

What Is Man?

Chapter 7 of *Christian Beliefs* by Wayne Grudem

Psalm 8:4 – “**What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?**”

Psalm 8:1-9 – How Majestic Is Your name

Genesis 1:26-31; 5:1-2; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9 – God created man in his image

When a creator/inventor creates something, it is made to fulfill a purpose.

Why do we exist?

Genesis 1 speaks not just to our description of being in God’s image and likeness, but to our purpose of reflecting and representing God, filling the earth with his likeness.

Westminster Larger Catechism (prepared for the Church of England & Church of Scotland in 1647), has as its first question: “What is the chief and highest end of man?” The answer: “Man’s chief and highest end is *to glorify God, and fully to enjoy Him forever.*”

Isaiah 43:7 – “everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made”

1 Corinthians 10:31 – “whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

John 15:8-11 – How we glorify the Father and experience full joy

To give God glory is to give him honor and praise. All creation exists for God’s glory (“The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands” - Psalm 19:1), but only humans made in his image can do so consciously and by choice. We fulfill our purpose as humans only when we reflect God as his image bearers and bring glory to him.

What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

“The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God.” – Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 442

An image or likeness of something can never be that which it reflects, but it can point to it. It can remind us of that which it reflects and stir emotions, thoughts and actions appropriate to what/who it reflects. This is our opportunity as God’s likeness and image in a sinful world – to represent and point to God.

Partial list of aspects of our likeness to God:

God is personal, rational, spiritual, intelligent, creative, ruling, moral, relational, communicative, emotional and immortal. One made in his image will reflect these characteristics (and more).

Humans as the image of God:

Adam and Eve were created perfect (Genesis 1:26-31). Sin diminished God’s image in them and all humanity thereafter, but it did not remove it. We are still His creatures and the highest of His creation, but we are unable to mirror His holiness on our own. Through regeneration He enables us to begin the process of reclaiming His fuller image in our lives, “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). This image won’t be fully realized until we are made new in the new heaven and new earth yet to come.

Jesus as the image of God:

“He is the image of the invisible God” – Colossians 1:15

John 14:5-11 – the relationship of Jesus and the Father

“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” – John 14:9. To know what God is like, look at Jesus.

Hebrews 2:5-9 – Jesus the perfect Son of Man

Mankind’s possible states as it relates to the image of God:

1. Perfect reflecting the image of God from the moment of existence. Only Adam and Eve experienced this (and then only temporarily). This is not an option for anyone since the Fall.
2. Fallen, lost in sin, still God’s highest creation, but woefully lacking as a reflection of God’s image because of sin. This is everyone’s initial condition since the Fall.
3. Regenerate, saved by grace through repentance and faith, becoming more like God’s image through sanctification (growing in holiness). See 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:19-24. This is possible for all.
4. Fully sanctified and glorified, perfectly reflecting God’s image. This is the ultimate destiny of all who are saved by God. “When he appears, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). This is assured for all God saves.

Our responsibilities as humans created in God’s image:

Be like God. Reflect him. Represent him. Fulfill our purpose as shown in Genesis 1.

Glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Help restore his people and his earth to the way they were meant to be.

“If we ever deny our unique status in creation as God’s only image-bearers, we will soon begin to depreciate the value of human life, will tend to see humans as merely a higher form of animal, and will begin to treat others as such. We will also lose much of our sense of meaning in life.” - Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, p. 450

Hymn: “Thou Art Worthy” by Pauline Michael Mills, 1963

*Thou art worthy, thou art worthy,
Thou art worthy, O Lord.
To receive glory, glory and honor,
Glory and honor and power.
For thou hast created, hast all things created,
Thou hast created all things;
And for thy pleasure, they are created,
Thou art worthy, O Lord.*