

Systematic Theology #4: Humanity, Sin, Salvation

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY

1. Humans were made in the image of God and were given a mission.

Genesis 1:26–28 (ESV) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- Humans are unique in comparison to all other animals.
- Humans were designed for a unique relationship with God.
- Humans were intended to reflect God’s glory here on earth.

2. Humans were created as a unity of body and soul/spirit.

Genesis 2:7 (ESV) 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.

The word ‘man’ is translated from the Hebrew word ‘adam.’ The word ‘ground’ is translated from a related word ‘adamah.’ The similarity between the two words was to remind man of his origin: he is of the earth.

- It is unbiblical to think of the body as the prison house of the soul, or to think of salvation as the liberation of the soul from the body.

God called the finished creation “very good.” The incarnation of Jesus demonstrates that God still views the human body as good, even if he disapproves of the influence and damage caused by sin. Our salvation includes receiving new, immortal bodies. Death is the separation of the soul/spirit from the body into a state of being that God never originally intended.

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

1. The first humans rebelled against God's authority.

Genesis 2:17 (ESV) "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

- God's prohibition was a relational and moral test to determine whether they would trust him and submit to his authority, or whether they would seek their own desire.

Genesis 3:6 (ESV) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

2. Enormous tragic consequences ensued because of their sin and guilt.

- Humans were relationally separated from God, cut off from immortality, and condemned to death (see Genesis 3).
- The entire created order on earth was negatively affected (see Genesis 3 and Romans 8:18-22).
- Human nature became corrupted by an inclination toward evil.
- The Bible records the ensuing history of humanity as one that is filled with evil and violence.

Genesis 6:5–6 (ESV) The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

- All humans since then have inherited a sinful nature.

Romans 5:12 (ESV) Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...

Romans 5:18, 19 (ESV) *[O]ne trespass led to condemnation for all men... [B]y the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners...*

Theologians refer to this as “total depravity,” meaning that the entire human condition has been affected by sin.

- All humans are sinners by nature and by choice, and are guilty before God and liable to eternal punishment.

Ephesians 2:3 (ESV) *[W]e all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

Romans 3:9–10, 23 (ESV) *[A]ll, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one... [F]or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

1. Humans are in desperate need of God's salvation.

- They are spiritually dead toward God.

Ephesians 4:18 (ESV) *They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.*

Ephesians 2:1–2 (ESV) *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...*

- They are powerless to deliver themselves from their sinful condition (see Romans 5:6; 6:17-21; 7:7-25).

Romans 7:18–19, 24 (ESV) *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

- They are unable to atone for their sins.

Romans 3:20 (ESV) *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge*

of sin.

According to God's justice, no amount of good deeds can atone for sin. Disobedience toward God makes one guilty before God and an enemy of God. No amount of good deeds can remove or eradicate the sinful condition of human nature. Consequently, every human is liable to eternal punishment and separation from God.

2. Jesus, the God-man, came to provide salvation for us while we were still sinners. He suffered the punishment we deserve for our sins.

Romans 5:8 (ESV) but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Isaiah 53:5–6 (ESV) But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

3. Salvation is the sum total of all God's work for humans in delivering them from the full consequences of sin.

- Regeneration is the spiritual change brought about by the Holy Spirit, by which we become spiritually alive toward God.

Titus 3:5 (ESV) [God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...

- Justification is the judicial act of God by which he pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and credits them with the righteousness of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV) For our sake [God] made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings the whole person increasingly under the influence of the new nature, conforming them into the image of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (ESV) Now may the God of peace himself

sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Glorification is the completion of the work of salvation by God whereby we perfectly reflect the image of Jesus and enjoy everlasting immortality in our resurrection bodies.

Philippians 3:20–21 (ESV) But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body...

4. The Bible teaches many important truths about salvation, including:

- Salvation cannot be earned; it is the gracious gift of God.

Romans 3:23–24 (ESV) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

- Salvation is received by faith springing from a repentant heart.

Mark 1:14–15 (ESV) [Jesus] came...saying, “The...kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

- Salvation leads to a transformed life and good works.

Titus 2:14 (ESV) (Jesus Christ) gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is the doctrine of the sinful nature so important? If humans were born good or even morally neutral, how would that affect the biblical teaching about salvation?
2. Why is “salvation by grace through faith” so significant?

HOMEWORK

1. Read Romans 6-8. Write a brief summary of each chapter. What is the main truth that caught your attention?