



Humanity: Dignity, Depravity, & Destiny

Week 6 – 10/12/2025

What will happen in the future for humanity?

We ended last week by reviewing the events, (laid out by Hamilton)

1. Jesus, “defeats his enemies (Rev. 19:11-21),
2. Sets up his kingdom (20:1-6),
3. Puts down a final rebellion (20:7),
4. Enacts the final judgment (20:11-15),
 - o Some to everlasting condemnation in hell, and,
 - o Some to everlasting blessedness in the new heaven and earth.
5. And finally, Jesus rules with God in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22).

People are assigned to their “eternal states” - condemnation or Salvation.

The final judgment is the final, future, universal, public verdict rendered by Christ of all humans and angelic beings (Rev 20:11-15).

- Jesus will render this judgment and will be seen as a true and just judge (1 Pet 1:17; Rev 16:7).
“God judges impartially” ... Jesus’ judgments are “true and just.”
- o Believers acquitted on basis of Christ’s work, his justification (Rom 3:21-4:25) and given degrees of reward (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:12-15).
- o Unbelievers are punished, actually stand condemned already (Jn 3:17-19, 36), some degrees of punishment (Luke 20:47; Matt 11:22,24).

I. Eternal Punishment

- Sentence of the unrighteous to eternal conscious punishment in hell.

2 Thessalonians 1:9 – eternal

“They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”

Revelation 20:14–15

“Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

These are hard realities to get our heads around, eternal condemnation.

- On a gut level it is hard to square with our sense of fairness, equality, God’s love for people and nations.
- So it seems some of God’s reasons and ways here are hard to swallow – we wish we could understand better. But one day we will.

We do know this...

In this salvation through judgment/condemnation,

We have two realities,

- The sobering reality of some being condemned
- And the glorious reality of others being saved

These realities work together to manifest an array of God’s perfections (Rom 9:22-23).

- Mercy and justice, grace and holiness.
- Kindness and righteousness.
- Wrath, power, and glory.
- God shows his plan for all things.
- God shows he is a just Judge and a merciful Savior.
- God manifests his full range of perfections in all this, that his Name might be glorified.

Beeke and Smalley explain, speaking of this human destiny,

“Whether God glorifies himself by saving us from our sins or by damning us for our sins, mankind will glorify God in the end. It is our escapable destiny.”¹

This reality is reflected in Scripture, revealing that every person in heaven and on earth will fear God, bring glory to his name, and confess Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father (Rev 15:4; Phil 2:9-11).

¹ Beeke and Smalley, *Reformed Systematic Theology, Volume 2*, 204.

Revelation 15:4,

“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Philippians 2:9–11

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

II. Eternal Life

- The righteous in Christ receive eternal life in the new heavens and new earth.

The New Heavens and the New Earth

Isaiah 65:17

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

Revelation 21:1–4

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

- Shows God's desire to be with people, live with them on peace/harmony.
- God will wipe away tears! No death, crying, pain...etc.
- Scan through Rev 21-22 and notice all the glorious elements of the final state of believers.
 - Many themes are started in Gen 1-2, repeated throughout the Bible, and end here with consummation in and through Christ.

According to Schreiner and Morgan, in the new heaven and earth

“humans are blessed beyond description, finally living to the fullest the realities of being created in his image.”²

² Morgan and Schreiner, *Salvation* (2024), p. 14.

- Eternal blessedness and full human capacities and realities as humans created in God's image.

And so for now, believers share the gospel faithfully.

- And seek to grow in the image of Jesus
- while living within the reality of sin in a fallen world.

Romans 8:18–25

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

- So we live now in this hope, hope of a new heavens and earth. Hope of the glorious telos that God has planned for us!
- We serve in hope, we share the gospel in hope, we grow into the image of Christ in hope, we suffer in hope,
- Knowing that someday we will live in heaven enjoying the fruition of our *telos*, imaging God perfectly and glorifying him forever!

How does Depravity relate to Humans as the Image of God?

What are some words to describe humans as fallen, yet still the created in image of God?

Corrupted, polluted, dimmed, distorted? (doesn't reflect as intended),
Damaged? (ability to relate perfectly), dented, marred,

How about some that may be misleading or inappropriate to describe this?

Destroyed, ruined, devastated,
(believers) we're sinners? Is this accurate to say?
lost, erased, ceased, taken away, negated.

Image of God – has been inspirational yet also twisted for evil.

John Kilner in his chapter of the book, *Created in the Image of God*, describes how views on the *imago Dei* throughout history have inspired amazing stories of liberation, yet at the same time it has been twisted into a justification for great evil.³

- An eye opening and fascinating study to me, applications for our day.

Twisted into justification for great evil.

- If we define image as only a capacity scale we have many problems.
- Someone lower on the scale of ability to reason or righteousness, “scale” they are deemed some less worthy of respect, even sub-human.
 - Some humans are better than others, more superior.
- People with mental, physical limitations and the Nazis.
 - Stronger members of society as stronger images, those weaker needed to be cleansed. Defined a certain ethnic group as superior image.
- Eugenics without image of God, with an extreme anti-God secular worldview, leads to all kinds of compromises. DNA manipulation of those deemed weaker or compromised, etc. i.e. Nazis, extreme feminism, some IVF practices.
- Mistreatment of Native Americans in the name of lesser image bearers.
- Mistreatment of African Americans – they were seen by some as sub-human, not fully reflecting the image. Thus could be enslaved.

Yet the accurate concept of image of God has inspired many stories of liberation, and great good.

- This doctrine helped inspire giving to the poor, freeing people from Roman oppression, rescued babies disposed of in Roman times.
- Inspired people to care for those who are socially estranged, such as HIV patients.
- Inspired people to help needy groups, such as Native Americans.
- Correct understanding of the image of God has inspired freeing of slaves in America... Frederic Douglass spoke of image of God.
- Civil Rights movement with Martin Luther King Jr. – equality and dignity of every human being.
 - He would often appeal to Scripture and the doctrine of the image of God in his sermons and speeches

So, this same doctrine has been used for great good and for great harm.

³ Dockery and McAfee, *Created in the Image of God*, (2023). Kilner’s chapter, “The Image of God and Human Dignity,” pages 19-43.

- Biblical accuracy on the *imago Dei* is essential, that's why we've spent so much time getting it right.

My conclusions about all this:

- Though humans are still the image of God as their essence, Adam and Eve's sin distorted human ability to purely reflect God's image in their relationship to God and to the world.
- Hoekema explains, "Sin has not changed our essence but has changed the direction in which we are moving."⁴

The image itself is not damaged... or erased the standard of what humans are created to be.

"What has been damaged is the ability of humans to live out God's intention in making them in his image.... Our capacity for relationship with God as damaged by the fall."⁵

- The image of God in humans is not destroyed or ruined or devastated...
- A certain group of people does not have more of the image of God.
- But, the image of God in humans isn't fully reflecting the likeness of Jesus.
- It has been corrupted or polluted – we can be new creations in Christ! We grow into the image of Jesus, but we are not better than anyone!

Final Class Review

Week 1 - Dignity

Human nature & personal identity consists of five interconnected features: 1) Shaped by God, 2) Unified Somatic Souls, 3) Sexed, 4) Storied, and 5) Social.

Week 2 - Dignity

Human beings are the crown of God's creative handiwork! Humans are created, contingent, and commanded beings – commands/duties are to be corulers, multipliers, and caretakers.

Made in the image of God. Humans are ontologically (essence/core) the image of God, created to relate with God and to reflect who he is in relationships and in creation. We relate to God in a love relationship that leads to worship. We reflect

⁴ Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 169.

⁵ Hammett and McCoy, *Humanity* (2023), 122.

who God is in our human relationships through multiplication. We reflect who God is in our relationship with creation through stewardship.

Week 3 – Depravity

Sin negatively affected our relationship with God, other people, and creation. The consequences of sin are spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. Humans are sinners by choice and by nature. Humans are in a state of sinfulness with inherited guilt and inherited corruption. This corruption includes pervasive depravity and spiritual inability.

Week 4 - Depravity

We used Romans 3 as an illustration of human depravity. Court room imagery.

- The **charge** has been made; all are under sin. (9)
- The **case** has been argued; all have turned aside. (10-18)
 - Corruption of the entire **perspective** (11, 18) worldview.
 - Corruption of the entire **population** (10-12). All, no one, etc.
 - Corruption of the entire **person** (13-17) - mind, throat, tongue, lips, feet, eyes... every part of us has been affected by sin.
 - That's total/pervasive depravity, pervasive depravity.
- And the **conviction** has been announced; all are accountable and guilty. (19-20)
 - No one **speaks** a defense. (19a)
 - No one **escapes** judgment. (19b)
 - And no one **earns** righteousness. (20)

Well, we have this bad news, but we know that this is not the end of the legal proceedings. Is it?

- Christ has been sacrificed on the cross.
- The conviction that we deserve fell on him, sin's penalty is death.
 - Christ took the punishment for all who believe.
- This is what Romans 3:25 says, "God put Christ forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." What good news!
 - Jesus is the sacrifice of atonement, he was punished so that our sins could be forgiven and we could be made clean, by the blood.
- Now a great exchange has taken place before the court.

Human Destiny – Last Week

My summary statement: For believers, even as they struggle with sin, humans move toward the completion of their *telos* (purpose & future), to image God and glorify him forever.

Application Time!

Let's apply what we have learned about human dignity, depravity, and destiny and the image of God to a few issues of our day.

How does our view on human dignity, depravity, and destiny and the image of God impact how we approach the following issues?

1. Engaging in political debate online or with others you fundamentally disagree with.
2. Relating with transgender ideology in our culture.
3. How you lead your family or lead in the church.
4. The rise of Artificial Intelligence and how we react to it and use it.
5. The abortion debate and euthanasia, beginning of life and end of life issues.
6. Helping the poor and marginalized in society.
7. Relating with people at work and how you view your job.

"We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed."

(Article 3, EFCA Statement of Faith)