

What is Man? 9-9-01

Psalm 8, Genesis 2:7, 3:1-6

The Psalmist David while considering the wonder of the night sky and its millions of stars asked, "*What is man that you are mindful of him or the son of man that you should visit him?*" The NIV translates that last part "*care for him?*" Today more than ever before we are seeing the wonder of the simple phrase, "*He made the stars also.*" We can now see there are thousands if not millions of galaxies. Our own galaxy is whirling at the incredible speed of 490,000 mph. But even at that tremendous speed it will take 200 million years to make one revolution.

We need to consider the answer to that question, "*What is man?*", to truly understand our relationship with the Almighty. David went right to Genesis 1,2 to find his answer. Almost everything we need to know about man is right there in the first 3 chapters. He was the last and crowning act of creation. He was given dominion over all creatures. Most of all, he is made in the image of God. David said, "You have crowned Him with glory and honor."

He was not the only creature formed from the dust of the ground but he is the only one into which God breathed the breath of life. When God did that "*man became a living soul.*" He had a body like all the animals. He had breath, as did the other animals, physical life. He has a mind and will as do animals, though his is superior to the rest of creation. But this special breath in the nostrils that brought life to Adam was unique from other creatures. This is the crowning of glory and honor that separated him from the rest of creation. The breath or spirit of God gave him life that is a part of the eternal life of God.

This same breath of God is translated as 'spirit' in Job 26:4 and Proverbs 20:27. This life that is more than physical, means that we will go on after these bodies have quit breathing. Adam was given the breath of life was warned that if he ate of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil he would lose it. That is not physical life, but the life of God – the breath of God. We use the word 'inspiration' which means to breathe into. He would lose that inspiration of God and be separated from Him.

We have this picture of man in the Garden with dominion (the rule) over all the creatures of the earth. They are to submit to him just as he submits to God. Man is clothed in the glory of God and walks and talks with God in the Garden. Eden means pleasure, this specially prepared place met all his physical needs. God even created woman to give him companionship and to be his suitable helper. They were a team as perfectly matched as any team could ever be.

They alone are made in the image of God. They can commune with God and have a relationship with Him. The image of God they bear is not His physical shape for God is a spirit. It is their ability to commune with God, to rule over creation, and be clothed in glory. Every man and woman born is made to be in the image of God. Our intrinsic worth is not in our physical body or mental ability. That is what the world would value.

Our value is the breath of God each of us can share in. Every human life is priceless because of this capacity. Is that what you value in yourself and your acquaintances? Or do you think like the world that your worth is in your physical body and mental ability?

Dr. Chen Hua Yu described man in these words: *"Like Adam and Eve, we are vessels, created to be fully dependent upon God for everything. We have a living soul, with a mind, emotion and will to love God; and our human spirit to receive Him as our eternal Life. Finally, we have our outer body – our vessel – to be filled with Him, in order to cooperate with God in expressing Him and reigning with Him. This is our purpose in His creation."* All of our being, body, soul and spirit is meant for the glory of God.

But God gave Adam a clear choice. How could Adam know his relationship with God was of his own free will, if he did not have the choice to leave the relationship? The temptation Satan presented appealed to their physical senses as well as their pride. The Tempter twisted all the good they were surrounded by, into a focus on the one thing forbidden. Genesis 3:1b *"Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'"* Once he had Eve's focus on the one thing forbidden, he did what he does today with us. He gets us to doubt God. He questions God's intentions and purposes. God gave man a choice so that man could freely choose to walk in life, of his own free will. Satan is telling Eve, "Not so, God doesn't want you to try this because He knows when you eat it you will be like Him. He wants to keep the knowledge of good and evil from you so He can remain the boss. Come on, you really believe you will die when you eat that fruit. No way! You will be like God."

When God made everything, He declared it good. Adam and Eve were surrounded by only good. The trick of Satan was to get them to desire more. Isn't that what he does with us also? He attempts to get you to see some value in something outside of the goodness of God. It may be a physical thing that you seek satisfaction from, it may be position or self importance outside of who we are in God. The key issue is independence from God, so that we can be our own god, bowing to no one but self. It is a declaration that you will be your own Lord.

Eve handed it to Adam who was with her (see Genesis 3:6). Eve was tricked by her own desires which made her a willing listener to Satan's seduction. Adam was afraid of being alone and losing this wonderful helpmeet. 1 Tim 2:14 (NIV)¹⁴ *And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.* Adam ate it knowing he would not be like God. He chose Eve over God. His satisfaction has become the woman more than God. Both of them had chosen something outside of God to fulfill them. They had both chosen to be independent from God in these decisions. They refused to cooperate with God for their own good. The real deceit of Satan was to encourage the elevation of their perception of what was best for them above that of God's. *"Adam as a living soul should have used his will to refuse both Satan and his wife, and to choose his spirit to turn to God and depend upon Him, his true life-source."* Dr. Yu

As a result of these decisions in their own hearts followed by taking action on them, the life that the breath of God imparted – now departed. Their spirit within them died and

they were separated from God. They became self-centered in their lives independent from God. Their violation of God's order and purpose for man brought guilt and fear. Instead of looking forward to God's presence with them, they hid from it. Man surrendered his place as prince of this world to Satan. Satan readily has access to the thoughts of fallen man, because they are selfish like his own. He was made to be a "*living soul*" but now dominated by sinful desires, God calls the whole man flesh. Now every descendent of Adam will be born in darkness with a desperate need of the light of life, the breath of life. Because man walks in darkness, he readily believes any lie that would promise satisfaction. The death of separation from God is the natural birth condition of every human.

In John 8:44 Jesus tells the religious Jewish leaders: "*You are of your father, the Devil... and the lusts of your father, it is your desire to do.*" That is true of every man outside of life. What a fall! We know Jesus took a giant step down into humanity, but have you considered what a descent man took, from being a child of God, ruling over the earth in utter dependence on God to being a self-centered child of the Devil? We have to see this to realize our great need. Too many today don't recognize their condition and think they are "good". Good is utter dependence on God and in our natural state we will never go that route. Jesus exemplified a life that does live in utter dependence on God and that shows us how far our lives are from that original intention of God. The Spirit of God must open our eyes to the horror of what we are outside of God, so that we are desperate to yield to the life of Christ, repent of our fallen state and abhor it. When someone says, "I'm a good person", we need to understand the person has not yet yielded to the revelation of the Holy Spirit, of their true condition. They are so blind they are calling black white. By good, they mean comparatively with others who set themselves up as gods – rebels against the One and only God.

The person who has not received the breath of life, been born from above, is blinded by the Prince of this world. 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)⁴ *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* Satan began this work of blinding right in the Garden when he promised Eve her eyes would be open. But the believer, too, can be blinded. Rev 3:17 (NIV)¹⁷ *You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.* We become blind by looking at ourselves and what we have. We can also become blinded by self-righteous conceit, like the Pharisees, who could not see their own faults. Satan promises the believer he can open his eyes to deeper truths. We must discern and reject this attempt to operate with our pride to be our own god.

When we come to Christ, after this revelation of our condition, we come humbly seeking the breath of life. We ask God to breathe into our nostrils His very Spirit. Our previous father must surrender his position to that of our heavenly Father, and we become born of the Spirit. This is not an intellectual attainment. You cannot read and understand and so become born of the Spirit. Sadly, I have had people tell me you must comprehend salvation and intellectually ascend to it. New Christians have the same danger in reading spiritual books and filling their mind with understanding, instead of tasting of life from its Source. We can certainly learn from other brothers and sisters but it will not

become a part of our spiritual life, unless we taste of it personally in our spirit, not our minds. When we read or listen to others we need to discern if we are tasting of the Spirit of God or of the soul (intellect) of man. Intellectual attainment can prompt the very thing that was involved in the fall, satisfaction in pride in our wisdom.

We must be very alert to the source of our thought life, for it comes from one of three sources: God, Satan, or ourselves. That is why we need a renewed mind. We must consistently test our thoughts and refuse those that would offer some satisfaction outside of Christ. We must determine the source and refuse those that are not of God, those that point to self, those that would focus on the forbidden tree.

In a Bible study on Genesis chapter three, the teacher was pointing out how Satan focussed Eve's attention on what she did not have, instead of all she had. He pointed to a light bulb that was burned out on the ceiling. It was in a row of lights on one switch. He said, "It is like pointing to that one bulb that is out, instead of all the others that are on." At that instant the bulb lit up. This is a true story. Silence filled the room as we contemplated what God was saying. God does not withhold light. He only asks us not to partake of what would be destructive to us. The speaker had used the wrong illustration and the Spirit of God made it clear. *No good thing will He withhold from them who walk uprightly.* Psalm 84:11b In Christ every good thing is yours!

I bring up that experience to relate it to our thought life. When the enemy tries to point to something and say you are missing out, it is time to reject that thought. When he says you are missing something, when he says you have suffered too much, when he claims things are too hard, all his efforts are to get you to focus on self, and a lie. The lie is that there is some good thing outside of Christ you are missing. He's trying to get you to act like him, independent from God.

If we were to stop short of the cross we would have to conclude that Satan won and has taken over all of God's creation. But then we would be stopping short of God's new creation through Christ Jesus. The cross judged all the evil that Satan has permeated this entire world and every generation with. The sentence was delivered and carried out in the One who could endure it in our place. Now we can receive the breath of life, and return to utter dependence on God our Father. Now we can let our thought life be renewed. Now we are free of religious effort. Gal 6:15 (NIV)¹⁵ *Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.* John 3:6 (NIV)⁶ *Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.* The Spirit or breath of God has entered into us and we can see. We can walk in the light of life and return to the headship (leadership) of Jesus Christ.

I want to close with a challenge from Dr. Yu before he was martyred: "*The Father wants us to be filled only with His Christ. Will you let Him deal so thoroughly in His love, until you are consumed with Him, having to continually depend upon Him, instead of anything of yourself? For God to take you deeper into Himself, He must expose all in you that is not of Himself. I hope that, as He shines in you, you will take Him as Grace, to deal completely, so He may possess you wholly, and bring you into His fullness in your lifetime.*"