

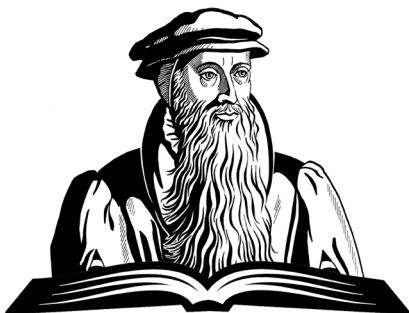
# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

*Module 3:*  
**ANTHROPOLOGY—  
THE DOCTRINE OF MAN**

*Lecture 2*  
**THE NATURE OF MAN**



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

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*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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### *Module 3 ~ The Doctrine of Man*

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# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

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## *Module 3 ~ Lecture 2*

# The Nature of Man

Most people own at least one mirror. You'll find them in lots of places, both in public and private. You often see them over a sink, enabling people to better comb their hair, straighten their shirt, or brush their teeth. But you also find them in many other places. Sometimes, women even carry them in their purses. Mirrors allow you to see yourself, and many people like looking at themselves. They're concerned about their appearance, and how they may be viewed by others. But mirrors have significant limitations. They can only show you one part of the body—the part facing the mirror and whatever fits within the size of that particular frame. But there is more to you than what is reflected in any mirror. You have a soul, as well as a body, and the soul cannot be seen with the eye. Truly understanding ourselves requires looking beyond what is skin deep. We need to answer questions like, Who am I? What is my origin? Where is my destiny? What is my purpose in life? How do I know things? And on and on the questions go. Many of these questions can only be supplied by the Lord, and He provides the answers in the Scriptures. Only the Creator and the Designer Himself knows truly and fully what man is.

The series of lectures in this third module, or course, on Systematic Theology is devoted to the study of the Doctrine of Man. The purpose is to explore what the Bible teaches about man, before and after the fall and the entrance of sin into the world. In the previous lecture, we considered an introduction to this module. In the present lecture, we will explore the Nature of Man, and we'll begin by looking briefly at a passage of Scripture to open up our consideration of the Nature of Man. In Genesis, chapter 2, we read some important things. In verse 7, it says, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." And then, in verse 18, it says, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." And then, in verses 21 and following, it says, "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

In Genesis 1, God provided us with an historical account of the creation of the universe in six days. We learned that man was created on the sixth day, in chapter 1, verse 26 and following. He is the apex, if you will, of all that God made. In Genesis 2, God goes back and provides more details about the creation of man. Verse 7, which we just cited, tells us that God Himself created man as part of His handiwork. "The LORD God formed man," it says. So this eliminates any possibility of

mankind evolving from earlier forms of animal life, as in the myth of evolution. God is the Creator.

We also learned of man's lowly origins. We are told that God formed the body of the first man of the dust of the ground. As a consequence of sin, and the entrance of death, this reality remains vividly before our eyes. In Genesis 3, verse 19, after the fall, we read, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." We also learned that God created mankind, male and female, from the beginning. He was made with the capacity for relationships. Verse 22 tells us that the body of the first woman was made from man: "and the rib which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman," verse 22 says. We are also told that she was made for man. So if you go back to verse 18, the Lord says, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." So designed mankind with gender distinction, and we'll explore the implications of this later in the lecture.

Furthermore, we learned that God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. So God gave life to him. Man's first breath came directly from God. And he was constituted a living soul, a living being. Mankind was more than just material substance having a body; he was created with a reasonable soul as well.

From the opening pages of holy Scripture, we're introduced to the nature of mankind. His nature is rooted in the origin, design, and purposes with which God created him. Genesis 1 to 3 provides us with true history about the very first man and the very first woman. This historicity of Adam is an essential Biblical doctrine, and we must recognize and vehemently resist any departure from this truth, deeming it false and dangerous error. It remains essential for many other Biblical doctrines, and for godly practice. It is a solid foundation, on which God builds many other truths in Scripture. So undermining the foundation would topple the structure of Biblical orthodoxy.

Secondly, let's consider some of the doctrinal details related to the nature of man. Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 4, paragraph 2, begins with these words: "After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after His own image; having the law of God written in their hearts." In this lecture, we are considering the Nature of Man more generally. In the next lecture, we will focus our attention on what it means for man to be created as the image of God. So in this lecture, first of all, man is a creature, a created being—we see that—he is not a god. He exists as a result of being made by the living and true God, as we sing in Psalm 100, verse 3, "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Or, to use Paul's words, it is "in him"—that is, God—that "we live, and move, and have our being"—Acts 17, verse 28. So man is temporal, not eternal. Human history has a beginning, unlike God, who is eternal and outside of time.

Secondly, God created mankind with physical, material bodies. And we see that matter itself is not evil, contrary to some of the heresies in the early church. At the end of the sixth day, God declared that what He had made, including man's body, was very good—chapter 1, verse 31. The body has dignity. Among many other reasons, this is important, because Christ, in His incarnation, assumed to Himself a true human body. So denying this would completely undermine the gospel altogether. Our bodies have intricately designed faculties, all of which are to be employed in God's service, for God's glory. Therefore, the believer is told, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"—1 Corinthians 6, verse 20. Or as we read in Romans 6, verse 13, we are to devote the parts of our body "as instruments of righteousness unto God."

But man is more than just a body. So thirdly, we see that we have a living, immortal, reasonable



soul. Ecclesiastes 12, verse 7 speaks of death, saying, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” So the constituted nature of man consists of both body and soul. Now there are some, in our own day, those who are Dispensationalists, have mistakenly taught that man’s nature consists of three parts: body, soul, and spirit. But a careful study of Scripture proves that God uses the words “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably, as synonymous terms for the same thing. So man is constituted chiefly of two things: body and soul. The body has various parts and members, and the soul has various faculties. Think of your mind, which is distinct from your brain, or man’s volition—his will, or his affections, and so on.

Fourthly, we should also note that man was created with the moral law of God written on his heart. Romans 2, verse 15 speaks of the Gentiles, who did not have the ten commandments in writing, but, as it says, “which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” Man is not created as a blank slate, in a state of innocent ignorance. He’s created with a sense of good and evil. Man’s conscience serves as God’s deputy within him, testifying against his sinful deeds. This is true because man has the law of God written upon his heart.

Fifthly, mankind was created male and female from the beginning, according to God’s perfect design. He made male and female both, united in dignity, and united in their faculties and privileges as bearers of God’s image, but distinguished as man and woman. Two genders, not more, and not fewer. Gender distinctions and role relationships were established before the fall, not as a consequence of sin. To deny or distort the God-given distinction between male and female is wicked, and creates sinful chaos and confusion within the created order. This is why Paul can describe the abomination of homosexuality as “against nature,” in Romans 1, verse 26. Likewise, the Bible specifies different roles for man and woman, from the beginning. Given the importance placed on this in Scripture, and the attack on it in the present day, we’ll consider this in a bit more detail. Think in terms of the roles of men and women within the church, first of all. Paul addresses a woman’s role within the church, in 1 Timothy 2, verses 11 and 12, where it says, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” We find the same thing being stated in 1 Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 34 and surrounding that passage. But going back to 1 Timothy 2, notice that he grounds this—what he’s just said—in creation. It says, “For Adam was first formed, then Eve,” in verse 13. So he is not describing something cultural, limited to one time and place. It’s rooted in God’s design, within the created order itself. Paul specifies to Timothy what must be implemented in all churches, at all times. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 3, Paul writes, “But I would have you know”—and then he goes on, and says, “the head of the woman is the man.” Then he explains the distinctions in decorum between men and women, and he grounds the mandate for women to cover their heads in public worship within the created order, along with other reasons. So he says, in verses 8 and 9, “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.” The point here is that Paul is distinguishing the roles of men and women, even their decorum in public worship, and he’s rooting it in creation.

We can also think about the roles of men and women in the home. Paul also applies the principle of male headship we just saw in 1 Corinthians 11, to the home. In Genesis 2, we learned that God made woman as a helpmeet and companion to complete man, bound together in unity and mutual love. That beautiful relationship reflected order, assigning leadership to the man. We read in Ephesians 5, verses 22 to 24, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is

the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” Again, you’ll see something similar in 1 Peter 3, verses 1 to 7. So the husband employs his headship in giving himself, in self-denying, self-sacrificing love for his wife. Headship is for the benefit of those under its leadership.

But Paul describes male headship as a matter of fact in God’s design—not just what ought to be, but what is. And he raises our eyes, even above the created order, to show how it reflects the greater relationship of Christ as Head to His bride, the church. Well, the broader Biblical doctrine regarding the roles of men and women goes beyond the scope of this lecture. But we need to see that these Biblical truths take us all the way back to God’s created design in the beginning. In summary, we learned that God created man, male and female, with a body, and a soul, and with the law of God written upon his heart.

Next, we must consider three errors that arise, related to man’s nature, beyond the ones that we’ve already covered in what we said. First of all, there are theologians that deny the historicity of Adam as the very first man. And this comes in many different forms. They will say that Adam was a person that was subsequent, there were other people besides him at the time, or were before him. Others will say that it’s just a story, and that it’s not an actual person that’s being described, and so on. Not only does this deny the plain teaching of Scripture, it also undermines other Biblical doctrines. God sets the gospel within the context of the relationship of the headship of Adam to all his posterity, on one hand, and the relationship of Christ—called the last Adam—to His elect people. First Corinthians 15, verse 22, says, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Notice the words later in that chapter, verse 45 and verse 47, “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam”—speaking of Christ—“was made a quickening spirit. . . .The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.” So for example, in a future lecture, we’ll be considering the Doctrine of Original Sin. We’ll learn that sin comes to all men in Adam, as the representative of the human race. And you can consider, for example, Romans 5, verses 12 to 21, which covers this doctrine. We read things like, “As by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men.” Or it says in that passage, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” So the historicity of Adam as the very first man is essential to Biblical religion.

Secondly, we need to assert the fact that no group within mankind is more or less human than another. All are made in the image of God. God created a variety of ethnicities and nations, with diverse features and skin tones, and so forth. But they all come from one single source—the first Adam. Malachi 2. Verse 10 says, “Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother.” Paul said in Acts 17, verse 26, that God “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” The gospel is to be preached to every tribe and tongue upon the earth, and the diversity of people groups is reflected in heaven itself. Revelation 7, verse 9 says, “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb.” And so God created the world with great diversity and there’s many discrepancies and differences between different people groups, and those are going to be preserved, even represented, on the last day.

Thirdly, we spoke earlier about those who consider man’s physical body evil. But we should also consider those who deny the existence of the soul, asserting that man’s nature is only physical. So, if that’s true, then when man dies, he dies like a dog. Well this has many implications. It undermines human responsibility, for example. When a tree drops a branch on your car, you do not

deem the tree culpable. The tree is operating within the physical laws of nature. If man is merely physical, then whatever he does is an inescapable result of physical forces and instinct. So he does not have a mind to decide anything, or volition to choose anything? Well, this is obviously absurd. It would also eliminate human consciousness, introspection, and intentionality. Animals don't sit and think about the past, or the future, matters of logical deduction, cause and effect, things that they've never seen or don't even exist, and so on.

Furthermore, the body changes drastically over an extended period of time, but people remain the same person with the same self-awareness, and so on. So you see, just a few brief examples of why this irrational notion of the denying of the soul needs to be rejected. God reveals, in His Word, the certain truth that man's nature includes an immortal soul. And the refusal to believe this leads to absurdity.

Fourthly, and lastly, we can now draw a few practical applications for ourselves. First of all, the place of humility. Man was created in the beginning from the dust of the earth, and when he dies, he returns to dust. And so, this should induce, within our own hearts and souls, a sense of humility, as creatures before God. An inflated sense of our own hubris, and power, and so on, is unseemly, and is inappropriate in light of all that we are. That humility leads to dependence. Remember those words from Acts 17, in God we live, and move, and have our being. We need to be conscious of how dependent we are upon Him, for everything, not just for big things—when we get into a crisis and we're crying out to the Lord for help. Not just even for spiritual things, which is obvious, but for everything. We depend upon the Lord, every breath we take, our heart beating, and all of the other details that form our lives. We should walk with dependence upon the Lord.

Secondly, the bodies of believers belong to the Lord for His service. We're created by Him, and we're responsible to Him. You think about those words I mentioned from Romans 6, where the Apostle Paul is saying to the believer, Your body is not your own. You've been brought into union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, the parts of your body are actually His. They are to be employed in ways that please Him, that glorify Him. They're not to be employed in sinful things, but in things that exalt the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Well, that means we should exercise stewardship over the body, like everything else that God has given to us. You see Paul speaking of this in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 27: "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." And so there's dignity that belongs to the human body.

Thirdly, the soul of man is the soul of the matter. Unlike the world, we cannot be preoccupied with the body—excessive food, and exercise, sleep, or pandering to our bodily comforts. We recognize the important place of the soul, Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." And so we should take this doctrine and use it to reinforce the priority of cultivating the soul—of the need for our souls to be sanctified, and to grow in holiness, to die unto sin, and to live unto Christ, and be conformed to His righteousness. And so, the important place of the soul within our thinking.

Fourthly, with regards to the dignity of the believer's body, you see this expressed, even in the fact that it is laid in the grave upon death. The Shorter Catechism tells us that the bodies of believers, when they are buried, are still in union with Christ, and that they are laid in the grave with the hope of the resurrection. So when Christ came to save His people, He came to save all of them. He came to save their souls; He came to save their bodies as well. When the believer is brought into union with Christ, all of them is brought into union with Christ. And therefore, there is, even in the body of a believer who has died, it is to be viewed and seen, and treated with dignity. This



is reflected in the fact that, throughout history, Biblical Christian burial is used. This is the model that the Lord gives us. When the believer dies, we don't just dispose of the body like trash, or burn it like trash, but rather, it is, with a measure of decorum, laid to rest in the grave, with the hope of the resurrection. I mean, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the incarnate Word, has a body. When He ascended into heaven, He ascended with His human body. His human body is actually exalted above the highest heavens in glory. One of the Puritans said that we have human dust on the throne of heaven, so this is important for us as well by way of implication. We recognize, of course, the immortality of the soul. Not only is the body laid to rest with dignity, but at death, the soul of believers is perfected in holiness and goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. How precious the soul is—immeasurable in its value. The Lord Jesus tells us, What will you give in exchange for your soul? Would you give the whole world in exchange for your soul? And the answer is, of course, a dogmatic, "No!" That our soul is worth more than the whole world put together, and it ought to be viewed as such. That's how God sees it, that's how we should see it as well, having our minds conformed to His own.

Well, in conclusion, in this lecture, we have explored the nature of man. This addresses questions about man's origin, his identity, his purpose, his destiny, and so on. In the next lecture, we will turn our consideration to the Biblical doctrine of man as the image of God.