

5. Creation and Morality (1Q 2013—Origins)

Biblical material: Gen. 2:16, 17; Gen. 1:26–28; James 3:9; Acts 17:26; Prov. 14:31; Matt. 5:44–48; Rev. 20:11–13.

Quotes

- The immutability of God’s holy character is itself the absolute and the final court of morality. *Os Guinness*
- No man’s religion ever survives his morals. *Robert South*
- The acceptance of a scientific [i.e. evolutionary] view of man’s origin does, as Darwin as well as many of his critics feared, have real implications for moral beliefs. *Jonathan Kelley*
- Evil and good do objectively exist because they emanate from the fact that there is an unchanging, omniscient (all-knowing), and holy God. These are not subjective opinions invented and written down by man. Rather, ‘good’ expresses the innate characteristics of God Himself that He has built into every human being, and every human being is responsible to live up to those standards. And the absence of good defines evil. *Janine M. Ramsey*
- A friend of mine, over lunch one day, spoke of the sinking feeling he inevitably gets when each new idea lessening the worth of individuals is put forth. He spoke of the fact that, like abortion, no matter how inhuman or even inane an idea, he gets the sinking feeling because he knows that once it is being espoused by the elite, it is only a matter of time before it is accepted. The reason for this is, of course, that in the absence of a firm moral standard each “idea,” however implausible, gains credence. It is a case of the morally incompetent leading the morally blind. *Franky Schaeffer, (son of Dr. Francis Schaeffer) A Time for Anger.*

Questions

Why is the story of how human beings were formed important for our moral perspective? How would we view ourselves without the data in Genesis? How does God come across in the account of the creation of human beings? Why does God plant the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What of the garden setting and its implications?

Bible summary

Gen. 2:16, 17 reports God’s instruction to Adam that he was free to eat of all the trees in the garden with the exception of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This follows God making man in his/their own image (Gen. 1:26-28), with the implication here that this *imago dei* also included moral and ethical character. This is also referenced in James 3:9, and the original creation of humanity from Adam is also reported in Acts 17:26. Prov. 14:31 explains that when we do not act morally we dishonor our Maker. Rev. 20:11-13 reminds us of the end-time moral judgment for our actions. Jesus calls on us to be truly “children of your heavenly Father. For his sun shines on both the good and the bad; and he makes the rain fall on both those who do right and those who do wrong. For if you only love those who love you, what reward do you have? Don’t even the tax-collectors do that? If you only speak kindly to your family, what more are you doing than

anyone else? Even the heathen do that! Grow up and become completely trustworthy, just as your heavenly Father is trustworthy.” (Matt. 5:44–48 FBV).

Comment

The description of how God formed the first human being is essential. It reveals that God animates the physical and gives life, but says nothing about an inanimate soul. As other texts demonstrate, at death this breath of life simply returns to God who gave it. No conscious soul or spiritual entity lives on. When you think of how much confusion there is over such ideas, and how the vast majority see things differently, you realize how a correct understanding is so important, especially as we look at how things began.

Add to that a clear and careful reading of the creation of Eve helps avoid misconceptions in gender issues and the role of wives etc. The idea that Eve was a “helpmeet” (old English for fitting or appropriate help) for Adam ensures that the first couple is seen as mutually supportive and complementary.

God’s placing of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden seems either provocative or unnecessary to some. But from a different perspective it can be understood as well demonstrating the openness of God and his respect for his created beings. By providing this one place where the Accuser could speak with Adam and Eve, he safeguarded Satan’s freedom of speech, while by having just one location he protected Adam and Eve’s privacy and right to live in peace, undisturbed by a persistent Enemy. Similarly he upheld Adam and Eve’s right to know and be exposed to differing viewpoints, if they so chose. This respect for religious liberty and freedom of conscience speaks so well of a God who considers freedom essential to his universe.

Why was it not good for man to be alone, when God had already pronounced all of creation very good? Does the idea of “incompleteness” mean “imperfection”? The complementarity of Eve demonstrates the dynamic nature of God’s universe, and that learning, experience, even truth, is developmental. The new dimension of Eve for Adam leads to exhilaration and delight, and shows that while he was “perfect” before, he is “more perfect” now! In the same way we too develop and grow, and look forward to that process continuing throughout eternity. It will be our privilege to examine all of God’s acts from eternity past to eternity future. How good God looks in such an understanding of his universe!

Where do “moral ideas” come from? It’s hard to understand right and wrong, good and bad, if we are merely the chance products of evolution. How do you square self-sacrificing love with the survival of the fittest?

Ellen White Comments

In the beginning, God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” But sin has almost obliterated the moral image of God in man. Jesus came down to our world that He might give man a living example, that he might know how to live and how to keep the way of the Lord. He was the image of the Father. His beautiful and spotless character is before man as an example for him to imitate. We must study the copy and follow Jesus Christ, then we shall bring His loveliness and beauty into our character. In doing this we are standing before God through faith, winning back by conflict with the powers of darkness the power of self-control, the love of God that Adam lost. {1SAT 33-4}

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