BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGY REVIEW

an·thro·pol·o·gy n

1. the study of humankind in all its aspects, especially human culture or human development.

2. the parts of Christian doctrine that are concerned with the nature, origin, and destiny of humankind

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The term "biblical anthropology" may sound a little scary to some. It may conjure up images of a teaching that mankind evolved from the apes. Nothing could be further from the truth concerning the study that we are about to embark upon. What we are actually studying is how we were created by God and how we become a new creation when we are reconciled to God through Christ. This is not an all-inclusive study. Our focus here is on the human body, what it is and what it will become for those in Christ. Biblical anthropology in total is a large subject that could require many volumes of work to be comprehensive.

First Things First: We Are Created in God's Image

God created us in his image according to Genesis 1:26 & 27.

Gen. 1:26 KJV And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Gen. 1:27 KJV So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

God created mankind with some of his (God's) own attributes; including freewill, intelligence, creativity, and he also gave man a conscience to remind him of the difference between doing good and doing evil.

Humans are Not Just Animals

The species of humankind is not like the animal kingdom. We do not (or should not) operate solely upon our instincts. We have the intelligence to make choices. The beasts of the earth just follow the programming that God has given them.

2Pet. 2:12 KJV But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

Psa. 49:20 KJV A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish.

The creatures of the earth reproduce, build nests, dens, hives or other domiciles, and find food. Mankind also does all of these things. But, mankind does more. Humans have the ability to think about whom they want to reproduce with. Humans build many types of homes with many types of décor each according to the desires of its owner. Humans eat many varieties of food and specialize in various types of cuisine. Humans do the things that animals do, but with intelligence added. Because of this, the intelligence factor, the human race has an added

responsibility before God. We are to think about our future actions and choose between good and evil, between serving God and not serving him.

Luke 12:48 NIV …From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

God Has a Plan

Our ancient ancestors, Adam and Eve were not thinking too clearly when they were deceived by Satan and sinned thereby causing great calamity to come upon all who would proceed from them. However, God in his foreknowledge had already taken this into account and had a plan ready for mankind's redemption from sin.

1Pet. 1:18 NIV For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,
1Pet. 1:19 NIV but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.
1Pet. 1:20 NIV He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.
1Pet. 1:21 NIV Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

God had his plan in place before the foundation of the world, as it says in verse 1:20 above.

Mankind Has Great Intelligence

God also gave mankind great intelligence. Collectively God said that “nothing would be impossible for them” if they were all working together.

Gen. 11:6 NIV The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.

There is a great lesson to be learned from the verse above. If mankind could only be united to do good, if all six billion people on the planet were working toward one good goal, perhaps world peace or eradicating certain diseases, they would be able to accomplish it.

Our Great and Wonderful Promises

You may ask, what does that have to do with biblical anthropology? The answer, everything! If unrepentant mankind in the Old Testament had that much power, how much more power does the body of Christ have. By the body or Christ, I mean every born again believer on this planet. What if we were all working together for one common goal? What if we forgot our denominational differences and used every gift that God has given us as individuals and used it to reach the world for Christ? Even though the number of the saved is much less than that of the total population, we have something that they do not have, the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament God gave a promise to the Israelites.

Lev. 26:8 NIV Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

Our promises are much greater than the verse above. Jesus says that if we have enough faith, nothing will be impossible to even one of us.

Matt. 17:19 NIV Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

Matt. 17:20 NIV He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’”

We Are a New Creation, A New Species

God has given much power to those who are of the family of faith, to those who have become a new creation, to those who have embraced a new anthropology, a biblical anthropology.

2Cor. 5:17 NIV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

We who are in Christ have a new father, our Heavenly Father. We have a new Lord, Jesus Christ. We have new brothers and sisters, the entire family of God, the body of Christ.

So how does this come about? What is it that makes us different when we repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Simply put, when we are saved we receive a new nature in addition to our old sinful nature. When we are born, we come into this world desiring to have our

own way. Even little babies cry for what they want. This is our instinct governing us. Until we grow up and have a relationship with God (born again) we are self-serving creatures.

Our God is our belly, Until We are Saved

Rom. 16:18 NIV For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Phil. 3:19 NIV Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Our physical bodies always desire to do those things that are instinctual. Our physical bodies want what they want, without any regard to right or wrong, good or evil or God's word. Our physical bodies, and our soul simply want the desires of the flesh, always.

Rom. 8:4 NIV in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Rom. 8:5 NIV Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Rom. 8:6 NIV The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

Rom. 8:7 NIV the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

Rom. 8:8 NIV Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Rom. 8:9 NIV You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

When we receive Christ we have a new spirit placed within us. Our new spirit desires to please God. It never sins. It always desires to do right. Our old nature always desires to follow natural instincts. Any good that may be done by the old nature is simply by accident in a sense, because our old nature has no desire to please God, it only desires to please itself.

We are Not Our Bodies

Now, here is when we get to the important point. The point is this: we are not our bodies. Once again, We are Not Our Bodies! No, we are no more our bodies than we are an automobile when we ride in one.

Think about this. Pretend you are a being from another planet that has just arrived on earth. You see millions of cars going up and down the roads of earth. You say to yourself, these must be the creatures that inhabit the earth. Seeing the headlights you say to yourself, look how their eyes shine. Seeing the different body styles and sizes you say, what a diverse species this is, from two legs (Wheels) to eighteen legs. Look at the diversity of colors, and on and on. What this spaceman does not realize is that the cars, trucks and motorcycles are not the creatures. They are simply vehicles that are used to move the creatures of earth around.

Our bodies are similar to motor vehicles. They serve as a place for our soul and spirit to reside in, so we can move about and do things in the physical realm. You are not your body!

Sometimes our bodies get out of control, like a berserk toy robot. They become addicted to things like alcohol, drugs, food, sex, pleasure, money and more. Our bodies are meant by God to serve us in this world. We must keep them under subjection.

1Cor. 9:27 KJV But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Our spirit should rule over our bodies, not vice-versa. Our body is our ship and we are the captain of it. We are to use our minds to direct its use for God's glory.

2Tim. 1:7 KJV For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

1Cor. 7:37 NIV But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, …

God has given us this body to use on earth, and he will eventually give us a new body suitable for use in his kingdom. God has also give us the power through his Holy Spirit to control this body through a sound mind along with God's own love within us. First Corinthians 7:37 above is primarily talking about marriage in its context, but if one has power over that desire, then it should be able to be applied to anything in life.

A Lesson From the Demons

We can learn a lesson from demons. They always desire to always inhabit a living thing. Without a body they can do nothing. If a human is available, that is their first choice, second would be an animal, third vegetation, such as a tree, and beyond that anything that is alive. Our topic is not demons though, but humans. We must realize that we are not just flesh and blood, we are a spiritual being. We are similar to them (the demons) in the sense that we need a body to do anything in this world. They view whatever they inhabit as a temporary home. They know that their temporary home will eventually die or they will be cast out of it. They use it as long as it is profitable to them. So it is with us in a sense, we should view our bodies as a temporary home for use until we have a better one. Our bodies should be slaves to us and to our (spiritual) desires and not the other way around. Our body is to us like a tent, a temporary dwelling, to be discarded when a permanent home becomes available.

2Cor. 5:4 NIV For while we are in this **tent**, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

2Pet. 1:13 NIV I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the **tent** of this body,

1Cor. 15:50 NIV I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

We are spiritual beings temporarily living in a body of flesh and blood. God has a new spiritual body prepared for us, a body like Jesus received after he was raised from the dead. God can place our spirit in a new body as easily as we can go down to the local automobile dealership

and place ourselves in a new car and leave the old one behind. He not only can do this, but he will at the resurrection.

1Cor. 15:42 NIV So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

1Cor. 15:43 NIV it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

1Cor. 15:44 NIV it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1Cor. 15:45 NIV So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

1Cor. 15:46 NIV The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.

1Cor. 15:47 NIV The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.

1Cor. 15:48 NIV As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

1Cor. 15:49 NIV And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

1Cor. 15:50 NIV I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

1Cor. 15:51 NIV Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—

1Cor. 15:52 NIV in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1Cor. 15:53 NIV For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

1Cor. 15:54 NIV When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Our study of biblical anthropology is not so much about what we are now, but about what we have already begun to become and what we will become. If we have a relationship with our creator then we already have our new spirit. We are simply waiting to inhabit our new spiritual body which will complete our transition, our metamorphosis.

Phil. 1:6 NIV being confident of this, that he who began a good work **in** you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1Sam. 16:7 NIV But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

God has from ancient times looked at the inner man, which the heart symbolizes. This is not simply a New Testament teaching. Enoch and Noah are said to have “walked with God.” Abraham and Moses were the “friends of God,” David was a man “after God’s own heart.” There has always been a difference between the spiritual person and the natural person in God’s eyes.

The final point of this study is to help the body of Christ realize that our physical tribulations on the earth in our human bodies will someday come to an end. Hallelujah! When we receive our new bodies we will soon forget about everything that vexed us so badly on planet earth. After

ten thousand years in Heaven we will have only just begun to see the wonderfulness and goodness of our God.

So, seeing that our physical bodies are just a temporary stop in our anthropology tour, let us ignore the cravings of the flesh and desire to please the spirit of God that he has placed within us. We will never regret even one thing that we have done from a pure motive for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1Cor. NIV 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we first begun"
From "Amazing Grace" by John Newton.