

The Whole Counsel of God
Study 6

TAKING UP THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

*“What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man that You care for him.”
(Psalm 8.4)*

By taking up the doctrine of man as our next theme, we are following the order of doctrinal themes as introduced in the opening chapter of the Bible. The first theme is God: “In the beginning God created...” (Gen 1.1). God was there at the beginning. He alone is eternal, and he created all things. We began with God as he exists in himself eternally, and this was revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ. The second theme which Genesis 1 sets before us is the creation: “...God created heaven and earth” (v 1). Genesis presents to our mind’s view the creation of the visible universe, but as the Bible unfolds we see that the creation of the heavens included the angelic order of beings, and we have surveyed what is disclosed to us about this vast order of creation. The third special theme set before us is mankind. Genesis 1.26-30 opens up to us the biblical doctrine of man, and now we will take this theme up.

The doctrine of man presents what the Bible teaches in answer to the question raised in Ps 8.4: “What is man...?” In answering this question, the Psalmist turns back to creation and says, “You have made him...” (v 5). Here the doctrine of man must begin. Man is what God has made him. But, as we delve into the creation account we soon realize that the question as to what man is opens up to us a huge puzzle. The question, “What is man?” is simple, but the search to find the answer opens up to us deep, vast and very complex issues. In this study, we will try to establish a biblical orientation for answering the simple and deep question raised for us in Psalm 8.

A. BIBLICAL ORIENTATION

We believe that all scripture is God breathed and that “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2Pt 1.21). That means that the Spirit of God moved David’s spirit to raise the question as to what man is, and through David he makes us search for and reflect on the answer. Here the Spirit sets us on a quest, and this quest is unique among all searches for truth for it is the search for what we are. We bring to this search our own self consciousness and our experience and sense of what it means to be human. The Spirit wants to direct us through the field in which we will find God’s answers and this involves a profound reorientation for us.

1. Following the trail of revelation in search of what man is

a. Setting the focus on man at the start

Genesis 1 introduces man as part of the physical creation. As such, the topic of man belongs to the subject of creation. But, Genesis 1 also raises man to be viewed as distinct from the rest of the creation. The sacred text does this in several ways. God created all things by his powerful word, but when it came to the creation of man the divine word is different. Rather than decreeing the earth to bring forth man, God speaks in consultation with himself: “Let us make man in our image...” (v 26). As the image of God, man was made to stand in a unique relationship with God and creation. He was made to reflect God in the physical creation. On the one hand, man is in the physical world, but, on the other, he is placed over it to rule. After the word of divine consultation, the sacred text pauses and celebrates the creation of man with the first piece of poetry in scripture (v 27). As the last creation, man is presented as the goal of the creation of all else, and only in the creation of man is all that God made very good (v 31). All that God made was good, but only when man was placed in the world was all very good.

Genesis 1 makes mankind the special object of God's attention. This feature of the biblical view of creation is brought out in Prov 8.31. Wisdom was with God before the world was created, and by wisdom God created all. The divine and creative wisdom has her special delight in the sons of men. Of all creation, the focus is on man, and the wisdom by which God created all is given to human beings. Wisdom's great project is to bring people to her rich banquet (Proverbs 9). The NT heightens this focus on man by revealing that God's eternal purpose, made before the foundation of the world, was for man (Eph 1.4-5; 3.9-11). In taking up the doctrine of man, we are taking up the eternal object of God's purpose for which he created the universe.

The spotlight of revelation is put on man at the beginning of God's ways. Under this light, man is seen to be what he is in God's thoughts and by the creator's work. In this light we must begin.

b. The search for man

Genesis 2.4 begins another account of creation in which we are made to see how God set up history within the heavens and the earth created in Gen 1.1-2.3. Here the creation of man is presented first, and man's world is built around him. In the account of the work of the creator, we see what man is as made by God, but in the prohibition of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil another dimension is opened up. The tree focuses on what man must deny himself. Whatever man is, he was not made to take the knowledge of good and evil for himself. What does this mean for the nature of man? The answer is given by God in Gen 3.22: man was not to become like God. Had man not sinned, the answer to the question as to what man is would have been straightforward—man is what God made him. But, through sin man became something that God did not make him. The complication this raised is seen in Adam and Eve's immediate reaction to eating the forbidden fruit. They looked at themselves and were ashamed (Gen 3.7). When God re-entered, he asked Adam the first question ever raised—"Where are you?" (v 9). This searching question points to the deep complexity that sin brought in. Man is lost, and God's way in history is to guide man to answer his searching question, "Where are you?"

Adam never answered God's question. God had to locate him and guide him through the confusion sin had brought in. What we see in the Garden remains true throughout the rest of history. Man cannot locate and find himself. He is lost. God must locate him. The story of mankind outside of the Garden, i.e., in our world, deepens the sense of man's utter and desperate lostness, and this lostness is nowhere greater than in what man thinks of himself and makes himself out to be. As Rom 1.22 says, "Professing to be wise, they became fools."

c. Where to look for answers

If the doctrine of man simply stated and explored what we learn of man as created by God, it would be abstract and fail to give us the truth we need. Hebrews 2.6-9 points to the problem posed by the truth of what God made man. The writer quotes Ps 8.4-6, which states that God in creation put all things in subjection under man's feet. Then he makes the observation, "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him" (Heb 2.8). The author of this letter points out a profound and disconcerting truth: what God made man in creation is not what we see in his actual state. This influenced the way the writer introduced the quotation from Psalm 8. He wrote, "But one has testified somewhere, saying..." (Heb 2.6). You testify to what is not seen by people. We do not see in our world what the creation account says of man. To us it is only a testimony. Instead of being crowned with glory and honour by God and having all things put in subjection under their feet, people are "those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2.15). The writer of the letter to the Hebrews points to the only fulfilment of the truth of man in creation that is seen and realized in history. He says that we see Jesus who suffered death and is crowned with glory and honour (Heb 2.9). Within the history of the fallen world, what God made man in the beginning is realized in Jesus.

d. The three questions

We must pause and take in the full force of what we have observed from Heb 2.6-9. The question, “What is man?” receives an initial answer in what God made man in creation. Our study on the doctrine of man must begin here where the subject of man is introduced in the Bible. But, this initial answer only poses a profound riddle for us who live in the fallen world. The two elements of the riddle are: 1) the truth testified as to what God has made man and 2) the reality of the human condition in a fallen world that is the opposite of what God has made man. This paradox poses the new question: where do we see what God made man to be? The answer is given in one word—Jesus. This answer in turn opens up a whole new vista for the doctrine of man. In Jesus we see human nature in a relationship with God that is way beyond what we see in the creation account. Humanity is joined to deity. What does this mean for the doctrine of man?

The Spirit in posing the question as to what man is first points back to the creation of Adam. But, as Hebrews 2 shows, the question also points forward to the realization in the world of what God made man; and by this the Spirit who inspired David in Psalm 8 is the spirit of prophecy that is the testimony of Jesus (Rev 19.10). Our study of the doctrine of man must follow the witness of the Spirit.

We have marked out the trail along which we must pursue our quest to understand what man is. Along this trail three key questions are raised for us. The first question is: what is man? (Ps 8.4). In answer to this we must look back to creation. The second question is: where are you? (Gen 3.9) or, where is man in his sinful state? Here we must look at man in history. The third question is: what do we see in Jesus? (Heb 2.9). Only in answer to this third question do we fully understand what was presented in the witness to what God made man in creation. A complete treatment of what the Bible teaches about man must work through the three questions.

2. The vantage point from which we look at man

The trail along which the Bible leads us in our search to find what man is shows that our subject is by no means simple or straightforward. Man, in fact, presents us with an enigma. In one sense it is easy to identify what man is. Man is not a ghost. The human being is there in a body, and as a collective whole mankind is there in the human race. Each of us also has the inner knowledge of what it means to be a living human being. But, in our experience of humanity, both in what we know of others and of ourselves, we are confronted with something mysterious. The person that lives, communicates and relates through the body cannot be seen and analysed as an object. This is the case because the source of the active and conscious life of human beings is hidden from human view.

The source from which our conscious and active life flows is the heart (Prov 4.23), and it is at this source of all our ways that we are closed off to human view, even to our own view of ourselves. God told Samuel, “...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1Sam 16.7). Jesus pressed the fact that human evaluation of people is contrary to God’s evaluation (Lk 16.15). The scriptures say of God, “...you alone know the hearts of the all the sons of men...” (1Kings 8.39; 1Chr 28.9). Jeremiah asks concerning the heart, “Who can understand it?” (Jer 17.9). The apostle Paul refused to take his knowledge of himself as the true judgment on him (1Cor 4.3-5).

In the depth of his being, man is exposed to God alone. The truth of man, therefore, is only given in what man is before God. The truth is not found in what a human being says of himself or in the opinion others will form of him. This fact points to the vantage point from which we must look at man. Human beings must be seen from God’s point of view. The word of God is the sharp two edged sword that alone penetrates to our inner most being, for it is the word of him from whose sight no creature is hidden and before whose eyes all things are open and laid bare (Heb 4.12-13). We must look at man from God’s point of view as that is given to us in scripture. There is no other way of gaining a true understanding of the human being.

a. The full question of Psalm 8.4

We took the subject matter for the doctrine of man from Psalm 8.4: what is man? This question, however, is not the full question that the scripture raises. It was lifted out of a larger question which we now give in full: “What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?”

The question, “What is man?” focuses our attention on man himself and directs the mind to look into man to find out what man is. The fuller biblical question turns the mind to God. The question does not ask what man is in himself but what he is that God should take thought of him. What is man in the thoughts of God? This question enquires not so much into the nature of man as into the purposes and ways of God in relation to man.

The perspective that the question of Ps 8.4 sets is very significant for our study of the doctrine of man. The Bible never contemplates man in himself. Man does not have an independent existence. He is what he is in relation to God, and man can only be rightly understood within this relationship. Man does not hold his identity in himself. He has a relational identity. When we turn to look at man in this relationship, we must be very careful to be precise. The Bible does not present what man is by the way he relates to God but what he is in the way God relates to him. When it comes to what man is in his created nature, the truth lies in how God relates to man. Man is not an evolved or self made being. He had no role to play in his creation. Man is what he is solely by God’s thoughts and work.

The question of Ps 8.4 points to a profound insight: the doctrine of man is woven into the doctrine of God. We must keep this in mind.

b. The fall of man as a critical shift in perspective

We commonly think of the original sin as mankind’s break away from God. In a real sense, this is true. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and so turned away from him. But, this is only one side of the original sin. God’s command forbade man to take the knowledge of good and evil. Satan focused Eve’s attention on this denial and turned her mind so that she was motivated to make herself to be like God in gaining this knowledge. The tempter did not call Eve to a denial of God but rather to an assertion of herself. It was not a matter of denying that God was God but of making oneself to be like God. Eve’s self assertion was carried out by her defining the good as that which was good in her perception and to her appetite and sense of self development.

Sin is defined by God’s law, and before God sin is disobedience. But, the motive of sin in Eve was not the explicit denial of God. It was simply the act of asserting her nature as that which defines what is good. In this act, human nature is placed alongside of God. This has serious implications for the truth of God. God is no longer regarded to be God alone. Rather, human nature is exalted to the role of divine nature.

Paul works out the pathology of sin along the same lines in Rom 1.21ff. The fall of the nations into the darkness of idolatry and debauchery did not begin with a bold attempt of replacing God with idols. It began with negligence: they didn’t glorify God as God or give thanks. The positive sin began with self assertion. Professing to be wise, they became fools (Rom 1.22). Here we find the parallel with the sin of Eve. The positive side of sin is the assertion of self as wise, as the source for determining what is right and wrong. Once this move is made, the sense of the divine is redefined (v 23).

The final consummation of sin in history is presented in the prophetic vision of the antichrist. Here in the full fruition of sin we see the same trait that we find in its bud. The antichrist sets himself up as God. Sin, in its very nature, is the human self assertion in which people raise human nature to the role of God’s nature and then degrade their view of the divine nature and finally replace God with man.

The biblical doctrine of God defines what sin is, but the doctrine of man lays bare the human side of sin, which is the heart of sin. At the heart of the revolt against God lies the self assertion that raises the human ego and nature to the position of God in determining what truth is. This self assertion is often not professed

as a bold assault on the truth of God but is presented as being motivated by an interest in realizing the dignity of man. The doctrine of man addresses this self interest and shows it to be not only a violation of man's relationship with God but also a corruption of what it means to be truly human.

The Bible presents us with opposing perspectives on what man is. The first is the biblical answer to the question: what is man? Man is defined by the way God relates to him. The second perspective is given to us in scripture as it answers the question God raised: where is fallen man? In the view of sinful mankind, man is what he is in himself and defines good and evil from the point of view of his own nature. For us it is not a matter of simply stating the positive truth of scripture to the question about what man is. This truth comes up against what man sees himself to be in sin, and only in this clash can the truth be grasped by us. We do not come to the subject as neutral. We actually come with our flesh which orients us by sin. The truth given in creation must function within God's work to reorient us.

c. Humanity in Jesus Christ

The fall of man was irreversible. There is no return to Eden, and there is no return to the created state. This means that we cannot find the solution to the problems of sin in what we learn from the account of creation. God's way ahead is redemption in Jesus Christ.

In Christ the fact that man is defined by the way God relates to him is forever sealed. Jesus Christ is not a man becoming God. Rather, he was God who became human. God joined humanity to deity. Jesus did not take up our humanity to bring it back to its original state. Rather, he took it through the cross in obedience to the sentence of death on mankind for sin and raised it to eternal life and glory. By faith we take what we are and will be from God. All is of God. This is the final affirmation of the perspective set in Ps 8.4. Man is what he is by what God is towards him.

3. Challenges

The biblical doctrine of man directly engages the self understanding of people in our age. Our age is set off from all previous ages by the word *modern*, a word which refers to what is recent or the latest. Modern society has this prevailing sense that it is beyond the outlook of all the ages in the past. When it comes to God, the modern world is marked by the fact that there is no one view about God that defines the age. But, this is negative. The positive mark of the modern age is its affirmation of man. In previous ages, people thought of mankind in relation to the divine order. Usually the divine reality was understood in an idolatrous manner, but people still thought of themselves in relation to the divine. The mark of the modern age is that people think of mankind apart from the divine and then regard the belief and knowledge of the divine as that which comes out of human nature. This humanism can be radical and atheistic. But, more often it is religious in varying degrees. In this religiosity, the divine is accepted in some form (and even in orthodox Christian form) but its character is determined by human nature and experience.

The unity of society in the modern age rests in the humanistic orientation. All are drawn in to start their thinking with mankind and join in that which all can observe about people, and this gives all a common approach, even if it does not yield a common conclusion and belief. The whole array of different ideas about God is then tolerated within this common approach to humanity. On the surface it may look like the Christian can connect with the world in this approach since it professes to be religiously neutral. But, the humanistic approach is not neutral to the biblical truth, for in biblical revelation God alone defines what man is and this is essential to the truth of God. The biblical doctrine of man addresses the starting point and foundational assumption of humanism, and this fact gives this doctrine a special relevance for Christians in the modern age.

The humanistic approach to understanding human beings is carried through on the authority of being scientific. The scientific approach was established with a high degree of success in the study of the physical universe (physics and chemistry) and of living organisms (biology), and then its kind of certainty and authority were sought in the study of the personal nature of mankind. The attempt is made to approach to individual person scientifically in psychology, human society in sociology and mankind developing

cultures in anthropology. To be scientific, these approaches have to limit themselves to what people can observe. Here the biblical truth comes up against the scientific approach to the understanding of mankind. Man cannot be understood in and of himself, and we cannot have a true knowledge of man simply from what we see or from what people say of themselves. God is invisible and cannot be an object of scientific investigation. Since man in his created constitution is related to God, he has his real identity outside of the field of scientific observation. As a physical being acting in this world, the human eye can see people, and the intellect can analyse the data it receives through the senses of the body. But what is observed amounts to mere external appearances. The true meaning of man and the truth behind what he does remains beyond scientific study.

Christians can tend to think that because the “scientific” study of man claims to be objective and is based on careful observation they are free to share in the humanistic approach to understanding mankind. Yes, we share a common field of observation with all and that includes observing human behaviour, and we can share many observations of patterns of behaviour. However, the biblical doctrine of man challenges us here. When it comes to explaining what we can see, we can only get it right if we explain man from the point of view of how God relates to man. It is not enough to tag a biblical verse or idea onto a psychological theory. The revelation of God must shape and control the whole understanding of man. Earlier we pointed out that God alone sees the heart. The scriptures we referred to show that the evaluation of human beings that is formed by human observation is in contrast to the way God see things.

The scientific approach does not aim at mere knowledge. Scientific knowledge is power to manipulate the object being studied so that we can control things and carry through our will. This is true of the physical sciences, and in the physical realm scientific knowledge has proven very effective. Such power is also the aim of the human sciences, but the supposed scientific knowledge has proven to be very ineffective. As the study in the human sciences increases, the dysfunction in human life increases. This confirms the biblical truth that at its source mankind lies beyond the field of human observation. Now we ask whether or not the biblical doctrine of man proves more effective than the knowledge of the human sciences? If it is matter of scientific effectiveness, the answer must be, no. Scientific knowledge aims at empowerment over what is known. It works in the material and animal creations because God has created man to rule over them, but God did not create man to rule over man, and this truth is verified in the fact that man cannot develop a successful science and technology of human nature. The doctrine of man does not disclose to us man as a being that we can understand and control. Rather, it discloses to us that God is in relation to man in a living way and the truth calls man to yield to God. This is the point of the doctrine of man. It shows us why man must yield to God and how God brings this about. This yielding is faith, and only by faith can one taste and see the power and reality of the truth. But, a verification of the truth that depends on the response of faith cannot be scientific.

What all people can see is that mankind is afflicted with real problems that make human lives miserable and difficult. What all people want, especially those who are in the grip of the problems, is to see the problems solved and people relieved of the difficulties. Psychology and sociology deal with the human problems and seek solutions. In this the human sciences move into the domain of redemption, though they deal with the problems without acknowledging the problem of sin before God and seek solutions that are worked by people and not by God. The human sciences in their practical agenda move into the domain of redemption that belongs to Christ alone.

The biblical doctrine of man does not promise us a science of man that enables us to gain a human control over mankind’s problems. But, it shows how man is designed for God to work in him, and God’s power through his word is clearly demonstrated where there is faith brought about by that word. What the Bible teaches about man, like all of the word of God, is powerful and works real changes in people (1Thess 2.13). Paul testified to this in his statement of confidence: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (Rom 1.16). The salvation was real and observable (1Cor 6.9-11).

In our study of the doctrine of man, we will not engage the human sciences and give the biblical answer to the issues raised in them. Rather, we will work through the positive teaching of scripture as the issues are raised in the scriptures. We will be moving within the holy place of revelation, and we must remember that

what is holy is apart from what is common in the world. But, to see how God works and relates to us, we must see how the reality of God is both apart from the world and how God brings those far away near to him. We will present the biblical doctrine of man as the vital counterpoint to the mindset of the age. Without doing this, the study would be a tragedy. The doctrine of man touches the modern age at its core, and this doctrine takes up and puts into the light the very being that the modern mind is preoccupied with—man.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF MAN IN THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

We must keep in mind that our study of the doctrine of man takes place within an exploration of the whole counsel of God, and we must be careful not isolate the subject of man.

1. Sizing up the doctrine of man

a. The link between God and man in revelation

The doctrine of man is a theme in the doctrine of God. If we ask, “What is man?” we must enquire into why God should take thought of him. It is God and not man who asked Adam, i.e., man, “Where are you?” This question only is raised and answered by God in his search of man. The final answer to these questions is given in Jesus Christ and here we see God taking up humanity and joining it to himself.

There is another side to the connection between the doctrines of God and of man. In scripture God reveals himself, but he never presents himself in isolation from man. God only reveals himself in his relation to the world in general and to man in particular. In Genesis 1, God is introduced in his act of creating the heavens and the earth, and this total creation has its goal and completion in man. Throughout the OT, all of the revelation of God takes place within his relationship with people. In Jesus God is revealed in his eternal relationship as he exists independently of and prior to creation, but God is only revealed thus in the man Christ Jesus. On the one hand, we cannot properly understand man apart from God, but, on the other, we have no knowledge of God apart from his relation to man.

The doctrine of God and the doctrine of man are to be distinguished but they cannot be separated from each other. We see this in the unfolding of scripture. God is progressively revealed in the progress of the history of God’s relationship with his people and through them with the whole world. As God is revealed, man is discovered and exposed. As man is progressively exposed in his failure and need and as man is redeemed, God is further revealed.

b. The scope of the doctrine of man

The inseparable connection between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man gives to the latter a vastness. All doctrine is about God and how he carries through all that it means for him to be God. But, since God is revealed in man, the doctrine of man is parallel to, or woven together with, the doctrine of God. In the end, the two doctrinal themes are co-extensive. This is definitely the case for revelation in time and for the eternal future. But, it also reaches back to the eternal past, for God’s eternal purpose was for man.

We have already seen, in our earlier studies, how the doctrine of man is woven into all doctrine. When we looked at the doctrine of God as the trinity, we had to look at the deity of Christ through his humanity: the Son of Man is the Son of God. The doctrine of the trinity shows up the highest truth about man. God designed man so that God could reveal his eternal triune nature in man and that man could participate within the divine relationship of the Son to the Father. We saw how the creation in Genesis 1 moves up to the creation of man so that all is for man. We also saw that the creation of the heavens includes the invisible realm of the angels, the heavenly court from which God rules over all. The good angels are only brought into view as they relate to mankind, and in this they are shown to serve the heirs of salvation who are destined to rule as the image of God. Satan and the fallen angels only are seen as they work on

mankind. Through the way Satan and his angels are entangled with the human race, mankind must gain the victory over evil angels who came from all of the created ranks of angels. In this, man in his destiny to rule must be raised in conquest over the highest orders of angels. Through his redemption, man's mandate to rule over the earth takes man into the very rule of God in heaven.

These earlier studies have already woven into our study a comprehensive view of man in relation to God and all creation. In taking up the doctrine of man as a subject, all that we are doing is lifting up one strand that is woven together with the doctrines of God and of creation. Now we will see how man was designed for the great role that God has purposed for him.

c. Personal involvement

We have pointed out that the doctrine of man embraces all truth. There is another side to this. All the truth must be revealed and worked out in man. There is nothing of God revealed but what is worked out in and through his people. We only truly learn that which transforms us, and this transformation runs deep. We must be changed from what we are in ourselves to what God in Christ is in deepest contradiction to our flesh.

In one sense we can study man in an objective way. Mankind as the human race or species is there for us to look at. We can for the sake of study step back and observe. But, we must remember that we are human and whatever we say about mankind we at bottom say about ourselves. When we ask, "What is man?" we are asking, "What am I?" When we take up God's question, "Where are you?" our answer is not telling God where mankind is out there but where we are. If we look to see what we see of true humanity in Jesus, we have to see what is not seen in mankind and in us, and yet what ought to become true in us.

There is no mere objectivity in studying the doctrine of man. The fact that the doctrine of man is woven into all doctrines shows that we cannot learn any truth in a detached manner that leaves ourselves out of the subject we are considering. All truth must go into and through us. Paul grasped this point in Gal 1.16. He did not say that God was pleased to reveal his Son to him but *in* him. What this means is seen in his story. The cross and the work of Christ were manifested in the reality of his own life. The emphasis set in the gospel on personal faith, a relationship with God through Christ, the transforming power of the gospel and the reality of sanctification all point to our total engagement with the truth. The doctrine of man must show us how we are designed for full participation in the truth—in the whole truth.

2. The place of the doctrine of man among the doctrines

For the study of doctrine, Genesis 1 lays out the triad of themes of God, creation and man. Our study of the doctrine of man is, first of all, part of this triad. Man is presented as a relational being in scripture. The relationship that defines him is God's relationship with him. But, God relates to him within the creation in which he is to rule. This is of critical importance. We are never to see man in abstraction from the whole creation and try to see him in relation to God in isolation from creation. Rather, man is to live out God's relationship within creation.

In Genesis 1 we see God above creation working as the creator and finishing his work with the creation of man. The second account which begins with Gen 2.4 starts where the first account ended—with man being placed on earth. Here we see God as the LORD God acting within creation in a direct relationship with man. Through this the history of mankind within the Bible begins, and it is in this history that God reveals himself beyond the foundational truth that he is the creator. All other doctrines in scripture are unfolded within the history of God in relation to man. This means that all further doctrines are directly concerned with man and develop the doctrine of man.

To give our study a clear focus and to confine it, we will limit the doctrine of man to those themes raised in Genesis 1 to 3. The whole world was set up in the creation as related in Genesis 1. Our world is the world in sin, and this world was brought about in the Garden of Eden. Here both God and man acted, and man's action was formative for the world in which we are born and come to know God. What happens after man's

exile from the Garden of Eden is salvation history and must be understood in the themes that concern God's way of salvation: the revelation of God in a fallen world, the salvation through Christ and all the themes that bring out the full range of our salvation up to the final things and the eternal state.

Genesis 1 to 3 presents a rich array of themes by which we are to understand man. In both creation accounts man is first presented in God's relationship to him. God made man in his image (Gen 1.26) and gave him the breath of life or spirit directly (Gen 2.7). Both accounts also present man in his created relationships. Mankind is put into a relationship with the earth and ground, and this gives man his work and food, and with animals. Mankind is also internally related as male and female, and out of this comes mankind's collective nature as a family and race. Creation also sets up man to make history. Mankind must fulfil the divine mandate to rule the whole earth, and mankind must act under God's law. Through the latter, the source of evil is brought into a relationship with mankind. Here the great themes of man's moral and spiritual conflict and role are introduced.

All of the themes we have pointed out are an integral part of the doctrine of man. They are all woven into the rest of the Bible. What the Bible teaches on each of these themes is challenged in a bold way by the modern humanistic outlook of the present age. This means that each of the themes is of special, critical importance today.

In the first study that introduced the series on *The Whole Counsel of God* we stressed that we only have a sense of completeness of doctrine in the revelation of God in Christ. This is true in a special sense for the doctrine of man. We have already seen that we only see what God has made man to be in Jesus. To give the seal of completeness on the themes that we will be considering, we have to turn to what we see in Jesus. We will keep the doctrine of man and the doctrine of the humanity of Christ closely tied together.