

# THE223 Christian Narrative 1 Creation and Fall

## Unit 3a Origin of Man

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As we begin a new unit, our attention will now shift from God to man. In our first two units, we considered at some length the nature of our Trinitarian God and how this God created the world in which we live. We looked at trinitarianism and at the beginnings of creation. As we turn our attention to humanity, we will stay in the creation account by looking at how God created mankind. So we begin our discussion with anthropology, the study of man and his relationship with God. Our first main teaching point in this unit is simply that mankind is unique among creation. I want us to spend sufficient time understanding the unique position humanity holds within creation.

If we open our Bibles to the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, there are many hermeneutical markers that help us understand both the importance and uniqueness of the creation of mankind. First, notice that in Genesis 1, there is divine deliberation and discussion surrounding the creation of man in Genesis 1:26-27. There seems to be an intense intentionality to the creation of mankind. Furthermore, of course, we see that humanity was made in God's image, a topic which we'll later discuss at length. Now, turn your attention to Genesis 2. In Genesis 2, we have a detailed discussion of the creation of mankind. There are two items I would like us to notice here. First, notice how the aspect of time is slowed down considerably as we are given the creation account of man. God created everything else in the universe and the days seem to just zip by in Genesis 1. But in Genesis 2, time slows and we see the fashioning hands of God form man out of the dust. We see the intimacy with which God breathes into man the breath of life and so man becomes a living being. We should not gloss over the slowing down of time in Genesis 2 for it communicates to us much about the importance of this event.

Secondly, notice the sheer real estate given over to the creation of man. Now, this may seem like an abstract thought, but it's one that has always impressed me. Biblically speaking, we teach that the canon of Scripture is complete, that God has fully revealed to us all that he desired for us to know in his Scriptures. There is no more revelation to come from God, so mathematically speaking, we have a finite number of words that have been given over to God's revelation onto humanity. God certainly wants us to know what he has revealed, but to me, it seems that some things are more important to God than others, given the amount of space that he dedicates to certain subjects. So in Genesis 1:1-25, God creates the entire universe save mankind. Twenty-five verses to detail what took place over six days. But then we're given all that and more to describe how God created humanity. Certainly we must recognize at the outset of our discussion the important and unique place that humanity has within creation. Humanity is then the pinnacle of God's creative activity, as we will see.

So here we have then Genesis 2:7. "Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." Man was made from something which was created, that is, the dust of the ground. He is Adam from *adamah*. He is man from the ground. And from something which was then also preexistent or eternal, that is, the breath or the ruach of life. Dust from the ground, breath of life. Something that was already created, something that was eternal. It is these two things in concert which God uses to form man. And what we're told is that when these two things are brought together, man became living. He became living when these two things, the dust of the ground and the breath of life were combined. Man was a new creation. Unlike the rest of creation, he is the unity of earth and divine breath.

So the life of mankind is to be found in what came of the unity of earth and breath: the soul. The Bible talks much of the idea that it is in the unity of both the material and immaterial part of mankind that life is to be found. So we find Ecclesiastes 12:7. "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit

returns to God who gave it.” We read in Luke 8:55, “And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And she was directed to eat something.” So here we have an example of when the spirit leaves, the material part, the body, is now dead. When the two are separated, they are dead. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8. We find a great treatise about this. “We know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in this body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” The life of mankind is found in the unity of breath and ground or in that which is created: the soul of the man.

Now, we have to ask the question, “How do the material and immaterial parts of humanity exist together? How do they relate?” Now, there are two different positions that are suggested within evangelicalism: dichotomy, which is far more popular both in the church and academy; and trichotomy, which is not as popular but still is not without its defenders. And so in this slide in front of you, we can see a brief description of both dichotomy and trichotomy. Dichotomy, at its most basic, simply states that humanity has both a body and a soul. The body is that material part of a person, that part that you and I can both see and touch, while the soul is the immaterial part of a person. And in this instance, dichotomists would hold that the soul and spirit are used interchangeably to describe one and the same aspect of a person. So as you read throughout Scripture, the dichotomists would argue that when you read soul or when you read spirit, these two words can be used interchangeably to speak of one and the same aspect of an individual.

And this is where the trichotomists would disagree. The trichotomists would hold that there is a body, that material part of a person. And here they would agree with the dichotomists. However, they would disagree in that soul and spirit can be used interchangeably. The trichotomists would argue that the soul represents a person’s intellect, emotion, and will, while the spirit represents a higher faculty of a person which comes alive only when that person becomes a Christian. And so the dichotomists would hold that there are two basic components to us as human beings, while the trichotomists would argue that, in fact, there are three core components that make us human beings. Yet notice at the bottom of this slide. No matter which view, both hold that the material and immaterial aspects of humanity exist in unity, not duality. They’re not separate but equal. Rather, they are fused together. They are integrated. And this is an important note for us to understand.

Thus, mankind is unique because it has a soul. Yet as it relates to the soul, there is still some debate as to how the soul is actually created. And so while we are unique as mankind because we do in fact have a soul, we have to ask the question, “Historically speaking, how have people believed the soul to come to be?” There are two primary evangelical positions, even though you see three listed on the slide. I’ll talk about the third one briefly at the end, but where I’d like to draw most of our attention today is to these first two positions: creationism and traducianism. Creationism holds that the soul is created at the moment of birth, that when a person is birthed, their soul is then given to them, and so it is created at that moment. Traducianism is the belief that the soul is not given or created at birth. Rather, that it is created at the moment of propagation. And so the moment the body is propagated, so the soul is

propagated. Now, we could talk at greater length at each of these, but we'll leave that to another time. Suffice to say that most evangelicals are going to hold to one or the other of these positions: creationism, which argues that the soul is created at the moment of birth; and traducianism, which argues that the soul is created at the moment of propagation.

There is a third position which is not really held within evangelicalism all that much. You can find it outside of evangelicalism. You can find it in some of the earlier church fathers who argued for a pre-existential soul, that is, that the soul eternally existed and is given to the body when the body is born, but it isn't created at the time that the body is created. It's not created at the time that the body is born. Rather, that it preexists. And so that's why we see it given the title "Pre-existentialism." Again, this is not a popular view within evangelicalism. Far more popular are creationism and traducianism.

Now, let's continue to talk about some of the things that make mankind unique. We've looked at the soul. Let's also now look at the fact that mankind is exalted among creation. Here we have Psalm 8:4-5. "What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." Now, we've already looked at some length at the idea of how the creation narrative itself talks to us about the importance of the creation of man, yet we step outside of the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, and here in Psalm 8, we also see that humanity is given a special place within God's created order. And we'll talk more about this in continuing lessons as we're looking at man's role in creation, but suffice to say now that mankind is unique because he and she has an exalted position among creation.

Another unique aspect to mankind is that mankind was actually named by God. We find this in not the narrative of creation in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, but actually a few chapters later in Genesis 5. Here in the first two verses, we read, "This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created." Now, this verse is not essential to our understanding of mankind, but it is noteworthy. We want to see, particularly in verse 2 [Genesis 5:2], that both male and female were named man by God. Theologian Wayne Grudem says that this is an important note that we shouldn't be afraid to use a non-gender neutral term when talking about humanity because God, in a sense, coined the phrase. To quote Grudem, he says, "I am not here arguing that we must always duplicate biblical patterns of speech or that it's wrong to use gender neutral terms sometimes when referring to the human race, but rather, that God's naming activity reported in Genesis 5:2 indicates that the use of man to refer to the entire race is a good and very appropriate choice and one that we should not avoid."

Now, mankind is also unique in that it is unified. There are two things that we can look at here. Again, one will come from Genesis 5. First, the same likeness and image was and is passed on from one generation to another. So Genesis 5:3, "When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth." His likeness, his image were both based on God's likeness and God's image. And so we see that mankind is unified in passing on the same likeness and image, the likeness and image of God, from one generation to another. And we see this as well here that in Acts 17:26, we see a genealogical unity or a genetic unity that does exist. "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place." Mankind is unified.

So we've looked at several of the different ways that mankind is unique among creation. And so we come back to our big idea, our teaching idea for today: Mankind is unique among creation. Man is the unique combination of body and soul. We have discovered that there is some variance among evangelicals as to the general relationship between the body and the soul, so we have dichotomy and trichotomy. And we've also discovered that there's some variance as to when the soul is generated, either traducianism or creationism. While unanimity is not as important as unity in each of these discussions, we should each of us confidently take a position and seek to defend it biblically while not letting go of humility. Most important for us to note, though, as we bring this lesson to a close, is that God has made us unique. He made us special. We are the jewel of his creation. And as we will see in our next session, we reveal him to his creation best.