



Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 4 – THE DOCTRINE OF MAN
LESSON 82 – SOCIETY AND CULTURE

BIBLICAL DOCTRINE – JOHN MACARTHUR, PGS. 399-451
SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY – WAYNE GRUDEM, PGS. 439-528

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Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ There are at present approximately 196 nations on the earth, consisting of thousands of ethnic groups.
- ▶ Just as God is both unity (one God) and plurality (three persons), God's image bearers evidence unity and diversity.
- ▶ Humanity is unified since all humans are descends of Adam, yet many ethnic groups and nations exist.
- ▶ Acts 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,
- ▶ From one man to every nation.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ God created Adam and Eve with the genetic ability to produce a multiplicity of “races”, including variations in physical features and the lightness or darkness of skin tones.
- ▶ The command to multiply and fill the earth, as it was carried out, demonstrates differing people groups, stemming back to Noah’s three sons (Genesis 10-11).
- ▶ Ham, Shem, and Japheth became the family heads of various and distinct people groups in the world.
- ▶ Genesis 9:19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ The Tower of Babel event recorded in Genesis 11 reveals the desire of the people to stay in one place instead of obeying God's command to fill the whole earth.
- ▶ Genesis 11:4 And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."
- ▶ God thwarted their plans by confusing their languages forcing people to scatter according to the ability to understand one another (language groups).
- ▶ Rather than a judgment, the dispersal of people by groups was God fulfilling His plans for the people of the world.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ God called Abram from the land of Ur of the Chaldees, by him forming a new nation of Hebrews, and through him blessing all the people groups of the world.
- ▶ Genesis 12:1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
- ▶ Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ As the Old Testament focuses mainly on Israel, we do see that even in the Exodus there were multitudes of other peoples mixed in with the Jews (Exodus 12:38).
- ▶ Moses himself married a Cushite woman, who was from a place in Africa near Ethiopia (Numbers 12:1).
- ▶ The Exodus account sets the expectation for God's people when it comes to being accepting of foreigners.
- ▶ Leviticus 19:34 The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ Throughout the Old Testament we see God's plan for including people from every tribe, tongue, and nation with His people. All barriers between the Jews and Gentiles have been removed in Christ.
- ▶ Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ As we follow the Great Commission and make disciples of all peoples, we see unfolding before us the truth that the only two people groups who matter are those who know Christ and those who do not.
- ▶ Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...
- ▶ Whatever ethnic or cultural distinctions may exist in the world between peoples, any two people anywhere in the world who know Jesus are part of the same holy nation, the Kingdom of God, where ethnicity is simply irrelevant.
- ▶ Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.
- ▶ Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ 1. All people of every ethnicity are made in the image of God.
- ▶ 2. No people group is superior or inferior to any other.
- ▶ 3. Racism, prejudice, and bigotry is a heinous sin in that it denies full personhood to certain people groups, thus violating the dignity of all of God's image bearers.
- ▶ 4. Israel was chosen to be the nation through which God would restore fallen humanity, but not because they were better than any others (Deut. 7:6-10).
- ▶ 5. Salvation is provided to all through the ultimate Israelite, Jesus the Messiah and King of the Jews.

Ethnicity and Nations

- ▶ 6. The death of Christ and the establishment of the New Covenant bring unity to all who identify with Jesus. True racial unity and harmony are found only in Jesus, and not in education, social reform, legislation, or any other man-centered attempts.
- ▶ 7. The church should evidence racial harmony and diversity and serve as an example of God's intentions to make one new people out of many peoples.
- ▶ 8. In the eternal state, nations will exist in harmony.

Human Government

- ▶ God is a God of order, and human government is an institution created by Him to provide for social order in the world.
- ▶ Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Human Government

- ▶ 1 Peter 2:13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.
- ▶ From these passages we see that God has appointed human government as His servant and part of His common grace to mankind.
- ▶ Since God appointed government and all legitimate authority ultimately comes from His authority, resisting government is resisting God.
- ▶ Government exists to punish the evil doer, curbing wickedness.
- ▶ Government has the right to carry out capital punishment (Rom. 13:4).

Human Government

- ▶ In the event that any human authority or government demands that we disobey God, since God is the ultimate authority, in obedience to Him we must disobey that human authority – with humility and willingness to suffer the consequences (Acts 5:27-32).
- ▶ We have examples of believers actively involved as part of some of the governments of the most wicked and corrupt governments in the history of the world, yet God's people maintained some distinction – Daniel in Babylon, Joseph in Egypt, and Christians in Caesar's palace (Phil. 4:22).
- ▶ Righteousness within governmental leaders is a Scriptural goal for any nation (Prov. 14:34), however we must be careful to avoid the false belief that in any society the outward conformity to Biblical standards is sufficient without a changed (regenerated) heart.

Human Culture

- ▶ Culture is an expression of man exercising dominion over creation.
- ▶ Culture includes any area where man interacts with his environment, including work, art, music, education, etc.
- ▶ Since the fall the dominant characteristic of human culture is wickedness (Genesis 6:5).
- ▶ In this present era, Satan is the ruler of this evil world and its systems (Eph. 2:2). He continues to steal, kill, and destroy. However, even then, God continues to be the sovereign ruler over all of creation including Satan and fallen peoples.
- ▶ The new earth will be full of redeemed and restored culture (Isaiah 11; 35; 65-66).

Biblical Theology of Man

- ▶ The doctrine of man can be summarized as follows: at the culmination of the literal six-day creation, God created man in two genders, male and female. Starting from the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, mankind was mandated both to multiply and fill the earth and to rule and subdue the creation on God's behalf. These are mankind's primary responsibilities.
- ▶ Man was created in the image of God as body and soul/spirit, and has been called to love God and obey Him.
- ▶ Man disobeyed God and failed the kingdom command to rule and subdue creation and death entered creation as a result.

Biblical Theology of Man

- ▶ When Jesus fulfills man's destiny on the earth and finally and fully succeeds where Adam failed, His kingdom will transfer to the Father's Kingdom in the eternal state (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Rev. 20-21).
- ▶ When this happens, Satan will have been defeated, unbelievers will have been judged, and the curse will be forever removed from all of creation.
- ▶ The saints of God will then enjoy eternally a perfect relationship with God, other people, and the new creation.
- ▶ Christ will subdue and reign over all, forever and ever (Rev. 22:5).
- ▶ Next week: introduction to worldviews.