

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by beginning to examine biblical anthropology; that is, the study of man.

But, before we get started, we have a special free offer as an Easter gift for our listeners. For the rest of the month of April, 2019, if you send an email to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org and request a copy of our Easter book, we will send you a free copy of *Rediscovering the True Meaning of Easter*, by the Rev. P.G. Mathew. We are confident that you will find that book very edifying. Be sure to include your full mailing address in your email.

And now, Dr. Spencer, how would you like to begin the study of anthropology?

Dr. Spencer: Let's begin our study of man by asking a very basic question, "Where did man come from?" It might surprise people if they haven't thought about this question, but there are only two possible answers. The first logical possibility is that man is the result of natural processes. This is, of course, the answer an atheist would have to give.

Marc Roby: It is certainly the answer that most of the elite in our culture would give.

Dr. Spencer: And I'm also quite confident that it is the answer you would get from almost every single professor of biology or anthropology on every college campus in this country. It is the answer with which all of the school children in public schools are being indoctrinated as well. But let's think about that answer for a moment. It requires a number of things to have happened, several of which are so unlikely that the answer is, in my opinion, not reasonable.

Marc Roby: What things are you referring to?

Dr. Spencer: Let me give a short list of those things that would have to have happened, and then we will briefly discuss just a few of them.

First, a natural explanation for the existence of human beings obviously requires that the universe itself exist. Then it requires that the right conditions to make life possible exist somewhere in that universe. And then it requires that non-living chemicals come together and form a living organism; in fact, you need many living organisms and they must be reproducing and competing with one another for survival. Then you need some mechanism for these organisms to change from generation to generation and these changes must be inheritable. If all of these things happen, then the theory of natural selection says that the organisms that are best adapted to the environment will reproduce and survive in greater numbers.

Marc Roby: That's a reasonable brief outline of what is taught in our schools.

Dr. Spencer: But it's also a very cursory outline of the process of course, and I'm sure you could find fault with the way I've expressed it, but I think it will be adequate for our present purposes as soon as I add one more element. As living beings continue to evolve, they would have to reach a point where they become self-conscious and able to think abstractly about the world they live and to ask the question, "How did I get here?"

Marc Roby: Yes, good point since we are asking that question.

Dr. Spencer: Now I don't want to take the time to investigate this whole chain of events today, for example, a great deal has been written about the fact that our universe is a very special one. There are many, many characteristics of this universe that have to be exactly the way they are or intelligent life would not be possible. I'm going to leave that up to others to discuss. But we've looked at a couple of the other steps before, so let me quickly summarize some of our previous comments and conclusions. Any of listeners who are interested can go to our archive and listen to Session 1 for the details.

In that session I gave four reasons why I think it is intellectually untenable to be an atheist. The first is that you need a Creator to explain the origin of our universe. It is fairly clear from what we now know that this universe is not eternal. It had a beginning, and it will have an end. You can postulate the existence of a multiverse and believe that there are an infinite number of universes out there, but there is no way to confirm or deny such a postulate and I don't think it really solves the problem anyway.

Marc Roby: Well, why do you say that?

Dr. Spencer: It doesn't solve the problem because it seems unlikely based on the characteristics of our universe that such a multiverse would itself be eternal, and therefore you would then have to ask how that multiverse came into existence. If our universe is part of a multiverse you would expect it to share some physical characteristics of that multiverse, so for example, you would expect the physical laws that we observe in our universe to bear some similarity to the physical laws in operation in the multiverse. But the second law of thermodynamics, which is a fundamental law in our universe, is incompatible with eternal existence.

Marc Roby: Can you explain that?

Dr. Spencer: Yes, a detailed explanation would take more time than I want to spend on this, but a very simple crude explanation is that the universe will eventually run out of useable energy, kind of like a wind-up clock or toy running down.

Marc Roby: Yes, or like me after a few hours with my grandchildren.

Dr. Spencer: Sort of, although I hope you don't reach the point of heat death. In any event, if this universe is not eternal, then you need to explain its origin, and I think that requires God.

My second reason for thinking it intellectually untenable to be an atheist is that it is essentially impossible for life to be created by purely natural processes. We discussed this in Session 1. And in that session I noted that biologists estimate that the simplest living cell would require around 250 functional proteins, which are made by sequences of amino acids. I showed that the probability of generating 250 functional proteins by the random combinations of amino acids is less than 1 chance in $10^{41,000}$, which is inconceivably small; that's a one followed by 41,000 zeros. It is less likely than winning the Powerball lottery 4,842 times in a row buying just one ticket each time.

Marc Roby: I remember that session, and it hurts my head to even remember trying to grasp numbers that large.

Dr. Spencer: I think it's fundamentally impossible to get a good grasp of a number as large as $10^{41,000}$, or of a probability as small as 1 chance in $10^{41,000}$. The probability is so insanely small that having trillions more universes, with trillions more planets and making them all trillions of times older than our universe doesn't change the probability significantly. Interested listeners can go back to Session 1 and, if they are really interested, there is even a pdf file that shows you how to get those numbers.

But let's move on to my third reason it is intellectually untenable to be an atheist, which is that even if I give you a bunch of single-celled living organisms to get started, the amount of information required to produce a human being is so huge that you have the same kind of probabilistic problem all over again.

Marc Roby: And given the numbers you showed, believing in an old earth doesn't really help.

Dr. Spencer: No, it really makes no difference to the probabilities whether the earth is 10,000 years old or 4.5 billion years old. 4.5 billion years sounds outrageously long to us, but is literally insignificant in comparison with what would be required to make the probabilities of even a single cell look reasonable, let alone a human being.

Finally, my fourth reason for thinking it is intellectually untenable to be atheist is the impossibility of explaining volitional creatures like us in a universe guided by purely natural laws. All physical laws are either purely deterministic, which are laws that govern, for example, the movements of billiard balls, or they are random. But no combination of randomness with deterministic laws can explain volition.

Marc Roby: Alright, you've summarized the conclusions that we came to in Session 1. It seems very unlikely, I would have to say impossible, that there is a valid naturalistic explanation for the existence of human beings.

Dr. Spencer: But before we move on, I would also like to note that if the atheistic worldview were correct, one necessary consequence would be that human life would have no inherent value or purpose. That is why, for example, Albert Camus' famously proclaimed that "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide"¹, it's also why Bertrand Russell claimed that "only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built"², or it's the same reason Shakespeare wrote his famous line, "To be, or not to be, that is the question"³. Such statements are part and parcel of life in this unbelieving world. There are many different ways that men have expressed the hopelessness of life apart from God, but such hopelessness inevitably comes when unbelievers honestly confront questions of ultimate importance. Questions like, "What is the purpose of life?" or "What happens when I die?"

¹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, translated by Justin O'Brien. Copyright 1955 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., the first line

² Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship", in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, Simon and Schuster, 1961, pg 67

³ From Shakespeare's play Hamlet, the opening line of Act III, Scene I

Marc Roby: Of course, the fact that life is hopeless apart from God says nothing about the existence of God. It is logically possible that our lives are, in fact, completely meaningless.

Dr. Spencer: I agree that is a logical possibility. But I also think it goes against what every human being instinctively knows to be true. And I don't think we can entirely dismiss that instinctive knowledge, it is given to us by God. Nevertheless, I don't offer that point by way of proof at all, only to make clear what the choices before us are.

Marc Roby: Alright. And the only other possibility, of course, is that we are created, right?

Dr. Spencer: That is exactly right. There is no other logical possibility. And if one of our listeners thinks there is another logical possibility, I'd love to hear it. So please send me an email at info@whatdoesthewordsay.org.

Marc Roby: And, if we are created, then the obvious question, is by whom?

Dr. Spencer: That is the obvious question. And many religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, don't really have a single believable creation account. But Jews, Muslims and Christians all at least claim to believe in the account given in Genesis.

We read in Genesis 1:26-28, "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.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"⁴

Marc Roby: That account is fascinating, and it is important to note that it presupposes the existence of the true and living God who reveals himself in the Bible and it tells us that he made human beings in his image.

Dr. Spencer: It also contains a hint of the Trinity since God uses plural pronouns. He says "Let *us* make man in *our* image".

Marc Roby: And he gives to man what is often called the creation mandate, to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Dr. Spencer: That's very important. In the Christian view of creation, man has a purpose.

But we must take note of the fact that the mandate was given to Adam and Eve prior to the fall, so it assumed a relationship that ceased to be true when sin entered this world. Namely, it

⁴ All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® (1984 version). Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com The "NIV" and "New International Version" are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™.

assumed that Adam and Eve were in perfect fellowship with God and, as his creatures, everything they did was done in obedience to him and for his glory. In addition, we can reasonably assume that God told them far more than is recorded for us in the book of Genesis.

Marc Roby: And we are blessed because God has revealed the purpose of life to us in the Bible. We have noted a number of times that God's overall purpose in creation is the manifestation of his own glory. And with regard to mankind, the clearest verse is probably 1 Corinthians 10:31, which says, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Dr. Spencer: And we aren't left wondering how we are to glorify God either. In John 17:4 Jesus is praying to the Father and says, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do." Therefore, we glorify God in the same way; by doing the work he has given us to do.

Marc Roby: And Ephesians 2:10 tells us that he has prepared specific work for each one of us. It says that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Dr. Spencer: And we must note further that it says we are created in Christ Jesus. If a man has not repented of his sins and surrendered to Jesus Christ as Lord, he is in open rebellion against his Creator and he cannot glorify him through obedience. But, if he never repents, his eternal punishment in hell will be for the praise of God's justice. So, in the end, everyone will glorify God.

Marc Roby: Yes, we are told in Philippians 2 that everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. In Verses 6 through 11 in that chapter we read the following about Jesus, "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Dr. Spencer: That is a marvelous passage. And we can summarize all that we've covered so far by saying that the purpose of life for men and women is, first, to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and then to glorify God by living an obedient life.

Marc Roby: And if we do that, we are promised that we will live with him for all eternity.

Dr. Spencer: Which is a completely incomprehensible blessing. But returning to our topic of anthropology, we have presented the case that there are only two options; either we are the result of mindless natural processes, or we were created by God. If we are the result of mindless natural processes, then it necessarily follows that our lives have no real eternal significance and no purpose. And, I can't help but add, that if that were true, our minds would simply be a faculty that evolved and made us better able to survive. There would be no good reason for believing that our minds are well adapted to discerning the truth about this world except insofar as it helps us survive.

Marc Roby: But, on the other hand, as creatures made by eternal God, our minds were created by him for the purpose of understanding truth, having fellowship with him, and worshiping him.

Dr. Spencer: And our lives are significant and have a purpose. As we begin to study biblical anthropology, we must remember this critical fact; we are creatures. God made us and he has the authority to tell us what to believe, what to do, what not to do and so on. He is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe.

Marc Roby: We've talked about the importance of the Creator/creature distinction a number of times.

Dr. Spencer: And we've mentioned so often because it is so important. It is very easy for us to slip into the mode of practicing "religion" only for our benefit. That leads to anthropocentric worship, meaning worship that is focused on man. The "gospel" becomes nothing but a program for self-improvement and social change.

But real religion, worship that God accepts, is focused on him. The Bible begins by saying "In the beginning God ...", not "In the beginning man ...". That is why we covered theology proper before getting to anthropology. We must know God in order to know ourselves correctly.

Marc Roby: I like what Calvin wrote. The very first line of his book, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, says, "Our wisdom, in so far as it ought to be deemed true and solid Wisdom, consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."⁵

Dr. Spencer: That is a great opening line. Any attempt to understand man without reference to God is doomed to failure. And we see the terrible results of such failure all around us in our prisons, in poverty, violence, injustice, wars and so on.

Satan does not want people to carefully consider biblical anthropology. He wants us to be fully absorbed in the mundane details of day-to-day living. What is often called the tyranny of the immediate. But Socrates said that "The unexamined life is not worth living."⁶ And, even though he was a pagan philosopher, he was right about that.

Marc Roby: I think that's a great place to end for today. I look forward to continuing with biblical anthropology next time. And I'd like to remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org, and we'll do our best to respond.

⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Translated by Henry Beveridge, Hendrickson Publishers, 2008, pg. 4

⁶ Plato, *Apology*, in *The Great Books of the Western World*, Vol. 7 – Plato, Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1952, pg.210