

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF MAN

INTRODUCTION

Where did I come from? Why am I here? Who am I? Where am I going? Probably every system of religion or philosophy has asked and formulated answers to these four probing questions. But philosophy and religion can be wrong. Let us turn to the Bible to discover God's authoritative responses.

1. WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

- a. Genesis is the book of beginnings and clearly recounts the origin of man. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27).
 - (1) The Hebrew word for "create" is "bara," meaning to create out of nothing.
 - (2) Adam and Eve literally were created on the sixth day of creation. With them the reproductive process began. That is where we came from.
 - (3) Man was created "in the image of God" in the sense of immaterial likenesses such as intellect, emotion, and will. Furthermore, man's existence as body, soul, and spirit reflects the triunity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul gives several examples of immaterial likenesses. ". . . Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). ". . . Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:10).
- b. The concept of universal pre-existence is excluded by the Bible.
 - (1) The Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 B.C.) taught in his *Phaedo*, "Our souls must also have existed without bodies before they were in the form of man, and must have had intelligence. . . . Our souls must have had a prior existence. . ." (*The Worlds of Plato and Aristotle*, James B. Wilbur and Harold J. Allen, p. 27).
 - (2) Such a view, however, reverses the divine order stated by the apostle Paul. "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . . Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Corinthians 15:44,46). Note, Plato states that

the soul or spirit of man pre-existed which Paul writes that the spiritual part of man did not come first.

- (3) If everyone had known God personally before coming to this earth, God's words in Matthew 7:23 would be meaningless when He says, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."
 - (4) It is expressly written that Jacob and Esau had no history prior to their birth. "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth:)" (Romans 9:11).
 - (5) The origin of each individual spirit is explained in Zechariah 12:1. The Lord ". . .formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - (6) The only human being to pre-exist was Jesus Christ, and His pre-existent state was that of Godhood. The pre-existence of Christ is repeatedly presented in the Bible but only to prove His deity. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).
- c. Human theories of origins range from pre-existence to spontaneous generation to evolution. None of these are supported by the Bible. "In the beginning God created. . ." (Genesis 1:1).

2. WHY ARE WE HERE?

- a. Man was created to bring glory to the one true God.
 - (1) "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).
 - (2) Though a reference to the nation Israel, the application of Isaiah 43:7 is universal. ". . .I have created him for my glory. . . ."
 - (3) "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).
- b. God's creatures, through sinful pride, rebelled against the very purpose for their existence. Instead of humbly glorifying God, the creature now seeks to exalt himself.

- (1) The fall of Lucifer was due to his desire for exaltation.
 - (a) "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isaiah 14:12-15).
 - (b) Lucifer is portrayed as consistently advancing the concept that a mere creature can become the object of worship. The devil addressed Christ saying, ". . .All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9).
- (2) Satan, not God, authored the proposition that men can become gods.
 - (a) "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:1-6).
 - (b) Such pride is among the specified objects of God's hatred. "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Proverbs 6:16-19).
 - (c) Adam and Eve's desire to "be as gods" plunged the whole human race into sin and death. There was nothing noble about the Fall. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

- (3) God's judgment fell on a first century Bible character who entertained the idea of personal exaltation.
 - (a) Enthusiastic subjects once said of regal Herod, ". . .It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (Acts 12:22,23).
 - (b) In sharp contrast Paul and Barnabas refused to be worshipped by the people of Lystra, with the admonition, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein" (Acts 14:15).
- (4) An evil end-time figure will promote this same doctrine. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4).
- (5) It is absolutely impossible for men to achieve godhood.
 - (a) "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).
 - (b) Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalm 139:6).
 - (c) "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isaiah 43:10).

3. WHO ARE WE?

- a. We are sinners by birth. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).
- b. We are sinner by choice. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

- c. Even the very religious Pharisees were described by Jesus Christ as children of Satan. "Ye are of your father the devil. . ." (John 8:44).
- d. We are unrighteous. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10-12). "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. . ." (Isaiah 64:6).
- e. We are filthy. "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psalm 14:3).
- f. We are spiritually dead. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:1-3).
- g. We are unable to please God. Jesus said, ". . .Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). ". . .The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7,8).

4. WHERE ARE WE GOING?

- a. The Gospels present a two-fold choice concerning man's future: heaven or hell, life or death, light or darkness.
 - (1) "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46).
 - (2) "For God so loved the world, that he have his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).
 - (3) "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).
 - (4) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

- b. The apostle Paul also presents only two alternatives for man's eternal destiny. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

CONCLUSION

A consideration of the doctrine of man is far more than an intellectual pursuit. Each of us is individually responsible to arrive at correct answers to our original four questions. May God help us to accept Bible truth in the vital areas of our origin, purpose for life, potentials, and eternal destiny.

The awful reality of hell demands the most sober attention to these issues. Concerning those who refuse God's truth, the Bible says, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. . . . And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day and night. . ." (Revelation 14:10,11). A true story told by Jesus has helped millions to grasp the urgency of evaluating their spiritual condition. Pondering the implications of these timeless words could well change our lives for all eternity.

"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence" (Luke 16:19-26).

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