

## WEEK 2 | BUILDING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW, PT 1

Christianity is not just a lot of bits and pieces—  
there is a beginning and an end, a whole system of truth, and this  
system is the only system that will stand up to all the questions that  
are presented to us as we face the reality of existence.<sup>1</sup>

### ONTOLOGY: THE GOD WHO IS THERE

#### I. WHAT ON EARTH IS ONTOLOGY?

Before we ask ourselves what the Bible says about ontology, we should probably make sure we understand what exactly ontology is. Ontology comes from two Greek words: *ontos* meaning “being” and *logia* meaning “the study of.” As with any -ology, ontology is the study of something, and that something is the nature of being and existence. In other words, ontology is concerned about what ‘is,’ what exists.<sup>2</sup> Ontology asks questions about the fundamental nature of reality.

How does it work? It seeks to formally name and define types, properties, and interrelationships of the things that really or fundamentally exist. Confused yet? Here is an example of some ontological questions that may help clear things up a bit:

- 1) Do shoes exist?
- 2) What properties make a shoe a ‘shoe?’
- 3) Are shoes more real than the concept of walking?
- 4) What is the relationship between shoes and walking?

There you can see the kinds of questions that come up in ontology. It is concerned with existence (Do shoes exist? Are shoes more real than the concept of walking?), being (What properties make a shoe a ‘shoe?’), and how they relate (What is the relationship between shoes and walking?).

#### II. BIBLICAL ONTOLOGY

##### A. Ultimate Reality

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1982), 198.

<sup>2</sup> Ontology is the study of things that exist, especially things whose existence is logically entailed by a theory. If your theory logically entails the existence of some x, we would say that you are ontologically committed to the existence of x.

Central to the Biblical witness is that the ultimate, fundamental reality is not a concept or idea, but a person—the infinite and personal God of Scripture. Before there was anything else in existence, God existed (“In the beginning, God. . .” Gen 1:1). In fact, God alone is self-existent. That is, God exists independent of anything or anyone outside of Himself. He is life (John 5:26), and thus is not caused “to be” by another. Rather, as He tells Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). He is the great I AM, the self-existent one. He alone is the Source and Giver of life. Theologians call this God’s *aseity*—from the Latin *a se*, “from Himself.”

The Westminster Confession of Faith reads that “God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which He has made, nor deriving any glory in, any, unto, and upon them.” You see in this statement a clear affirmation that God is absolutely independent of His creation. “Who has first given to me, that I should repay him?” He asked Job (Job 41:11). God is not a needy God. He lacks nothing in and of Himself, and so He needs nothing outside of Himself.<sup>3</sup>

This follows logically from how else God is portrayed in Scripture:

- Perfection: If God is to be perfect, He must be self-existent. For Him to depend on something or someone else would imply there was something lacking in Him, which would further imply that He was less than perfect.
- Infinite: If God is to be infinite, He must be self-existent. For Him to depend on something or someone else would imply that He is less than He could be and needs to be added to, which would further imply that He was finite.
- Immutable: If God is to be immutable (unchanging), He must be self-existent. For Him to depend on something or someone else would imply that He could and would change when acted upon by that other something/someone, which would further imply that He is mutable.

You can see from just a few examples that for God<sup>4</sup> to be God, He must be self-existent. His aseity is “the key that unlocks all other attributes”<sup>5</sup>: His transcendence, His omniscience, His omnipresence, His goodness, His righteousness. God is all that He is; He can be nothing more nor nothing less; He cannot be added to or subtracted from, and His aseity ensures this.

We can (and must) go further in describing God’s self-existence. Part of God’s aseity is that He is perfectly fulfilled and happy; He does not depend on something or someone outside of Himself

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 56.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas’ definition of who God is can be helpful in thinking through the relationships between His attributes: “God is that being greater than which none can be conceived.” If other words, if you can imagine God being improved upon, you are not imaging the God of Scripture.

<sup>5</sup> Barrett, *None Greater*, 69.

for happiness or fulfillment.<sup>6</sup> As Jonathan Edwards writes, “God is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of Himself, in perfectly beholding and infinitely loving, and rejoicing in, His own essence and perfections.”<sup>7</sup> This means that if God had never chosen to create the world, He would have been perfectly satisfied and content in Himself.

How is this possible? It is possible because, as we know from Scripture, God is not just *a* person but *three* persons all having the full divine essence; just as “the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26). God is Trinity. For all eternity God has existed as three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—and these three persons have always shared perfect fellowship with each other. As Jesus said in his High Priestly Prayer, “Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5).

It is a significant aspect of the character of God is that He is a personal God. Personhood implies at least two basic characteristics: 1) Self-reflection and 2) self-determination.<sup>8</sup> In other words, God knows that He Himself exists (self-reflective) and He thinks and acts (self-determinative). This will come to define personhood in man, who is made in the image of the personal God.

**Summary:** Ultimate reality, the source and foundation for all that is, is the infinite, self-existent, personal God of Scripture. This is the God who is there.<sup>9</sup>

## B. External Reality

In the opening chapters of Genesis, we are witness to the self-existent God creating the universe *ex nihilo*, “from nothing.” Everything that exists outside of God was spoken into existence by God (Hebrews 11:3). Scripture is clear that He is the Maker of all things:

- He is “the Creator of the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 40:28)
- “I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself” (Isaiah 44:24)
- He alone “made the heavens, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them” (Nehemiah 9:6)
- He “formed the earth and the world” (Psalm 90:2) and “established all the ends of the earth” (Proverbs 30:4)
- It was “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host... For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Psalm 33:6, 9)

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Discourse on the Trinity*, 113.

<sup>8</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*.

In other words, external reality, all that exists, was created by God. More specifically, the New Testament witness tells us that it was through the Son that God created. John writes that “all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:4). Paul affirms this when he writes that by Jesus “all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. . . all things were created through him and for him” (Colossians 1:16).

There are significant implications to this. First, it means that everything that exists in the cosmos, including mankind, is entirely dependent on His existence; everything was created “through him.” He is the foundation and source of all that exists, and nothing exists apart from or independent of Him. As Paul told the Athenians, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24-25). God’s existence is not dependent on His creation; it’s existence it dependent on Him.

Not only is God the Creator of the universe, but He is also its Sustainer. The author of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the one who “upholds the universe by the word of His power” (Hebrews 1:3). Examples of His sustaining activity abound:

- “[Creatures] all look to you, to give them their food in due season. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust” (Psalm 104:27-29)
- He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. <sup>16</sup> He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. <sup>17</sup> He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? <sup>18</sup> He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow (Psalm 147:15-18)
- “He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses” (Psalm 33:7)
- “You cause grass to grow for livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth” (Psalm 104:14)

That God is actively sustaining the universe tells us something about the universe—reality—that God created. First, the universe was created orderly as an extension and expression of His character; it is not random or chaotic. Isaiah writes that God “did not create [the cosmos] to be empty” (Isaiah 45:18) where the Hebrew word תהו (*tohu*), translated empty, has the idea of “formless” and “worthless” (cf. Genesis 1:2). God did not create the cosmos to be chaotic or formless, but orderly and purposeful.<sup>10</sup> We see this in the natural laws operating within the universe (Biblical authors often compare the certainty of God’s promises to the certainty of natural laws continuing in operation, i.e., Hosea 6:3).

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<sup>10</sup> Certainly, the fall and introduction of sin into the world has affected the very creation, so that it no longer always operates as it was meant to (cf. Romans 8:20).

Second, the universe is *open*, meaning that it is not mechanistically programmed.<sup>11</sup> God is not a Clockmaker who made and programmed the universe and then stepped away. Rather, He is actively and constantly involved in all activity in the universe, even as history unfolds according to His sovereign will. This reality is what gives our decisions and actions significance. We are not machines operating according to a pre-programmed plan, but moral actors making decisions that shape the future and for which we will be held responsible.<sup>12</sup> This has significant implications for how we understand man's place in this created world.

Further, not only was everything created "through him," everything was created "for him." Because God is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, all things belong to Him. He is the Lord and Master of the cosmos. David writes, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). He is the one who owns "the cattle on a thousand hills" for "the world and its fullness are mine" (Psalm 50:10, 12). He tells Job that "Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11). This means that the universe itself has a clear teleology, an ultimate purpose for which it was created: to glorify its Creator. Thus, David writes, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). Paul tells us that "God's invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature" are clearly seen and perceived "in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20). All that exists to glorify God, the source and foundation for all that is.

**Summary:** external reality is the universe that God created *ex nihilo* to operate in an orderly way (according to the relationship of cause and effect) as an open system to demonstrate the divine power and goodness of its Creator.

### III. SIGNIFICANCE

As we will see in each of the worldviews we evaluate in this class, a worldview's ontological claims set the parameters for all other categories: anthropology, epistemology, and ethics. For Biblical theism, then, the fact that God is the foundation and source of all that exists provides the basis for how we understand what a human is, what the purpose of humanity is, how we can know something about anything, and provides the foundation for a coherent ethical system. As Philip Ryken says, "Every worldview has an integrating idea" and "every worldview is animated by its central idea or driven by its main story line."<sup>13</sup> What unifies Christianity, he says,

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<sup>11</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Scripture also affirms that God has predestined all events and that all of history unfolds according to His sovereign predetermination. This tension between predestination and free will is difficult to resolve (see Matthew 18:7 as an example of this tension). Ultimately, it is resolved in the mind of God who is transcendent and not bound by time and space like we are.

<sup>13</sup> Ryken, *Christian Worldview*, 35.

is not merely an idea, but the being and character of Almighty God. The Bible does not present God as the conclusion to some logical proof, or as a mystery beyond our comprehension, but treats his existence as the basic premise upon which everything else in the entire universe is built. God is always our ultimate frame of reference, the supreme reality at the center of all reality—the be-all and end-all of everything. Therefore, whatever else we include in our worldview will need to be understood with reference to God.<sup>14</sup>

## **ANTHROPOLOGY: MADE IN HIS IMAGE**

Genesis 1 & 2 give an account of God’s creation of the universe. It is full of beauty and grandeur as God speaks into existence the sun, moon, stars, planets and all manner of celestial bodies; as He forms the earth into a habitable planet with clear demarcations of land, air, and sea; as He fills the earth with an incredibly diverse array of plant and animal life with the ability to reproduce themselves. All of it, He declares, is good (Genesis 1:9, 12, 18, 21, 25). The climax of God’s creative activity, however, was not the creation of stars or planets, oak trees or lilies, whales or lions. It was when He created man:

Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

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” (Genesis 1:26-28).

Only after He created man and woman did God declare His creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Beginning with this creation account, we can construct a fully orbed anthropology under two broad headings.

### **I. CREATED IN HIS IMAGE**

The entire account of God’s creation of man is given far more attention than any of His other creative acts. Scripture tells us that God “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature” (Genesis 2:7). It is

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

portrayed as a thoughtful, intentional, careful act on God's part. Of critical importance is that only mankind is made in God's own image. Three times this phrase is repeated in Genesis 1:26-28, underlying its central importance to what it means to be human. To be made in God's image is no small thing; David can hardly contain his surprise at God's special care and concern for man, whom He has crowned "with glory and honor" and to whom He has given dominion over the earth (Psalm 8:4-8).

What does it mean that man is made in God's image? Most simply, it means that we are, in some way, like God.<sup>15</sup> While entire books have been written seeking to explain the *imago dei* in detail, for our purposes we can imagine the image of God as entailing two components: 1) reflection and 2) representation.

### A. Reflection

First, there is something in man's constitution that reflects the nature and character of God in a way that other creatures do not:

- Our ability to think and reason reflects God's ability to think and reason
- Our moral sensitivity (conscience) reflects God's moral nature
- Our ability to make decisions reflects God's ability to carry out His will
- Our ability to fellowship with God reflects the fellowship God experiences within the Trinity
- Our ability to recognize beauty reflects God's beautiful creativity in creation
- Our ability to love reflects God's love for Himself and His creation
- Our ability to empathize with those suffering reflects God's compassionate nature
- Our sense of justice and hatred of injustice reflects God's character as a righteous Judge
- Our ability to show mercy reflects God's character as a gracious and merciful God

David, reflecting on God's image in man, understood that God has bestowed to man a unique glory and honor that reflects the His own glory and honor (Psalm 8:5). The *Imago Dei* is something every person *is*. Man is a physical being (Genesis 2:7, 23; Job 19:26), but man is also a spiritual being (Genesis 35:18; Ephesians 6:6). Thus, while we are clearly a part of creation, made "of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7), we are also spiritual like God is and so reflect who He is.

One of the most significant aspects of reflecting God is that, like God, human beings have personality. As James Sire writes, "Our personality is grounded in the personality of God. That is, we find our true home in God and in being in close relationship with him."<sup>16</sup> Recall that personality entails two basic characteristics: 1) Self-reflection and 2) self-determination. Like

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<sup>15</sup> It is important we state this truth this way. We are like God—not the other way around. This gives God the primacy He is due. Far too many conceive of God the other way around and create false gods for themselves.

<sup>16</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 22.

God, humans are capable of self-transcendence—the ability to contemplate our own existence and purpose in the universe. We know ourselves to be. Further, like God we think and act in an uncoerced way. “We are capable of acting on our own. We do not merely react to our environment but can act according to our own character, our own nature.”<sup>17</sup> Though we experience external constraints due to our creaturely nature, we reflect God who is totally unconstrained by all that is outside of Him.<sup>18</sup>

That man is undeniable personal points to the necessity of a transcendent, personal Creator God because, if there was no such God, where would personality come from? As Francis Schaeffer writes,

Christianity has an adequate and reasonable explanation for the source and meaning of human personality. Its source is sufficient—the personal God on the high order of the Trinity. Without such a source men are left with personality coming from the impersonal (plus time, plus chance). The two alternatives are very clear-cut. Either there is a personal beginning to everything, or one has what the impersonal throws up by chance out of the time sequence. . . . If [the latter] is really the only answer to man’s personality, then personality is no more than an illusion, a kind of sick joke which no amount of semantic juggling will alter. . . . No one has presented an idea, let alone demonstrated it to be feasible, to explain how the impersonal beginning, plus time, plus chance, can give personality. . . . As a result, either the thinker must say man is dead, because personality is a mirage; or else he must hang his reason on a hook outside the door and cross the threshold into the leap of faith which is the new level of despair.<sup>19</sup>

When we look at the constitution of man, we see clearly that man is a personal being, and this demands a personal God. To deny the second is to implicitly deny the first. In this way, only a theistic worldview allows a person to live consistently with reality.<sup>20</sup>

That man is different from other creatures is obvious to any honest observer of the world; there is just something about man that is different. Man is not an animal amongst other animals, but a creature of a different order. Though other worldviews will seek to explain this reality in different ways, only the Christian worldview can adequately explain why man is what he is. Man is what he is the way that he is because he is made in the image of God. This gives every single

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>18</sup> The only limit or constraint on God is His own nature. God cannot act against His character—He cannot lie or act in an evil way because He is holy and good. Nothing external to God, however, can constrain Him. He is bound by nothing other than His own will.

<sup>19</sup> Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 112.

<sup>20</sup> More will be said on this in coming weeks as we evaluate the anthropologies of alternative worldviews.



human being, regardless of age, background, ethnicity, education level, or stage of development inherent dignity and worth. As Helmut Thielicke wrote, “God does not love us because we are so valuable; we are valuable because God loves us.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, Scripture grounds the prohibitions against murder (Gen 9:6) and cursing another person (James 3:9) on the fact that those individuals bearing God’s image.<sup>22</sup> The *Imago Dei* is why Christians believe that abortion is wrong, that racism is wrong, that any sort of prejudice is wrong. They are wrong because they are against a creature bearing God’s image.

## B. Representation

Bearing the *Imago Dei* has implications that extend beyond the way man is constituted. The image of God not only tells us what why man is the way that he is, but also what man is supposed to do. Returning to the creation narrative we see that in stamping His image on man God gave man a clear calling and vocation:

Then 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 birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

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” (Genesis 1:26-28).

You can see man’s calling in the phrases “let them have dominion” and “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion. . .” Man was made to rule over God’s creation on His behalf, vice-regents on earth who represented His rule and authority over creation. This world is God’s world, but He gave stewardship of it to the creature bearing His image. In the Ancient Near East it was common practice for a king to erect statues of himself in conquered territories; by putting his image in that territory, the king showed it was under His dominion.<sup>23</sup> This practice was but a shadow pointing to a greater reality of what God had done at creation. God put His image in the universe as an extension of His rule.

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<sup>21</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Nihilism*, trans John W. Doberstein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 110.

<sup>22</sup> In Genesis 9 this prohibition is made in the context of God declaring that every living creature “shall be food for you” (Genesis 9:3), showing a clear distinction between mankind and other creatures.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 81-2.

How, exactly, was man to rule on God's behalf? Genesis 2 gives us a clearer picture. In Genesis 2:15 tells us that God "took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work [עָבַד] it and keep [שָׁמַר] it." The Hebrew verbs Moses pairs together to describe Adam and Eve's vocation are paired together several other times in the Old Testament in very specific contexts. Typically translated as "to serve [עָבַד] and to guard [שָׁמַר]," they are used of Israel 'serving' [עָבַד] God and 'guarding' [שָׁמַר] His word, or of priests who were to 'minister' [עָבַד] in the tabernacle and guard [שָׁמַר] it and all its furnishings (Numbers 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; Ezekiel 44:14).<sup>24</sup> The word-pair is used almost exclusively in contexts of tabernacle worship, and is used primarily to describe the activity of the priesthood. Adam and Eve are portrayed in Genesis 2:15 as the archetypal priest whose duty it was to cultivate the garden—itsself the archetypal temple or dwelling place of God—and protect it from unclean or unholy influence.<sup>25</sup> In other words, mankind as God's representatives were to tend to and protect the sacred space on earth where God would dwell with man (Genesis 3:8).

Their vocation was not only to tend to and protect this garden, but to expand it. God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 1:28). In other words, Adam and Eve were to bear more image-bearers and were to expand the boundaries of the garden—the place where God dwelt with man—throughout the earth so that God's presence would fill it and the earth would be "filled with the glory of God" (Numbers 14:1). Man's dominion over the cosmos was not meant to be rule with an iron fist, but a rule marked by loving cultivation of God's good creation. In this way, creation would flourish to the glory of God. Man's role was both royal and priestly—we were created to be king-priests over God's world. Echoes of this original vocation can be seen in humanity's use of science and technology to subdue nature, as well as man's expressed creativity in the arts.<sup>26</sup> "Human creativity," Sire writes, "is borne as a reflection of the infinite creativity of God Himself."<sup>27</sup>

As mankind fulfilled its purpose of representing God in the world through the cultivation, protection, and expansion of God's temple-garden, the promise was that God would dwell there. Man would live in the presence of God. One of the most significant implications of man being made in God's image is that we were created to relate to God. The Genesis narrative alludes to this relationship when we see God "walking in the garden" and calling out to man (Genesis 3:8-9). Unlike all other creatures, we were created to have a relationship with God.

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<sup>24</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66-67.

<sup>25</sup> This clarifies how evil Adam and Eve's actions in Genesis 3 are. Not only did they disobey the one prohibition God had given them, but to allow the serpent to enter the garden unopposed was a dereliction of their duty to protect God's sacred space.

<sup>26</sup> Examples like these show the clear connection between man's constitution (how he reflects God) and calling (how he represents God).

<sup>27</sup> Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 22.

**Summary:** Man was created with a high calling. He was created uniquely by God, made in God's image so that man would reflect God and represent Him in the world as priest-kings.

## II. CREATED WITH A PURPOSE

As we read the above, it becomes painfully obvious that, somewhere, something went wrong. The picture of mankind at creation is not the reality we experience today. Mankind is not fulfilling its purpose as God's image-bearers, and people are estranged from God. This is where the narrative of our worldview comes in, the basic outline of which is:

### **CREATION → FALL → REDEMPTION → NEW CREATION**

A Biblical anthropology must include not just Genesis 1-2, but also Genesis 3—the fall. Rather than fulfill their high calling, Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the one tree God had prohibited them from eating (Genesis 3:6). They failed in their role as God's vice-regents by asserting their own authority and autonomy (“you will be like God” [Genesis 3:5]), and in their role as priests by failing to protect God's sacred space from the unclean creature—the serpent—that had entered it (Genesis 3:1). In so doing, they plunged the cosmos and humanity into chaos. Sin entered the world, and through sin, death (Romans 5:12).

Now, every single human being is born in sin, to the extent that sin has corrupted every part of our being, both the material and immaterial aspects of a person. Our physical bodies decay and die as a result of sin (Romans 6:23); further, Paul makes clear that our physical bodies can be used as vessels for sin and evil (Romans 6:12-13; 1 Corinthians 6:18-19). As to the immaterial, sin affects the mind (the noetic effects of sin, cf. Ephesians 4:17b; Titus 1:15) and the heart (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23). Sin is so pervasive that Paul describes people prior to conversion as being “dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked,” only carrying out “the passions of our flesh... the desires of the body and the mind” (Ephesians 2:1, 3). This state of total depravity renders a person utterly unable to please God. Paul writes that “None is righteous... no one seeks for God” (Romans 3:10) and that “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God... Those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7, 8). This is why Jesus told his disciples that “apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). This is the universal condition of man apart from the saving work of Christ (1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:3, cf. Romans 3:10; 3:23).

The *Imago Dei* has been marred by the fall, it has not been lost (Genesis 9:6; Psalm 8:4-8; James 3:9). Better yet, God has made a way for it to be redeemed. Jesus Christ the God-man is the only human being who has perfectly imaged God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15). When people come to faith in him, they are transformed “into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). That is, as we behold Christ we are conformed to His image (Romans 8:29) and the *Imago Dei* is progressively restored in us (something that will only be

completed when Christ returns and we become “like him, for we will see him as he is” [1 John 3:2]).

This reality of future redemption and new creation is not just for mankind but extends to the creation as well (Romans 8:19-21). Revelation 21 describes the new creation, a new heaven and a new earth where “the dwelling place of God is with man” (Revelation 21:3). In His infinite grace, God has acted in history to reverse the curse and restore the cosmos to its original, unmarred state.

For all this to happen, however, sin had to be dealt with. God cannot simply pass over their sins because this would be a violation of His perfectly just nature (Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 30:18); He must punish all sin in accordance with His character (Exodus 34:7). The author of Hebrews says that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). The righteous life and atoning death of Christ were necessary for God to reconcile Himself to sinners. Christ provided the perfect, righteous sacrifice that could fully and finally pay for our sins (not only was Jesus sinless, but he also kept the law perfectly and “fulfilled all righteousness” [Matthew 3:15], making him a sufficient sacrifice for sin). In the death of Christ, God’s wrath against sin was satisfied in full so that He can declare those who believe in Christ as justified in His sight, maintaining His own justice and integrity in the process (Romans 3:26). Thus, it was “fitting,” or consistent with God’s character, that Christ would be made “perfect through suffering” (Hebrews 2:10)—“he *had* to be made like his brothers... to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17).

Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has made a way for man to be redeemed and reconciled to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18). This redemption extends to the entirety of the created order; even now He is “making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Why? God through His prophet Isaiah declares, “For my name’s sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you... For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it... My glory I will not give to another” (Isaiah 48:9, 11). This is the ultimate purpose for all that God does. In speaking of the Exodus—the archetypal act of salvation—the Psalmist writes, “Yet He saved them for His name’s sake, that he might make known His mighty power” (Psalm 106:8); this reality can be seen throughout the Exodus narrative (Exodus 9:16; 14:4, 17-18). God says through Isaiah that “I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25). The prophet Ezekiel echoes this expression of God’s primary concern for His own name and glory (Ezekiel 36:22-23). God chooses and saves people “to the praise of His glorious grace” (Ephesians 1:6; c.f. Jeremiah 13:11). He forgives sins “for His name’s sake” (1 John 2:12).

A worldview that has God at the center, as He should be, recognizes that it is all for His glory. The entirety of the created order, including its story of creation → fall → redemption → new creation, is ultimately for the glory of God.