

# What is Man

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Mr Ken Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] O Lord, O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and infants you have established strength because of your force to fill the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the worth of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him.

Yet you have made him a little lord on a heavenly beast, crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands. You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the sea, birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

O Lord, O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. And to consider with you, as the Lord would enable us for a little, the words of the fourth and fifth verses from Samhite, what is man, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him.

We can all identify with David. In many respects, and especially in this one, we can picture David out there, tending sheep, on a clear, moonlit night, and looking up into the sky, seeing the moon and the stars, and then recognizing how small he is himself, a speck upon a speck, in the vast universe of God.

[ 2 : 03 ] David sees his finitude, how finite he is, in contrast with the infinitude of the universe.

And so he raises the question, which could equally be an exclamation, what is man? What is man? That you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him, and that you visit him.

You have made him a little lower than the angel. Or as the original, I understand, has it, you have made him a little lower than Elohim.

Just a little lower than God. So this great question, what is humanity? Exactly what does it mean to be human?

A member of the human race? And we can ask the question as it unfolds, and follow three lines of treatment. First of all, man, and that includes women, because the English language in poverty has only one word to describe the male of the species, and the generic of the human race.

[ 3 : 23 ] Gaelic and other languages are two words. But man here embraces woman, the whole of humanity. What about our origin?

And that's a great question that fascinates, and has fascinated, people down the generations. and our own day is no exception. And much money is poured into space exploration, trying to discover the origin of the universe.

So, what about ourselves? Where have we come from? Our past. And then, the question about our present. What about our present position, and condition, today?

And then lastly, what about tomorrow? What does the future hold on? In terms of destiny. man, past, present, future.

John Calvin, the great reformer, once said, true knowledge consists of two things. First, the knowledge of God, and then, the knowledge of ourselves.

[ 4 : 43 ] And today, we live, do we not, in a day of increasing knowledge, instant access, to all kinds of information. And if what Solomon, said in his day, is true, and it is, of the making of books, there is no end, we can certainly say that today.

At the touch of a button, we have instant access, to all kinds of information, done very undesirable. true knowledge, said Calvin, consists of two things, knowing God, and knowing ourselves.

One might think that, we don't need to be theologians, to know something, about ourselves, about our own species. but to, in order to understand, man, that he is, and that she is, biblically presented to us, we must reflect upon, God's revelation, concerning, the human race.

Now, just a word about, about the study of God, that itself, is, more than a lifetime study, and, were God not pleased, to reveal to us, a little concerning himself, as ignorant, we would be.

But, given the being of God, given that God is, the next, logical question, is, how does he operate? What plan, does he have?

[ 6 : 21 ] And that's the order, that's followed, in the shortest, advocate. What is God? And what is the decrees, of God? And God, executes, and carries out, his plan, this decrees, in the works, of creation, and providence.

We have just, read together, the magnificent, and majestic, account, unequaled, and unrivaled, of creation, in Genesis chapter 1.

In the beginning, God created the heaven, and the earth. And the earth, was without form, and void, empty, not chaotic.

Nowhere, can we attribute, chaos, to God's hand, and the earth. And were these, not the words, that were quoted, when, the man, first stepped, onto the moon, at least, in the capsule, in the module, that circled, that circled the moon, and, and, as these men, looked back, to the earth, these were the most, appropriate words, that came to mind, and that they quoted, in the beginning, God created the heaven, and the earth.

So there was, the divine fiat, the divine command, let there be, and there was. And then, as Genesis 1, unfolds, it's a story, of, differentiation.

[ 7 : 52 ] God formed the earth, and God filled, the creature. He spoke the world, and the seas, teemed with life, as the ESV has it, swarmed with living creatures.

And again, he spoke, and the earth, was populated, with flora, and fauna, all kinds, of living things. Innumerable, species, different species, of life.

And God, thought that it was good. And he, he had external, templates, for all these, different life forms. Let the water, spring forth.

And it appears, that the water, had the inherent potential, of, bringing life, forth, under God's command. And likewise, these earth, let the earth, bring forth, every living creature, after its kind. man, but when it comes, to the creation, of man, the narrative, slows down, almost to a snail's pace. And we have the words, not, let the earth, bring forth man, but let us, make man, in our image.

[ 9 : 18 ] Not, let me, make man, in my image, image, but let us, make man, in our image. So there is the deliberate, divine counsel, and man is formed, from the dust, of the earth, not, from a clod of earth, not, from a lump of clay, but, from the fine, dust, of the earth.

And we read later, in this narrative, when the sentence is passed, upon rebellious man, for his disobedience, the death sentence, for he had committed, a capital offense.

Dust thou art, and unto dust, thou shalt return. We came from the dust, made, meticulously, it's almost as if, the potter, shaping our vessel, pitied, for his own use.

And here is the great creator, with manual dexterity, forming man, and breathing into man, the breath of life, and Adam, becomes, a living soul.

And Adam is made, after God's, own image. And that's an interesting question, which will touch upon, what does that mean? To be made, in the image, of God, what does the image, consist of?

[ 10 : 47 ] So here is man, the first man, Adam, and it's interesting, that the Hebrew, word for ground, is Adamah.

Here is Adam, the man, made from Adamah, the ground. earth, and there is, a close affinity, between man, and the ground.

And that itself, is a study worth pursuing. So man is made, and he is the apex, of God's, creative activity.

There is nothing, higher than man. Sometimes we think, mistakenly, that angels, are higher. But not according, to the word of God.

But according, to the scripture, nor, nor is it said, that the angels, are made, in the image of God.

[ 11 : 48 ] Man is. The angels, are servants, of the redeemed. Man is made, woman is made, in the image of God. So here is Adam, with a brilliant, intellect, far superior, to that of, Aristotle, or Einstein, or any of the, brilliant minds, of the past.

Adam's knowledge, of God, is perfect. His vision, is unclouded. And the animals, are brought, before Adam.

And he is able, with, brilliant insight, to understand, the nature, of these animals. And not one, is found, as a suitable, companion father.

Adam is perfect, but not complete. And so, Eve is formed. And God did not say, to the man, you make the woman.

And we know, if we know our Bibles, we know how, the woman was formed. A deep sleep, came over Adam. And God, took one of his ribs.

[13:07] And from that rib, he formed the woman. And the thought there is, that he, architected the woman. He built the woman. It's almost, as if the woman, is a clone, of the man.

And, gardeners know, what, what it is, to take a cutting, of a parent plant, and to grow, an identical, daughter plant.

A cutting, was taken, from the man, to form, the woman. And, when God, takes the woman, to the man, and presents her, to him, he breaks forth, in rapturous song, this is, bone of my bone, flesh, of my flesh.

Here, at last, was one, who was suited, eminently suited, to Adam. Now, he is complete.

She is, his like opposite, or opposite like. And, you remember, from school days, and the study, of magnetism, how you have, the two poles, opposite poles.

[14:23] And, they attract each other, the north, and the south poles. Here, is, this new, specimen, specimen, of humanity, brought before Adam.

Brilliantly new, spectacularly, different, from anything, that has appeared, on the earth. And, Adam says, she is from my tissue, bone of my bone, flesh, of my flesh.

And, one day, one day, when God, will present, the church, to Christ. Isn't that, what he will say? Bone of my bone, flesh, of my flesh.

He is the glorious, head. And, they are the members, of his mystical body. Never, was there a union, like this. And so, we have the man, and we have the woman.

And, we have them, at their point, of origin, made, upright. Conformed, in every way, 100%, conformed, to God's, specification.

[15:36] creation. Exactly, the plan, that he had, in his mind, was brought, to perfection. So, at the point, of origin, man, is created, upright.

He has a, righteousness. He has a, standing, before God. God, is perfect. He, worships God, in the fullness, of the spirit.

He is, morally, perfect, also. He lacks, nothing. In fact, God, could not, make him, otherwise. Everything, that God, does, is perfect.

And, it's at this point, that we differ, radically, right at the very root, from what, modern science, and modern anthropology, teach.

Science, so called, teaches, that man, at its, at its point of origin, is only, slightly higher, than the brute beast.

[16:52] savage man. That's not, the biblical teaching. At the point of origin, man is perfect. And, it's important, to recognize that, and to hold, onto that.

And, tragically, false teaching, in our schools, and universities, over many years, has taught, that we are, byproducts, of the evolutionary process, not so.

And, David asked the question, what is man? Man, as he comes forth, from the hand of God, is perfect. Created, in the divine image.

And, what is that? What does the image, consist of? I said earlier, that the template, or the blueprint, that God had, for other life forms, came from the ground, and from the earth, came from the sea, and from the earth.

But, when it came, to the formation, of the human bear, the template, was God himself, made a little, lower, than Elohim, but with certain, in certain, important respects.

[18:05] So, and what does the image, consist? And, there has been much discussion, and much debate, over that question. Man is, it consists, in everything, that man has, that makes him, radically different, to every, other life form.

Man has the ability, to think. Man has been given, a reason. We are rational beings. And we can think.

In God, there is thought. In God, there is the word, of God. In the beginning, was the word.

And the word, was with God. And the word, was God. And there was, communication, between the members, of the Godhead. And we have, the capacity, to think, and to communicate.

Pascal, the great French, physicist, and philosopher, said, man, man is a reed. Man is a reed.

[ 19 : 14 ] Just a story. The weakest in nature. But he is a thinking reed. But he is a thinking reed. And that's where our dignity consists. Our capacity for thought.

And for communication. And for decision making. We can freely decide. We can choose. And we can refuse. But then there's also this. And in this, the human race also reflects the image of God.

Inner capacity for appreciating beauty. There were some Romanian young people over here last week.

On an exchange visit. And some of these young teenagers came from, have come from, very deprived homes.

[ 20 : 19 ] So much so, that some of them didn't want to go back. But they're here on an exchange visit. And some of them are on. And maybe for all I know, there might be some here who are hoping to make a return visit next July to Cluj, to where these young people are.

So they were with some leaders. And I had the privilege of knowing a leader over a number of years. And we met with them. And when we said goodbye at the airport on Friday morning, I asked some of them, what were the highlights?

Well, everything was a highlight for them. But there were two. One, they said, was the ocean. The ocean. They had never seen the sea. And they were taken over to the west coast of Harris for the beauty of the beaches on a lovely day last Thursday.

That was one thing. And then the second that they mentioned was the kindness of the people. And isn't that welcoming for us to hear the kindness of the people? These two impressed them more than their other activities.

And we have the capacity for appreciating beauty. We have our wonderful seascapes. They have their mountainscapes. And other places have their snowscapes.

[ 21 : 37 ] And all these reflect the wonderful artistry of our Creator. He is a sublime artist with form and color.

Some of us have seen television programs with those who are interested in gardening. And that's again a reflection. When you see a beautiful garden with all the thought that has gone into making that garden what it is.

It's a work of art. And it reflects the image of God in us. Someone has said he's also a marvellous musician.

This world has the most wonderful natural music. He's the great draftsman. What an architect to form our world and the universe.

And we can appreciate that beauty. And he's a magnificent mathematician. Only recently has our genetic makeup been discovered and it holds something like it's a three billion pieces of information mathematically designed.

[ 22 : 55 ] Our Creator is great and much to be praised. We miss out, don't we? So often by misspending our time on trivial things.

Things that do not matter. So the image of God in us is expressed in these ways and in this as well in fellowship. We were not made to live in a monastery.

We were made for fellowship and we need the fellowship of our own kind. It's interesting as someone has said Adam was not placed in university.

He was placed in a garden. And there's much we can learn from our environment and its beauty and we have responsibility towards our environment.

We have to pass it on. There is a slogan that says we don't inherit the earth from our forefathers from our vans. We steal it from our children.

[ 24 : 05 ] Now that's a thought-provoking slogan. And there is this in the image of God in us. We are made forever.

We are indestructible as God is indestructible. indestructible. She is forever. We do not go out of existence.

And there's much more that could be said about the origin of man. We have not come from the brute beast. We were not savage, savages at the beginning. We were created in God's image. But then the tragedy, the tragic story of the human race, the darkest day in our history. And we know what happened.

And we see Adam and Eve walking out of the garden as Milton portrays them hand in hand, wistfully looking back, but there is no way back.

[ 25 : 07 ] It's just forward. And forward to an unknown future. God's father, but praise God, he did not abandon the human race.

He was not going to permit the rebel king to have his way. His purpose of mercy and grace was not thwarted.

And before they left the garden, there was the grave promise that one would come. So the dark day, the darkest day in the history of the human race, what happened to the image?

That's another great question. And much dispute and debate has arisen over this. Has man lost the image of God as a result of his sin and disobedience and rebellion or not?

Well, there are many indicators in the Bible to point us to the fact that he has not lost the image of God. And just a few chapters further on, in Genesis chapter 9 after the flood, the great verse on when man's blood is shed, the capital offense of murder, the murderer must pay the penalty because of the image of God in man.

[ 26 : 34 ] And David himself in Psalm 8, David so patently fallen, himself still recognizes the image.

You have made man just a little Lord and Elohim. And then in the New Testament in the book of James, when James refers to the tongue, the small instrument that can set the world on fire, doesn't James say about the tongue?

With the same tongue we bless God and we curse men who are made in the likeness of God, in the likeness of God, still bearing God's image.

And if we did not bear God's image, whatever we would be, we would not be members of the human race. We still retain our rationality and our ability to appreciate beauty and fellowship and all these things that constitute and compose the image of God in man is still with us.

But something has been lost. What was lost when man said when man lost his original righteousness? Man is no longer upright.

[ 27 : 51 ] We have lost the favor of God. We have forfeited our fellowship with him. We are destitute. We are impoverished. No longer do we have the passion for the glory of God that Adam had in his unfallen condition.

That is gone. We have lost that. But what of the and that's a pressing position. But what of the future?

The image will be one day perfectly restored. Perfectly restored in Christ.

In Paul's great letter to the Romans in the eighth chapter and the twenty-ninth verse where he says God's predestinarian purpose is to conform us to the image of Christ.

We are to be like Christ. One coming day. What does it mean to be like Christ? That's a great question. And I always think of this connection.

[ 29 : 09 ] I always think of John 13. To be like Christ. The night before he was betrayed he took the basin and the water and the towel and he began to wash the feet of the disciples.

The work of the lowest slave in an eastern household. That's what he did. Or as Paul teaches us in Philippians 2 Christ who became the servant of the father.

He took the form of a servant. He became a nobody. And to become like Christ is to lose a reputation. To be thought of as nothing.

to prefer others over themselves. That's the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And one day every vestige of pride will be taken away.

Cursed pride that robs God of his wife and place and of his glory in our hearts and in our churches to be like Christ.

[ 30 : 17 ] Christ. But I can't let you go without asking the great question are you in Christ? Because if you are not in Christ and if you die Christless then your future is bleak indeed.

There is no future. Remember what I said regarding the image. we are indestructible. But the good news is that God so loved the world.

And God's great purpose is to bring people to be like Christ. Christ. Just a few weeks ago I had the privilege once again of going to Eastern Europe to teach and to be in the company of the Lord's people in three different Eastern European countries.

One of them was Bulgaria and I met Delcho. Delcho a former communist military officer high up in the army had all that he wanted past car attractive wife great prospects and one night Delcho awoke in terror when they thought that he was going to a lost eternity and Nina his wife couldn't help him.

She didn't know Jesus and this man who was so proud as he would tell you he asked him to tell us his testimony this man who was self-sufficient at all that he wanted suddenly found himself the realization that he had nothing nothing to face his major time went past and became more and more miserable and then one day Nina remembered that her granny had a bible and so he made his way to Nina's granny's house and he devoured the scriptures and he found peace with God on new year's day 1992 today Delcho is a pastor planting churches in southern Serbia or I could take you to Peter Peter the alcoholic Peter who sold everything whose marriage had broken because he needed the next thing and in the end he sank so low that he had to sell his dog and for a shepherd to sell his dog

[ 32 : 59 ] Peter was the prodigal and then like the prodigal Peter came to the census and Peter is today a pastor amongst the Roma people amongst the gypsies in Bulgaria and he was there at the mission school because he had taken his notes to go back to his own people all of which reminds us of Augustine's great statement you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee he made us for himself this morning in Stornoway we had the Scottish Secretary of White who spent 25 years in Burkino Faso a West African country as a missionary and the stories that this man told us were stirring stories convicting stories and he told us of a mother who came with a bundle of rugs to the missionaries and said to the missionaries can you please help my little daughter and when they uncovered the bundle and these were experienced nurses he was telling us they had never seen a sight like this ever from head to toe this little thing was covered in weeping sores and the nurse said sorry we have no medicine for this condition and the mother was about to wrap up this little thing in the rags and go away crestfallen when one of them said we don't have medicine but we know someone who does and so they prayed and they had I think he said I think it was mercury chloride a solution of mercury chloride which they diluted and painted over the skin of this little one something like iodine and they wrapped her in a clean cloth and off went the month four days later she returned with this little bundle in her house and they thought that the child had died and they unwrapped her not one blemish not one blemish perfectly healed and restored and he said to us the gospel in Africa and as your minister will tell when he returns from Korea the gospel in Africa is such he said that there isn't an empty pew and as he looked around the empty pews in Stornoway as I look around the empty pews here and in every other church in our land he said in Africa the churches are too small when he left 15 years ago they had built a large church which they thought would accommodate all the worship today too small that's our God that's the God of the Christian nothing is too hard for him and if you are asking how can I become his child he says to us once again come come to me all you who have burdened and I will give rest his arms let the arms of the father and the parable are open wide to receive returning sinners oh will you not come before it is too late to receive cos net lost take away