

Who or what is Man?

In Hebrews 2:6 the writer quotes Psalm 8:4 in a question that sages and fools alike have expressed for ages. What is man?

Hebr. 2:6 But one has testified somewhere, saying, what is man, that thou rememberest him? or the son of man, that thou art concerned about him?

• ***The greatest commandment***

To get some understanding of the nature of Man, we need to explore the terms that are used when we are told by Jesus what the greatest and foremost commandment is.

Matt. 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

Matt. 22:37 And He said to him, 'you shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

• ***Buying a horse***

A well to do business man was in western Pennsylvania, heart of the Amish and Mennonite districts, where he was dealing with an Amish farmer to buy this well trained, handsome animal.

Farmer tells buyer to be aware that around here we use special commands for our horses. To make him shift gait, you must say: "Praise The Lord"

As he was trailering the horse home, he came to a beautiful meadow and decided right then and there to try out this horse.

He said "Praise the Lord" and the horse took to a very steady walk. Then he repeated the command and the animal went into a very spirited trot and again the commanded and the creature cantered at a steady pace. Finally, on a long broad field he decided to find out how fast his steed could go. The horse went from catering into a furious gallop. The man was enjoying the power of this animal but suddenly realizes two things, one he forgot to ask the farmer what the command is to stop the animal – two – the field ended at a 200 ft cliff toward which he was headed. He tries all the ordinary ways he knew to get the horse to stop until at the very last moment he shouts "Amen" whereupon the horse came to a halt inches from the top of the cliff. Relieved he says "Praise the Lord"

• ***Clichés can get you into trouble***

How many of you can tell the precise difference between –the heart- the soul – the spirit and the mind? How many of you have used these terms in your conversations? Jesus tells us to **love**, which in the Greek is the word "Agapeo", which many have defined to mean divine, unconditional love. Many know that there are other Greek terms to which our English term "love" is applied, such as phileo – brotherly love – or eros – sensual love.

• ***Agapeo darkness and the best seats?***

John 3:19 "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

Luke 11:43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places.

These and other scripture use shows that this word does not mean divine love. The easier, although often superficial way of getting at the meaning of a word is to look it up in a lexicon. A better way is to look it up in a Greek or Hebrew concordance and read in context how the word is used throughout the holy writ. If you do this study for the word "agapeo" you will learn that it means "to be totally given over or committed to – without reservations. God is totally committed to you, to the extent that He died for you on the cross.

• ***Love with all your HEART***

We know that this doesn't refer to your blood pump, so what really is it? Let's see what God tells us about the human heart.

Jer. 17:9 *"The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"*

- ***Deceitful heart***

First it says the heart is deceitful, more than anything else. Furthermore it is desperately sick, -- the Hebrew word means "incurable". If you investigate this you will find that nowhere does scripture indicate that the heart can be fixed or patched up to be acceptable. It can only be replaced and not by ourselves but only by God.

- ***Who can understand the heart?***

There is no way to understand the human heart apart from the word of God. Only the word of God gives a true analysis of the human heart and it flies in the face of the notion that man is basically good.

- ***The soul***

Open your Bible to Hebrews chapter 4:12 as you try to think of the definition of what the soul is. The word translated soul is the Greek word *psuche* from which we get our words for psychiatry and psychology.

Heb 4:12 (NASB) *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

This verse tells us that there is a soul and somewhere deeper yet inside, there is something called the spirit and only the word of God can give us insight into either of these. This dooms the science of psychology to never really understanding the true human nature, because the word of God is the only tool available to do so, and this tool is rejected by most of science.

- ***The human spirit***

The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, which means air, breath, wind, in short the essence of life, especially as it relates to life given from God and in relationship to him. It is the spirit within man, especially breathed into him by God at creation that differentiates us from the animals in kind rather than just in degree. At some level, animals have been observed to do everything that man can do, usually at a much lower level or skill. The one thing that has never been observed in any animal at any level whatsoever, is the ability or desire to worship. This is unique to man, we are incurably religious.

John 4:23 (NASB) *"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."*

- ***The broken connection restored***

The fall of a man severed the connection of the soul and spirit from God and no human effort is able to restore this. It took the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to allow God to restore the connection. When a sinner through repentance comes to Jesus in humility, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within our human spirit and instantly restores the connection to God.

- ***The behavior paradox***

In the reading of the Bible we learned that at the moment we believed and trusted Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us and yet that does not immediately change our behavior. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit does not immediately transform us into a godly person. Godly behavior does not come to us naturally, but that it is a lifelong battle which the apostle Paul also acknowledges in Romans chapter 7.

- ***The element of time***

Everything we experience and/or learn takes time, more for some and less for others. Most people, when they hear the word "eternity" or "forever" automatically think of time, lots of time, an infinite amount of it.

This idea finds its expression in hymns we sing, such as “when we’ve been there 10,000 years..”, this number of years deemed a small fraction of eternity, an endless amount of time. We experience time as a progression of events. How many of you have at some point constructed a time line? There is a beginning event, then a series of other happenings in between and finally an end.

- ***Is God subject to time?***

All religious systems, and the differing ideas of their god they may have, place this god into a human context of time and space. Only the Bible tell us that the one true God who is – the “ I am” is outside of and independent of time and that time itself is created by Him. God is not limited to the fishbowl we call the Universe, but operates both within it and outside thereof.

Isa 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

- ***All creation summed up in first verse of the Bible***

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

First, there is “in the beginning – the beginning of what? The beginning of time. Then there is “the heaven” space itself stretched out (Jere. 10:12, Isa 45:12) and then there is “the earth” the creation of matter-energy.

Jeremiah 10:12 But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

Isaiah 45:12 It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.

- ***We must allow Him to change our behavior over time***

God uses many symbols to try to get us to understand that this process of changing our behavior takes time. It takes time for gold to be refined to ultimate purity, such that the molten surface mirrors the face of the refiner, after He has repeatedly skimmed off the slag rising out of the depths of the melt. It also takes lots of heat. It takes time for the potter to make a useful and beautiful vessel.

The Computer parallel

As an engineer "I am into computers" as they say and in studying them and working with them I have come to see some astounding parallels between their workings and that of people.

- ***Ubiquitous computing***

It is highly likely that most of you have at least one computer at home. Computers today are everywhere. If you had been asked this question ten or fifteen years ago, there would have been very few that could have replied affirmatively.

- ***Three basic requirements for a working computer***

Every computer consists of some 1) hardware, 2) software which determines the characteristics of a computer and finally there is a source of 3) power which energizes the hardware and allows it to perform the instructions encoded in the software.

- ***The hardware***

The hardware is the actual physical box you took home from the computer store if you have a computer. It contains all the tangible or visible components that allow it to function. In this parallel or analogy if you will, the human equivalent to this is your body.

- ***Examining the hardware***

If you were to examine this hardware to any depth of detail and became intimately familiar with even the minutest detail of its structure, circuits and chips, you could learn absolutely nothing about the actual function of the computer. In the same way, studying the human brain or any other part of the human body cannot tell us the least thing about the behavioral aspects and personality of the person that dwells in that body.

- ***The software***

The first thing to note about software is that it is not subject to the same laws as the hardware. If you take for example, a totally erased diskette or even a modern unformatted hard disk and carefully weigh it on the most accurate and sensitive scale you can devise, and then record software and data thereon, and then weigh it again, you will not be able to tell any difference. The information is weightless and can, unlike anything having mass, be transmitted at the speed of light. The information itself is eternal, not subject to gravity, decay or aging. Only the medium holding it can be and is subject to such loss or error.

- ***Mind and soul***

In the same way, what we call the mind, heart or soul are mass-less and not subject to decay nor loss. The real you, cannot be weighed on your bathroom scale (thankfully!). The real you is eternal, whether you like or realize that or not. The output you generate, such as your words and thoughts are also much more durable than you might like. All your words are transmitted and stored for future reference.

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

Not only is your direct audible output sent out for future reference, but the Word, the “LOGOS” the living word Himself records your thoughts and motives.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Psalmist prays for God to search through his thought-files in order to discover those deep hidden thought fragments that could be and unfortunately often are sinful.

Psalms 129:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts;

Psalms 129:24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

- ***The Body – your hardware***

The real you, being software runs in a hardware environment which is subject to the laws of physics of this present world. Like a computer, you have a CPU, which is your brain and some output devices, such the aforementioned mouth, supplemented by other body parts for emphasis of expression and action. Most of us also have the five senses for input. This hardware is the part that doctors can work on and which gets old and finally, despite all their efforts ceases to function.

- ***Software upgrade***

As it needful to upgrade the software in a computer over its lifetime, even so God also has a software upgrade program for us, which is a lifelong process that became possible on the day you allowed Him to begin this process when you became one of His sons or daughters.

- ***The kernel***

In a computer, there is a part of the software system called the kernel or operating system which controls all of the other processes and programs. Before you became a Christian, your software kernel had a root kit or virus and was subject to Satan’s control and death, but this kernel was replaced by a direct implant of God himself, -- the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Just as a computer without the proper kernel is incapable of receiving the software for doing the right work for the owner of that computer, so we too were incapable of receiving or discerning the mind of Christ in order to live a life pleasing to God, who is the owner and creator of us.

1 Corinthians 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

- ***A daily choice***

However, you have to yield your hardware, that is your body, to that process which happens on a continuous basis, every day of our life. The software needs to be loaded into and executed by the hardware to be useful to the owner of the computer. God wants to execute His programs in your present body, rather than your own, usually selfish desires.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

- ***A Matter of the will***

God honors the sovereignty of our will to truly choose on an ongoing basis whether we walk in our own desires or submit freely, out of love and thankfulness to His plan and agenda. If you are a Christian born anew by the Holy Spirit, then your spirit can subject your mind and your body to the will of God. Your salvation is a one time deal, but your sanctification, which is now possible, is a moment by moment choice of your will. Now when you choose to submit to God, it is actually possible for you to please Him because God's power is active in your life and on your behalf. Just think, you and I have the capability to either please or grieve the Creator of the universe.

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

- ***Not deterministic***

A computer is a deterministic machine that cannot ever do anything other than what it is programmed to do. However God has not constructed humans in this manner, but has given us the ability to choose and therefore truly love. Humans are not predictable by any mathematical formula or scientific methodology. That is a big reason why nobody as ever developed a sure fire formula or computer program to get rich in the stock market.

- ***The inner conflict***

This yielding entirely to the will of God is not something our old nature we still have from Adam will let us do without a fight, most often a very stiff fight. Your redeemed spirit, driven by the Holy Spirit within you wants to steer the train of your thoughts, your mind, and ultimately your action toward Godly goals on His track for your life. Your old nature, the flesh, desires to steer your train of thoughts toward your own goals and desires driven by fleshly feelings.

- ***Your will at the switch***

The free will God has given you sits at the switch in the track. In computer programming it corresponds to the "if then" statement. If you throw the switch according to the desires of the flesh, Paul writes in Romans 8, you will end up in the train wreck of death. The computer program executes an illegal instruction may

manifest itself in some computers in what has become known as “The Blue Screen Of Death” which tells the user the whole computer system has crashed.

Romans 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

• ***New Hardware promised***

As newer and better software is loaded into a computer, it eventually reaches the point where it is no longer able run the latest, most powerful software, even after all possible upgrades. Furthermore, as the components age, some of them begin to fail, sometimes catastrophically and the system will no longer boot. The only solution is to get a new, better, faster and more capable system. God also promises us new hardware, a new body, far more able, and unlike a new earthly computer, no longer subject to failure and decay.

1 Corinthians 15:42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;

1 Corinthians 15:43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

1 Corinthians 15:44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

1 Corinthians 15:45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being" ; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

• ***When will we get the new hardware?***

The Lord is very explicit about what point we will get the new hardware which will properly run the software He has spent a lifetime here on Earth developing in us. It is only then that this thing called the mind of Christ will be able to be fully realized in all its glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

1 Thessalonians 4:15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Conclusions

Is your hardware getting a little unreliable? Is your memory, like mine not always able to bring forth the proper data? Do you get tired sooner that you used to? That is what is decreed for the body we now dwell in. Right now, it is the software that God is working on. It is this new software, “The Mind of Christ” that is being developed in you right in this present life, that God will preserve and load into that new hardware, the eternal spirit body. The accounts of Jesus’ post resurrection appearances gives us a small hint of some of the capabilities of the new body we will receive some day.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

Take heart, Jesus can show up any time, and when He does, the old hardware, your body will be replaced by a new and perfect one:

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Right now though, for us Christians, the heart of this lesson is to understand that God has installed His Spirit within us to save us, but beyond that, for the first time to give us a truly free choice. Before we came to the Lord you and I did not have the desire nor the power to do His will, but now you and I **can** choose to allow Him to reprogram our thoughts. Arising from these new thoughts are our actions which will result in blessings for ourselves and those around us.