30 ; Rom.8:35).

2. Providence as government

This is God's directing of history to His own ends. Both Testaments refer to God's power to carry out His plans (Ps.135:5-7 ; Mtt.5:45). Jesus himself demonstrated this power (Mk.4:39).

The animal kingdom is under God's power (Ps.104:21-29). Human history likewise (Dan.2:21 ; Ac.17:26). And that of individuals (1Sam.2:6,7). Random and chance events also fall under God's providence (Prov.16:33).

Even evil actions fall under providence (Ac.2:23). This last point gives us a problem. How can God be associated with sin for he is perfect and cannot cause sin (Jas.1:14 ; 1Jn.2:16). God relates to sin in 4 ways:

1. Prevents it
2. Permits it
3. Directs it
4. Limits it

Features of God's Providence

1. It is universal.
2. It affects Christians and non-Christians alike.
3. God works for good.
4. God is personally concerned for those who are His.
5. God's providence includes human actions.
6. God is sovereign.
7. We need to be careful as to what we identify as God's providence.

The Problem of Evil

Having dealt with the general issue of providence, it is necessary to think about the specific problem of evil. More specifically, what is the relationship between God and evil.

Certainly there are passages where God is closely associated with acts of evil. The following are examples with some explanation:

The account of the life of Joseph is a good one (Gen.50:20). These passages, however, do not portray God as actually causing the evil directly. People do and God merely allows the acts.

When David sinned God struck down the child that came from the adulterous relationship. The child died (2 Sam. 12:11-12). This was a direct punishment of God, but on an innocent child. The bible offered no justification for the event, though the reason for this action was David's sin.

The crucifixion of Christ which was the most evil deed ever done was also ordained by God. Again we read of the benefits of this act and the fact that Christ was killed by lawless men (Ac.2:23), but never the less this was also an act of God. Christ was slain from the foundation of the world.

As we analyse these and other passages there are a number of things that we need to conclude:

1. God uses all things to fulfill his purposes and even uses evil for His glory and our good.
2. God never does evil and the bible never blames Him for any evil.
3. Evil is a very real entity and we should never do it.

Lesson 5

HUMANITY

Reasons for the importance of this doctrine includes the following:

1. Since humanity is the pinnacle of creation, it gives us an understanding of the completion of God's work. We get an insight into the creator in whose image we are made (Gen.1:26,27).
2. We also have an understanding of the doctrine of Christ.
3. Our doctrine of humanity impinges on other disciplines such as psychology and sociology.

Throughout history man has been viewed in different ways:

1. As a machine

Judge according to what he is able to do. He is a piece of machinery that can be rented and his value is proportional to what he can achieve.

2. As an animal

Man is just a higher form of animal but not appreciably and intrinsically more valuable. He works by instinct and learns from punishment and reward like Pavlov's dog.

3. As a sexual being

Freud saw sexuality as the key to humanity. Man is tripartite, the id is a caldron of desires & drives, the ego is the conscious component of personality and the super ego is the control on the drives. All human

behavior is sources in sexual drives.

4. As an economic being

dialectical materialism (communism) sees economic forces controlling the history of the world. History moves in progressive stages (epochs) and man is a tiny component in the machinery.

5. As a pawn in the universe

Existentialism pictures man at the mercy of forces in the world over which we can have no power.

6. As a free being

The human will is the essence of humanity. Humans need to have enough information to make valid choices.

The Bible has a very different view:

1. Man is created by a conscious purposeful act of God rather than having evolved by blind forces.
2. Man is made in the image of God, something that is unique to him.
3. There is an eternal dimension to man, though created he has an eternal future.

The basic question that has to be asked is weather or not humans are unique in creation. Are we of greater intrinsic value than animals?

On a rudimentary level we are different in many ways?

1. Man can make valid decisions and choices which affect his situation both in the present and into the future.
2. Man has goals and values which give his life purpose.
3. Man is morally accountable and senses this.

4. Man is a social being with needs more complex and sophisticated than that of an animal.
5. Man is able to be creative and imaginative.
6. Man has self-consciousness.
7. Man is a worshipping being.

There are two creation narratives Gen.1:26,27 and Gen.2:7-. We are given a description of how man was made in the second reference and reminded that man is made in the image of God.

Again the debates surrounding creation/evolution rage. Included in this debate is the age of man.

Image of God

Gen.1:26,27 reminds us that God deliberately made us in His image. There is something intrinsically valuable about this because in Gen.9:6 murder is prohibited precisely because we are made in God's image.

But what is the image of God? Various views have been put forward:

1. The substantive view

The image is some definite quality or characteristic in the makeup of a human being. Some like Mormons see this as a physical characteristic. We look like God, though this is not widespread.

More common is the idea that it is some psychological or spiritual quality. The main candidate has been reason.

2. The relational view

The image is what makes us truly human and distinguishes us from the animals. It is the image that makes us morally accountable before God and is therefore about relationship. No structural qualities weather physical or spiritual are involved.

3. The Functional view

This view pictures the image as something man does. For example he has the function of dominion over creation.

These views need to be evaluated to find their weaknesses:

1. Relational view: How can one say that a person who rejects God or denies His existence is in a relationship with Him? In any case what is it about man that enables him to have this relationship with God?
2. Functional view: In Ps.8:7,8 we see man exercising dominion over creation in parallel to the Genesis account yet there is no reference to him bearing the image.
3. Substantive view: Scripture itself never identifies any quality which might be the image. Also if the image is reason, for example, then logically a more intelligent person would have more of the image than someone who was educationally sub-normal.

Can we draw any conclusions regarding the Image of God?

1. The image of God is universal.
2. It has not been lost as a result of sin.
3. There is no evidence that the image is seen more in some.
4. It is not variable, nor has it conditions attached to it.
5. The image is part of the very nature of man, it is part of his being therefore must be substantive.
6. The image of man appears to be that which enables him to interact with others and with God. This could be described as personality. This would include awareness of self, intelligence, will, emotions.

Composition of Man

We can now understand that man is unique, what are the components of man?
Various views have been prominent:

1. Trichotomism

Man is composed of three elements, body, soul (psychological element with reason and emotion) and a spirit (the element which enables him to respond to spiritual stimuli).

2. Dichotomism

Two elements, a material body and an immaterial soul/spirit.

3. Monism

Man is a radical unity. To be human is to have a body and there can be no afterlife without a bodily resurrection.

It seems to me that man is indeed a being with three aspects; body, soul and spirit. At the same time he must be treated as a whole being. It is also reasonable to suggest that the soul part of man is equivalent to the image of God.

In the Old Testament the word for soul (*nephesh*) and the word for spirit (*ruach*) are used interchangeably. The same is true early in the New Testament with (*psyche*) and (*pneuma*). As it develops, however, *pneuma* is used increasingly for the part which enables us to relate with God (1Cor.2:9-16).

Where does the soul come from?

- 1) Pre-existent: Origen (185-254) taught that the soul exists prior to conception and that the body is an envelope. There is little Biblical support.
- 2) Creationism: The soul is created directly by God at some stage in the birth process (Eccl.12:7 ; Zach.12:1 ; Heb.12:9 ; Gen.2:7).
- 3) Traducianism: The soul is inherited from the parents in the same way the body is (Gen.2:21 ; Ac.17:26 ; Heb.7:9-18 ; Rom.5:12). This might explain the passing on of character traits as well as physical appearance.

Lesson 6

SIN AND IT'S CONSEQUENCES

Genesis 3 gives a blow by blow of the fall of man and the subsequent sinful life which he led. It is important, however, to get to the bottom of what sin actually is. The only way of doing this is to begin with the terms and words which the Bible uses for sin. These terms/words focus on the causes, nature and consequences of sin:

Causes of Sin

1. Ignorance

agnoia -based on the Greek to know. Is related to the English word agnostic. Indicates ignorance to sins though we are still culpable (Rom.1:13 ; 2Cor.6:9).

2. Error

Some terms relate to the propensity to go astray (1 Sam.26:21).

3. Inattention

Lit.'to hear incorrectly' (Rom.5:19 ; 2 Cor.10:6 ; Heb.2:2,3).

Character of Sin

4. Missing the mark

The Hebrew *chata* and the Greek *amaptano* are the most commonly used. They literally mean to miss as in Jud.20:16. However, the implication is not always that one makes a mistake and fails to hit the spot but that the mistake was deliberate.

5. Irreligion

A common New Testament word is *asebeia* which is the opposite of to worship. It means irreverence or impiety.

6. Transgression

The Hebrew *avar* literally means 'to cross over'. Sin can be like this (Num.14:41,42 ; Deut.17:2).

The Greek *parabiano* infers the breaking of God's law (Mtt.15:2,3).

7. Lack of Integrity

The idea of injustice is here (Lev.19:15).

8. Rebellion

The Hebrew *pasha* means to rebel (1Kg.12:19 ; Isa.1:2).

9. Treachery

The word *maal* is used both of a woman's unfaithfulness to her husband and of Achan's sin of breaking faith (Num.5:12,27 ; Josh.7:1 ; 22:20).

10. Perversion

The Hebrew *awah* literally translates 'to bend' or 'twist' (Isa.21:3).

11. Abomination

This word refers to acts which are particularly offensive to God such as idolatry (Deut.7:25,26).

The Results of sin

12. Agitation

The Hebrew *resha* which translates wickedness was originally a term for being loose. It refers to the lack of peace which the wicked experience (Job 3:17 ; Isa.57:20,21).

13. Evil

The word *ra* brings together both the act of sin and the consequences to the sinner.

14. Guilt

The Hebrew *asham* refers to compensation (Num.5:8). The idea is of the debt owed by the sinner.

15. Trouble

The Hebrew *aven* means to be in trouble in a moral sense (Hos.4:15 ; 10:8 ; Pr.22:8).

Sin therefore takes many shapes but in its essence it is when we do not allow God to be supreme in our lives.

The Effects of Sin

Sin affects all of our lives. Calvin talked about 'total depravity', not that everything we do is evil but that every part of our being is tainted with sin:

- 1) The will - Jn.8:34 ; Rom.7:14 ; Eph.2:1-3
- 2) The mind - Gen. 6:5 ; 1Cor.1:21 ; Eph.4:17f
- 3) The emotions - Rom.1:24 ; 1Tim.6:9 ; 2Tim.3:2
- 4) The speech - 2 Tim.3:3 ; Jas.3:5f
- 5) The behavior - Gal.5:19 ; Rom.1:28

Transmission of Sin

We are by nature sinful (Eph.2:3). Like a bowling bowl we have a bias towards sin. We, like Adam suffer from original sin (Rom.5:12). How was Adam's sin transmitted?

1. Realism

Every individual is potentially present in his ancestors. We were therefore actually present when Adam sinned so we also sinned.

2. Federalism

God made Adam representative of humanity. Adam's choice was therefore our choice. Adam is paralleled with Christ (Rom.5:12-19 ; 1Cor.5:22 ; 45-49).