

Basic Faith

Christian Theology for Everyone

Session 3: Humanity & Sin

Who/What We Are

(1) Context – Creation (the Universe)

God Creates . . .

- Genesis 1.1 – the primordial stuff of the universe
- Genesis 1.3 – light
- Genesis 1.6-7 – differentiation of heavens and earth
- Genesis 1.9-10 – separation of land and sea
- Genesis 1.11-12 – plant life
- Genesis 1.14-18 – sun, moon, stars
- Genesis 1.20-25 – animals, birds, fish, bugs
- Genesis 1.26-27 – humans

Humans are a part of God's creation

(2) Imago Dei

Genesis 1:26-27 – God creates humans in God's image (Imago Dei)

What does it mean to be created in God's image?

What can we discern about what God "looks like"?

Genesis 1:26, 28-30 – God gives humanity dominion and uninhibited usage of all non-human life on earth. As God has rule over Creation, God gives humanity rule over part of Creation (a likeness of God's function as ruler).

Although the concept is not stated, is it implied that humanity has stewardship over what it has been given dominion?

If your answer is "yes", then why do you believe this to be true?

Free-Will

Free-Will – the capacity of self-determination. The ability to make what is determined by free-will a reality (i.e. the ability to actuate free-will) is limited to what is possible within the situation at hand. For example: one can decide to jump off the roof and fly to the McDonald’s in Clinton for lunch but the abysmal aeronautic design of humans combined with gravity make this impossible.

God has Ultimate and Perfect Free-Will – as God has no limitations, God can do anything God wants to do. (If something is against God’s character, God will not consider doing it.)

Free-Will is the Most Dangerous and Worst-Best thing God Gave us . . . And God’s Biggest Gamble – God’s free-will leads to good decisions because God is perfectly wise and sees past his decisions. Humans, being a part of creation and therefore severely limited by where and when we are, can only guess at the outcome of our decisions. Moreover, our creaturely limitations prevent us from always making wise decisions. Our decision making is influenced by our physical-emotional-spiritual-social-economic-ideological situations, much of which affects us in ways we are not immediately aware of. The bottom line – Free-will allows us to make good and bad and really bad decisions. Yet . . .

Free-Will is Such an Important Good the God Was Willing to Give it to Us – whether we realize it or not, free-will is, maybe, the most important and valuable thing God has ever given us.

How might our use of free-will create problems for ourselves or others?

How might our use of free-will solve problems and make things better for ourselves or others?

What goes into making a decision that does no harm and may do good?

“The Fall” - Sin/Evil - How Humanity Attained the Capacity for Evil

Like the concept of humanity being created in the image of God, how humanity attained the capacity for evil is a religious concept, not an anthropological, psychological, or social concept. In other words, these concepts are ways that we understand who we are from a non-scientific point of view.

“The Fall” - The theological term for humanity’s tumbling off the cliff of purity and sinlessness by committing the first sin (actually the second).

Before the Fall – Genesis 2.8-25 – Life in paradise. Even better than vacation in Florida or _____ (pick your favorite). Humanity was happy and clueless (ignorance really was bliss).

The Fall – Genesis 3.1-13 – Humanity is lied to and falls to the temptation to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God had told them not to do. This first act of disobedience is generally considered the first sin.

How could this have happened?!?

Why does it matter that we came to know the difference between good and evil?

Can things get any worse?!?

After the Fall – Genesis 3.14-24 – as one famous writer said in the title of his most famous book, “Paradise Lost” The garden becomes the first place anyone is kicked out of for bad behavior.

Moreover, God lays down punishment in the form of the trials, tribulations, struggles and sufferings of life (Genesis 3.16-19)

The Nature and Problem of Sin . . . as told by the Bible

- Psalm 51.3-5
- Romans 2.28-32; 3.9-18; 7.14-25
- Galatians 5.16-21
- back and forth through the Bible we see people behaving badly as often (or more) than behaving well (pick a book or passage, chances are someone is doing something they shouldn't)

The greatest problem with sin for us, aside from its rebellion against God, is that it is _____ .

Sin is that which alienates/separates us from God and God's ways.

God's Long-Term Project - Saving Us from Sin and Its Ultimate Result, Death

Oversimplified Outline of the Bible:

- A. God creates everything - Genesis 1
 - 1. Non-living stuff
 - 2. Living creatures
 - 3. Humans in the image of God
- B. Humanity disobeys God and finds it as easy to do harm as to do good - Genesis 3
- C. God works a plan to save humanity - Genesis 4 thru Revelation

God's Options for Dealing With Rebellious Sin-shackled Humanity:

1. Destroy and start over - did that (Noah/Flood story), didn't work
2. Ignore humanity and hope it goes away - not likely
3. Engage with humanity to save it *** Best Choice! ***

Humanity's Fundamental Relationship with God – Covenant

Covenant – how God maintains a relationship with humanity, even when humanity cannot hold up its end of the deal

A covenant involves –

- two parties (the party of the first part is always God)
- a set of promises
- a sign indicating that one is party to the covenant

Example of a covenant: Marriage

- Party of the 1st part: wife Party of the 2nd part: husband
- Promises: those contained within the wedding vows (faithfulness, love, etc.)
- Sign: wedding rings (for the record: a prenuptial agreement is not a sign of the marriage covenant)

The major Biblical covenants:

Covenant	Parties	Promises	Sign
Noah	God, all creatures	God would never again destroy life on earth by a flood	Rainbow
Abraham	God, Abraham & Sarah's descendants	Abraham's descendants would be a great nation and the conduit of God's blessings to the world	Male circumcision
Moses	God, Israelites	"I will be your God and you will be my people" - thru the covenant stipulations, God would form the people of Abraham's covenant into a nation	The Law summarized in the 10 Commandments
David	God, David's descendants	God would protect Jerusalem & one of David's descendants would forever reign over Israel	none given (God can do whatever God wants)
New	God, humanity	Forgiveness of sins, eternal life, life with meaning, God's guidance, blessing, etc. extended to all people	Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Through the covenant relationships God has and continues to engage with humanity to free it from its sin.