

UNDERSTANDING MAN, Part 1 1-8-16 *The Origin of Man*

Psalm 8:**1-9** *O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! 2 From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength Because of Your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease. 3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? 5 Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty! 6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. 9 O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!* Psalm 8:5 and following tells us how God has placed man in a position of prominence in the universe. He has crowned Him with glory and majesty, but to David, the author of this Psalm, that fact is a mystery. 3-4 *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; 4 what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?* David asks the question, "What is man?" That is the question we will investigate for the next several weeks together as we engage in a study I have entitled, "Understanding Man." I expect to stay on this theme for about seven Sundays.

On the temple of Apollo at Delphi, nestled against a rugged mountain in one of the remote areas of Greece, an inscription summed up the wisdom of the ancient world. It said, "Know thyself." Those two words embody the deeply held conviction that, as Alexander Pope later phrased it, "the chief study of mankind is man." That is, our wisdom consists in the accuracy and depth of self-knowledge. Now, in one sense, Christianity has no quarrel with that except to say this - that man will never really understand himself until he understands God. For the existence of God is such an extensive reality that little at all can be properly conceived without relating it to God. Apart from that we can know certain facts about man; we can study our chemical make-up but we cannot know man as he is in himself without relating him to God and without hearing from God. As much as human knowledge has advanced we find that man still doesn't know what to think of man. Reinhold Niebuhr says, "*Man has always been his own most vexing problem.*" I'm guessing Niebuhr was a bachelor because, hey, women are way harder to figure out. Guys are so much less complicated don't you think? Remember this picture? From the control room in heaven. There is

something true about this and something false. Fact is, that even we guys are pretty hard to figure out. Of course, I have been using the term "man" generically and will do that the next few weeks. I hope you ladies don't mind – you are included.

As I was saying, man, to understand himself, needs to hear from God. How shall we study man? By the scientific method? Yes, absolutely, that is valid when properly applied. But it is limited. Shall we give ear to anthropologists and psychologists? Yes, but these are only men. They have only opinions and these differ one from another. We need more; so **we** shall hear from God, the world's greatest Anthropologist. **Our** conclusions must be founded on what our Lord says. God's word then shall be our basis for study. It is ironic that I say that today since my message contains less Scripture than almost any I've ever preached, but my conclusions are thoroughly Biblical and that, I expect, will be clear.

Our subject for today is *the origin of man* as the scholar would phrase it. In common speech we are asking, "Where did you come from?" Very important question. Very. Stephen Hawking, the famous scientist says, "*If we don't know our origins life is pointless.*" It is commonly asserted among the self-perceived intellectuals of our day that man himself is, at best, an advanced animal, an amoeba with hyper-active glands, and a cosmic accident. This is considered the sophisticated, open-minded, even scientific assessment of ourselves.

Some of you may be wondering if there is a sermon on evolution ahead of us this morning. You, my fellow homo-sapien would be correct. The subject of evolution vis-a-vis creation has become a pet topic for some Christians but it has never been of too great an interest to me because I don't perceive it to be addressing the great ultimate question of the origin of the universe. Many think it does but it does not and cannot. Darwin's famous work was not called, "*Origin of the Universe*" but what? "*Origin of the Species.*" And, you see, that does not abolish the need for God, for a first cause, since the universe had to exist if man or other animals were to evolve in it. How did it get here? The scientists have tried to answer that. The "Big Bang" theory takes us one step closer but still the Big Bang happened in time - what was before that? Scientists have no answer. Robert Jastrow was an author, geologist and astronomer at Columbia and Dartmouth. He founded NASA's Goddard Institute. He is in a word, a scientific heavyweight. Jastrow, who is not a Christian, writes of the search for ultimate beginnings. "*For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance;*

he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

You see, the question still remains, "What has caused the universe?" Evolution is no answer. What is evolution? Where is it? How big is it? You can't answer right? Evolution is no thing. It is not a being like a rock or a tree or a bird or a bee. Evolution is a term that describes a process, not a self-sufficient cause. It is illogical to say that evolution caused anything. People say it, of course; I can't stop them, but it is nonsense.

In the same way it is nonsense to say that the universe or anything is caused by chance. You ever heard that ? Space + time + chance = universe? What is chance? What is it? What's it look like? Did anybody get some for Christmas? Chance is no thing. The term 'chance' refers to the mathematical possibility of a given event. You toss a coin and it has a 50-50 chance of landing heads. But chance does not cause the coin to do anything. It cannot. Chance itself is no thing. So, what is the chance of the world being created by chance? Not a chance.

I hope you follow what I'm saying - evolutionary theory or any other theory does not eliminate the necessity of an eternal and ultimate cause of the world. The most rational thesis ever put forth for cosmic origins says that, "*In the beginning an eternal God created the heavens and the earth.*" But, did He also create man or did our species just slowly evolve from that initial creation? Most all of us are familiar with the idea that, through natural selection and mutations, new and different creatures came into being. This is the theory of evolution. It is only a theory, and has never been scientifically proven. I have a cartoon that shows a student holding a Bible with his teacher looking down on him saying, "*Yes, I know evolution only began as a theory but it evolved into a fact a long time ago.*" No, no. It has never done that. In fact, over the years the evidence has mounted up against the theory, and most of us, have always just found the basic propositions of evolution to be utterly inadequate to explain the amazing world in which we live. Listen to this amazing statistic. Recent surveys show that only 33% of Americans believe that evolution is an adequate explanation of human origins, while 73% believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. Isn't that incredible? After decades of trying to pound evolutionary theory into us via the public schools and public broadcasting and other media, the American public is largely incredulous. We have heard all the propaganda and we have said, "Bogus!" And it is bogus. I find evolution as a way to explain man or a way to explain the biosphere in general as just ridiculous. But most who want acceptance in the circles of academia cling tenaciously to their evolutionary faith. Evolutionists teach that your

grandfather was a monkey, your great-grandfather was a fish, and your great-great grandfather was a hydrogen molecule. This, of course, took billions and billions of years and is purely theoretical. Still, anthropologists like to trace out the development of man as he evolved from the monkey. We learn that some monkeys began to go bald and correct their posture, and then one fine day a female ape gave birth to a man - which is a name for a slightly upgraded monkey which is a slightly upgraded fish which is a slightly upgraded amoeba which is a slightly upgraded hydrogen molecule. The difference between beings can only be found in their degree of complexity. Now that takes more faith than I could ever muster but some anthropologists are committed to this stuff and it drives them to lunacy. One thing I love is how they tell us all about prehistoric man. Think of that. We now have histories of prehistoric man derived from the kind of un-reasons in which only scientists are allowed to indulge. But in order to get their works in print, scientists get very dogmatic about their ideas and make the most nonsensical claims. They find some very old two inch bone fragment and construct around it a body of a hairy guy with bad posture. They give him a high-sounding name like "Chromaectron man" and tell us all about him. From this we develop our notion of the cave man. What do you think of when you think of a cave man? He is an ape with tools isn't he? He went around naked and clubbed a woman on the head when his passions got the best of him. And we are told we have evolved a long ways from that.

What really do we know about our distant forefathers? Two things: they had stone tools is one. We don't know that they were naked although we expect they were born that way. But I once read a supposedly scientific description of a prehistoric tribe which began confidently with the words, "They wore no clothes." Now probably not one reader in a hundred stopped to ask himself how we should come to know whether clothes had once been worn by people of whom everything has perished except a few chips of bone and stone. I mean, did these experts expect to find a stone hat as well as a stone hatchet, or maybe an everlasting pair of pants made of the same substance as the enduring rock. Since we found no such items we conclude, "They wore no clothes, but they had stone tools." The **only** other thing we really know about our ancient ancestors, the cave-men, is that they drew pictures of animals on cave walls. Rather far from the hairy brutes we picture carrying clubs. GK Chesterton writes,

When novelists and educators and psychologists talk about the cave-man, they never conceive him in connection with anything that is really in the cave. When the realist of the sex novel writes, "Red sparks danced in Dagmar's brain; he felt the spirit of the cave-man rising within him," the novelist's readers would be very much disappointed if Dagmar only went off and drew large

pictures of cows on the drawing-room wall. When the psychoanalyst writes to a patient, "the submerged instincts of the cave-man are doubtless prompting you to gratify a violent impulse," he does not refer to the impulse to paint in water-colours; or to make conscientious studies of how cattle swing their heads when they graze. Yet we do know for a fact that the cave-man did these mild and innocent things; and we have not the minutest speck of evidence that he did any of the violent and ferocious things. In other words, the cave-man as commonly presented to us is simply a myth or rather a muddle; for a myth has at least an imaginative outline of truth. The whole of the current way of talking is simply a confusion, founded on no scientific evidence. If a gentleman wants to knock a woman about, he can surely be a cad without taking away the character of the cave-man about whom we know next to nothing except what we gather from a few harmless and pleasing pictures on a wall.

In short, there is no evidence to suggest that man was ever a lesser being than what sits here in this room.

Well now you say, we've come a long way baby. Maybe we have, but it is not from monkey to man. Without opening a Bible you know that you are different, distinctive, other than the animals. You may be an animal but there is none like you. The Catholic thinker Chesterton says man is not an evolution but a revolution. He points to two human values to show how utterly different we are from animals: one is art, the other religion. The one thing we do know of our ancestors is that they were artists. Chesterton writes:

We do not know whether they decorated themselves; but we do know that they decorated other things. We know they had pictures. And there remains with them, the testimony to something that is absolute and unique; that belongs to man and to nothing else except man; that is a difference of kind and not a difference of degree. A monkey does not draw clumsily and a man cleverly; a monkey does not begin the art of representation and a man carry it to perfection. A monkey does not do it at all; he does not begin to do it at all; he does not even begin to begin to do it at all.

Art was part of the life of real man from the very beginning. We did not evolve into artists.

And what about religion? Anthropologists say that man became religious to explain his experiences, dreams, changing seasons and death. They brought from him mystified associations that became religions. Again I quote the brilliant Chesterton who writes:

But there is not the faintest hint to suggest that anything short of the human mind feels any of these mystical associations at all. A cow in a field seems to derive no lyrical impulse or instruction from her unrivalled opportunity for listening to the skylark. And similarly there is no reason to suppose that live sheep will ever begin to use dead sheep as the basis of a system of elaborate ancestor-worship. It is true that in the spring a young quadruped's fancy may lightly turn to thoughts of love, but no succession of springs has ever led it to turn, however lightly, to thoughts of literature. And, in the same way, while it is true that a dog has dreams, while most other quadrupeds do not, we have waited a long time for the dog to develop his dreams into an elaborate system of religious ceremonies. We have waited so long that we really have ceased to expect it; and we no more look

to see a dog apply his dreams to ecclesiastical construction than to see him examine his dreams by the rules of psychoanalysis. It is obvious, in short, that for some reason or other these natural experiences, and natural excitements, never do pass the line that separates them from creative expression like art and religion, in any creature except man. They never do, they never have, and it is now to all appearance very improbable that they ever will. It is not impossible, in the sense of self-contradictory, that we should see cows fasting from grass every Friday or going on their knees as in the old legend about Christmas Eve. It is not in that sense impossible that cows should contemplate death until they can lift up a sublime psalm of lamentation. It is not impossible that they should express their hopes of a heavenly career in a symbolic dance in honor of the cow that jumped over the moon. It may be that the dog will, at last, have laid in a sufficient store of dreams to enable him to build a temple to the Dog Star as the spiritual home for lost dogs. These things are logically possible, but all that instinct for the probable, which we call common sense, must long ago have told us that the animals are not evolving in that sense.

In Reader's Digest I read a line by a man who told a teenage niece that he had a great-great grandfather who was the Bishop of Wales. The young girl looked surprised and said, "Wow, I heard they were intelligent but I never knew they were religious." She was thinking Shamu. No, no. No animal, not even whales, are religious, only humans. Now maybe these issues are too complex to deal with in a half-hour sermon but I really believe any fair thinker can recognize the inadequacy of evolution to explain what is and the inadequacy of anything but God to explain himself. You know you are radically different from a gorilla.

Now that I'm done with my introduction we can get to my main point which is simply that man is a special creation of God and I offer two defenses. (1) No other view can explain him. (2) The Bible says that man is a special creation. Genesis 1:**26-27** *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. The God who created all things by and in their species made man as his special and crowning creation. This is true of Adam and Eve and mankind. It is also true of each individual. Psalm 139:**13-15** *For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. 14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth.* The inspired Psalmist sees that he is not just a product of a biological process but a man who is the very handiwork of a Creator-God. That explains who I am and who you are and all the other speculations of men are mere rubbish.

If it really makes sense to believe that man is a special creation of God why have people devised other ideas to explain us? What motivates men to reject the clear explanation of Genesis? Maybe this is done by an individual wanting to appear smart. We humans do our most foolish things in order to appear smart but there is a greater reason for rejecting God's creation of man and that is that we don't like the implications of that view. If God created us, we belong to and we are accountable to Him. We are His, by virtue of creation, and our rebel hearts cry, "No! We will have no one rule over us!" And if we have to invent elaborate philosophical systems to get away from God and if we have to talk ourselves into believing these lies we will because one thing's for sure - we will have no God intruding into our private affairs! The Bible says, Psalm 14:1 *The fool says in his heart there is no god!*" The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre argued for our race when he said, "*God cannot exist, for if he did man would not be free.*" So men reject our creation by God because they don't like the implications.

But, when it comes to implications we have only gone from the frying pan into the fire so to speak. What are the implications of evolution? If we are the result of blind forces or of time and space + chance or if we are simply fancy mutated amoebas - what does that say about our existence on this planet? When men try to be consistent with their atheism one word comes out again and again - that word, "despair." For try as you might to avoid it, if you reckon with the fact that we are products of blind nature, or a chemical accident, or even the animal passions of two homo-sapiens you must admit that your life has no purpose or meaning whatsoever. Are you ready to live with that? I'll answer for you - No, you're not. The only way you can stand to live is to make-believe. You'll say you're a product of evolution but you will not let the implications of that sink in. You'll live as if you have a purpose. You'll live as if there is a God who has a righteous law. That's the only way you can live. One man who tried to be consistent with his atheism was Frederick Nietzsche the German existentialist of the 19th century. Nietzsche said, "*God is dead.*" and called men to boldly face the vacuum of values created by God's death. Nietzsche went crazy and spent the last years of his short life in an asylum where he signed his letters, "*The crucified one.*" He could not **live** his philosophy. It led to utter despair. Listen to the words of the atheistic evolutionist Bertrand Russell

That man is the product of causes that had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave, that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration,

all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins – all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built. Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark.

Do you see the despair in that? I'm just glad a few evolutionists are willing to admit it. Most are not. Most will talk over here about man coming from the slime and over here about being of supreme value. Ridiculous inconsistencies! Come on friend, let's be honest here, let's face it - if man rose up out of the slime and is one day going to sink back into the slime don't come around here talking about dignity. What a joke! There is none. Life is a horror! But men refuse to face and think about the implications of what they say when they turn their back on the word of God and the sovereign rule of our Creator.

Well, you know better don't you? You know you have a purpose. You know you have significance, and a significance based not on what you have done, but on who you are. You know you are God's creation; and if you are a believer in Christ Jesus you know your life is bound up with Christ and, far from despairing, you can shout with joy, "*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain!*" Purpose? We've got it and it is a glorious purpose. Next week we will talk about what that purpose is, but for now, let me finish by reminding you of the multitudes who know of no purpose, who are tossed and turned by the popular but Satanic lies of our age. Evolutionism has abandoned so many to despair and confusion. 50,000 a year take the step of suicide in our country alone. Millions are on that same stairway leading down to death. If you know Jesus you have the message of salvation. You have a faith that makes sense of who we are. It speaks not only to our origins but to our purpose and to our dignity as men. The message of evolution is a deadly nonsense. It is not defensible, but it gets propagated with great evangelistic fervor. But we have the words of life, we can offer hope for the hopeless. We are in a battle for truth, a battle for the mind of our culture and a battle for the hearts of men. And it's a battle waiting for you. Let's stand for prayer.