

The Mirror



What Is Man? (Part 1)
by Derek Prince

It's good to with you again at the beginning of a new week, sharing with you Keys to Successful Living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

The theme for my talks this week takes the form of a question: "What Is Man?" The Bible both asks this question and also answers it. I do not believe there is any other source to which we can turn for a reliable answer.

But first, let me say "Thank you" to those of you who've been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please take time to write, even if it's only a brief note.

Now, back to our question: What is man? It's actually the psalmist David who asks this question in Psalm 8, so I'll turn to Psalm 8 and read verses 3-8 where the question is asked.

> "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
> The moon and the stars, which Thou has ordained;
> What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?
> And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?
> Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God..."

The Hebrew there translated God is Elohim which is the usual word for God, but can be translated angel.

> "Yet Thou has made him a little lower than God, or angel,
> And dost crown him with glory and majesty!
> Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands;
> Thou has put all things under his feet,
> All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field,
> The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
> Whatever passes through the paths of the seas." (NASB)

There we have the paradox of man so clearly stated. Just a little tiny speck in the immensity of God's universe. When we do consider in the fight of modern physics the immeasurable

immensity of the universe, we have to echo David's question: What is man? In one place the Bible says that men are like grasshoppers on the face of the earth. And even that is really giving them more in proportion to the total dimensions of the universe than is accurate. Man is just a tiny speck in a vast universe which he can never fully explore, and never fully control. And yet somehow, God is so concerned about him.

Then there's the paradox of man's tremendous destiny and potential. He's made just a little lower than God. He's made to rule over all the earth. Everything in the earth is put under his feet. And we find that still in man today that innate sense that he ought to be ruling, that craving to rule. And yet the paradox is he can't rule himself. He's plagued with every kind of personal problem and weakness. He's plagued with problems of his relationships to his fellow men so that the earth is filled with war and hatred and violence and mistrust. And yet there's this sense in man that he's destined to rule. So there's the paradox: first of all the tiny speck in the immensity of the universe and yet so much cared for by God; and then the paradox or the conflict between his destiny and his potential and his plaguing problems and weaknesses.

Where do we look for the answer to the question: What is man? Let me use a little simile, an illustration. In the natural we can never see our whole self. There's no way we can see our whole body. There are areas of our body that we can never see. So if we are to see ourselves in the natural, we need a mirror. The same is true in the spiritual. If we are to see what we are really like, we need a mirror. And God has provided a spiritual mirror, it's His Word, the Bible, the Scripture. This is what James says in his epistle, chapter 1, verses 22-24:

> "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. [Notice it centers around our relationship to the Word of God.] For if anyone is hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was." (NASB)

So God's Word is a mirror, but it doesn't show us our natural person as we see in an ordinary mirror. But it shows us our total inner personality, what we're really like inside. And there's no other mirror that will show us that. We could say, in a sense, that God's Word is like an X-ray mirror, reveals what cannot be seen with ordinary eyes. This is very vividly stated in Hebrews 4:12-13:

> "The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, [or any surgeon's knife] it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (NIV)

So there's God's X-ray mirror. It's also compared to what we might call today a surgeon's knife, it enters into the inner invisible part of man's being. It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, the innermost nature of man made up of soul and spirit. In fact, without this mirror of God's Word, man really doesn't know how his own inner nature is constructed and interrelated. Actually, without the revelation of the Bible, man doesn't fully understand the nature of soul and spirit. It's only the Bible that can divide between these things that are so close, so intimately interrelated. But the Bible penetrates into those innermost recesses of human personality and reveals what's really there.

We turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and we get the Bible's picture or revelation of total human personality. It's contained in a prayer of Paul for the believers he's writing to.

> "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (NASB)

Notice the words there "entirely and complete." Paul's talking about total human personality and he presents it in three elements. "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete." So that's the Bible's revelation of total human personality. It consists of three elements: the spirit and soul, the inner nature of man; the body, his outward visible nature.

For a full understanding of the three elements that make up human personality, we have to go back to the record of creation which is given in Genesis 1:26, the initial statement about God's purpose in creating man.

> "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" (NIV)

Notice again God's purpose in creating man was to make him a ruler. He was to rule the whole earth. That's the same truth

that's brought out by David in Psalm 8, which I read earlier.

Notice also, that God there speaks in the plural. "Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness." There we have the essential paradox in Scripture's revelation of God, that God is one and yet more than one. This paradox is actually contained in the opening verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created. . ." The Hebrew word for God we've already seen is Elohim which is plural in form and is sometimes translated plural angels. But the word for created in Hebrew is singular. So in the beginning, a plural God created in the singular. There you have the paradox of the unity and plurality in the very innermost nature of God Himself.

Now let's see what it means that God created man in His likeness. In other words, a triune God created a triune man. The Scripture unfolds as the Bible goes on, the three persons that make up the one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three and yet one, absolutely one. The key word that describes that is "triune": three in one. And here we have the exciting revelation that man, created in the likeness of God, is also a triune being. He's one person, but there are three elements: spirit, soul and body. And so we have a triune man, created in the likeness of a triune God to represent God and to be God's ruler in the earth.

Now the only accurate source of this understanding is the Bible. I've been a professor of philosophy in the past and have studied many, many human attempts to discern the real nature of man, but none of them provide a satisfying answer. Man is left baffled. He is unable to understand himself. But when we look by faith in the mirror of God's Word, then we understand our own inner being and we find the key to many of our problems we cannot solve in any other way.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking more fully about triune man created in the likeness of triune God.

Radio Program

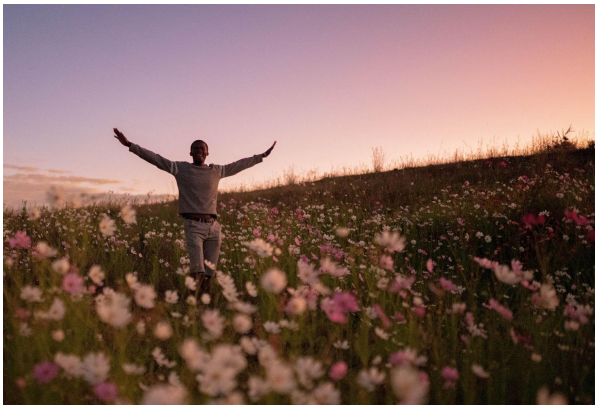
Transcript: TS-R069-101-ENG
Last Updated: 13 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

Bible Teaching Resources



Books

Illuminate and expand your understanding of the Bible with the Derek Prince collection of Christian books.



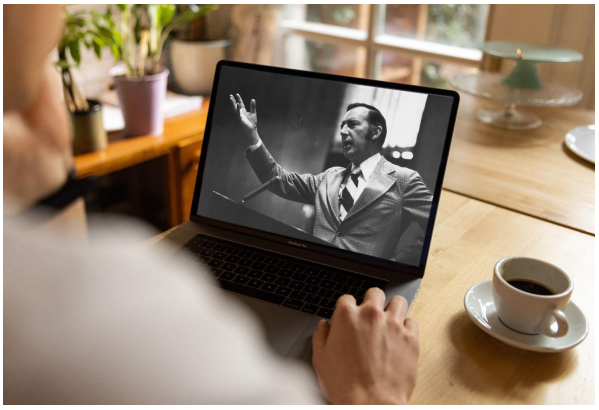
Daily Devotionals

Browse free biblically inspired daily devotionals by Derek Prince for practical teachings to uplift your Christian faith.



Legacy Radio

Listen to inspiring 10-minute messages and connect faith to life with the Derek Prince Legacy Radio podcast.



Sermons

Watch original and digitally remastered sermons by Derek Prince. Includes full message transcripts (free download).



Official App

Available free, download the official Derek Prince Ministries app and equip your faith, anywhere, anytime.



Proclamations

Declare life and experience the transformative power of God's Word with our bible-based Proclamations.

Copyright © Derek Prince Ministries