

Living the Essentials of the Faith: Everywhere, Everyone, At All Times
RAISE – Revelation, Anthropology, Incarnation, Sanctification, Eternity
Anthropology Part 1 – What separates us from God?

Key Concept: Humanity was created to be in relationship with God, yet all humanity has universally excluded itself from that intended relationship.

Summary: The first chapter of the Bible tells us that “God created humankind in his image.” This simple statement provides two crucial aspects to our Christian understanding of anthropology. First, we are created. As creatures, we are fundamentally different from our Creator, much like a work of art is ontologically different from an artist. At the level of our being, we share a common bond with all of creation (rocks, water, animals, stars, gases, plants, etc.) that we do NOT share with God. Intrinsic to the act of creation is the distinction between that which is made and the One who makes.

Second, this statement affirms that we are made “in his image.” When God created humanity, He formed us into something distinct from the rest of His creation. That image, that distinction, is simply this: God endowed humans with the unique ability to have and form relationships with one another and especially with God Himself. Thus God provided a means of bridging the inevitable chasm that looms between creature and Creator, and provided the purpose for all human life; to be in relationship with God.

Yet immediately after the magnificent story of God’s great triumph of creation, the Scriptures turn to the tragic story of humankind’s greatest failure. Here we discover, to our terrible sorrow, that our first ancestors violated the image of God within themselves. They rejected a relationship with their Creator in favor of a self-centered existence.

Their calamitous decision had repercussions far beyond their own lives. All humanity tasted the wretched fruit of the rejection of God, for we inherited a self-centered inclination instead of the God-centered orientation with which we were created. This innate self-focus (named “original sin” by the church) has led each successive member of humanity to repeat and reinforce the rupture in the relationship between creature and Creator. This rupture we name “sin”, a word referring both to individual actions of disobedience to God, and to the general condition of division from our Maker.

Sin and its consequences are the ultimate cause for all suffering and evil in the world. All broken relationships – between nations, individuals, strangers, family, neighbors, even between humans and nature – are broken because we have broken that most important relationship between God and those God made in his image.

The ultimate consequence of sin is death, meaning eternal separation from God. If our lives are characterized by our disobedience, disinterest and disregard for God, should we not expect our afterlives to be more of the same? Thus Scripture tells us that “the wages of sin is death.” Addressing our broken relationship with our Creator is the most urgent and vital need of all humankind, for sin is a defiance of our reason for existence.