

§ 10. Doctrine of Man

Lecture 8

Systematizing the Biblical Data Concerning the Nature of Man

We have surveyed briefly the biblical data concerning the nature of man. Now let's talk about different attempts to systematize these biblical data.

Some people take human beings to be trichotomous in nature, that is to say, human beings have three parts that go to make them up: the body, the soul, and the spirit. This is the view of human beings that prevailed among the early Greek-speaking church fathers and represents the heritage of Platonism. On Platonic doctrine, the soul is that which animates the body. It makes the body alive. So animals, being animate, have souls as well as human beings. But the spirit is a higher faculty that is distinct from the soul. The spirit would be what seems to make us self-conscious, rational persons, not just alive. It seems to be roughly equivalent to the mind.

By contrast, the dichotomous view holds to dualism of the body and the soul (or spirit). It doesn't really matter which word you use to refer to the immaterial part of man, the point is that we're made up of two parts: the material part and the immaterial part. This is the view that prevailed among the Latin-speaking Western church fathers.

Today many theologians eschew any sort of differentiation between material and immaterial constituents in man. They would espouse a unitary view of human nature, what we might call anthropological monism. That is to say, human beings are made up just of a single constituent which is physical in nature. We just are physical bodies. You are your body. There is no immaterial constituent to your being. These thinkers will often ridicule those who believe in a mind distinct from the body as believing in a “ghost in the machine” (to quote the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle¹). Our bodies are like a machine supposedly inhabited by this ghost (that is to say, the soul) which animates it and moves it about. Ryle rejected any such dualistic view of the mind and body as absurd.

Similarly in the early 20th century, in theology many theologians tried to play off the doctrine of the resurrection of the body against dualistic views of human nature. It became a sort of watchword among these theologians that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul but rather the resurrection of the body. To believe in the immortality of the soul is supposedly to reject the Jewish view of immortality which is the resurrection of the physical body and to subscribe instead to a Greek view of immortality according to which the body being material is something evil and is sloughed off in death. In death the soul is freed from the prison house of the body that drags it down, and it will fly away to heavenly realms. These theologians said that this Greek

¹ “Such in outline is the official theory [dualism]. I shall often speak of it, with deliberate abusiveness, as ‘the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine.’ I hope to prove that it is entirely false, and false not in detail but in principle.” Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 5.

view of the soul and the body which depreciates the body in favor of the soul is fundamentally un-Jewish and therefore unacceptable. The Jewish view of immortality is the resurrection of the physical body and therefore we should reject dualistic views in favor of some sort of anthropological monism. We just are our bodies, and these will be raised from the dead to new life.

So we've got three alternatives to evaluate: the trichotomous, the dichotomous, and unitary views of human beings. Which of these represents the most biblically faithful view? I would argue that some form of dualism-interactionism best represents the biblical view. By that I mean that a human being is made up of two components: a body and a soul (or spirit) and that these interact with each other in order for that human being to function as a human person in this life. You'll recall from our previous discussion that in the Old Testament we don't have clear terminological distinctions drawn between the soul and the body. Nevertheless, the Hebrew idea of a shade in *Sheol* seems to be the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek idea of a disembodied soul. The people who go down to *Sheol* are regarded as wraiths – having a kind of shadowy existence in the nether realms of the dead. It's not that they are extinguished at death. Rather, they still seem to exist as what the Greeks would call a disembodied soul – not really fully human but nevertheless still existing.

During the intertestamental period dualism became the standard Jewish belief. In order to illustrate Jewish beliefs during the intertestamental period, permit me to cite a few passages from the very interesting Jewish pseudepigrapha which are pseudonymous works written in Jewish culture during this intertestamental period. For example, in the book of 2 Baruch 30:1-5, the end of the world is described as follows:

[blockquote]And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled and He returns with glory, that then all who sleep in hope of Him will rise. And it will happen at that time that those treasuries will be opened in which the number of the souls of the righteous were kept, and they will go out and the multitudes of the souls will appear together, in One assemblage, of one mind. And the first ones will enjoy themselves and the last ones will not be sad. For they know that the time has come of which it is said that it is the end of times. But the souls of the wicked will the more waste away when they shall see all these things. For they know that their torment has come and that their perditions have arrived.[/blockquote]

So in 2 Baruch the author envisions the souls of the righteous dead as kept by God in treasuries – some sort of treasure box. When the day of the resurrection comes, the bodies of the deceased will be raised. Then the souls of the righteous dead will be taken from these treasuries and united with their bodies, and they will then go into the immortal

state. But the souls of the wicked will face torment. The text contemplates an intermediate state of the dead, both righteous and unrighteous alike, prior to the resurrection of the body.

Similarly, in the book of 4 Ezra 7:26-44 we have a vivid description of the Last Judgment. The author writes:

[blockquote]For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass, that the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed. And every one who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders. For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years. And after these years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath. And the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings; so that no one shall be left. And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish. And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, . . . and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn; but only judgment shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong. And recompense shall follow, and the reward shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not sleep. Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight. . . . Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, ‘Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised! . . . Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments!’ . . . This is my judgment and its prescribed order; and to you alone have I shown these things.”[/blockquote]

Here the prophet is given a vision of the resurrection of the dead, and we find the same thing that we saw in 2 Baruch, namely, the Earth gives up those who are sleeping in it – the bodies of the dead are raised – and then the chambers in which the souls of the dead are preserved are opened, and the souls are reunited with the body. This is the typical Jewish view of the resurrection which combines the immortality of the soul with the resurrection of the body.

Just one more passage from the Jewish pseudepigrapha to indicate this. This is from the book of 1 Enoch 22:1-5. The author writes:

[blockquote]Then I went to another place, and he showed me on the west side a great and high mountain of hard rock and inside it four beautiful corners; it had in it a deep, wide, and smooth thing which was rolling over; and it the place was deep, and dark to look at. At that moment, Rufael, one of the holy angels, who was with me, responded to me; and he said to me, “These beautiful corners are here in order that the spirits of the souls . . . of the children of the people should gather here. They prepared these places in order to put them, that is the souls of the people, there until the day of their judgment and the appointed time of the great judgment upon them.” I saw the spirits of the children of the people who were dead, and their voices were reaching unto heaven until this very moment.[/blockquote]

Here the spirits of the souls of the dead are safely sequestered until the eschatological resurrection.

So the view of anthropological dualism is abundantly attested in the Jewish intertestamental literature. The standard view in Judaism came to be that when a person dies his body (and in particular the bones) rest in the ground until the day of judgment, and his soul goes to be with God where it is safely kept until the Judgment Day. Then the soul and the body will be reunited, and the person will be judged.

When we come to the New Testament, the language of the New Testament is indisputably dualistic throughout. It consistently differentiates the soul and the body. That this distinction is meant to be literal rather than just figurative or metaphorical is clearest when we consider the intermediate state between death and resurrection. For example, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 which we have already examined. I think in that passage you recognize that Paul is expounding the typical Jewish belief about the intermediate state in anticipation of the resurrection. As we'll see in a moment, Paul believed that for those who are still alive at the time of the return of Christ they will be immediately transformed into their resurrection bodies without the need of passing through that state of nakedness in which the body is stripped away from the soul first. That is what Paul himself really wants. His real desire (if he had his way) is to live until the return of Christ and not have to go through that intermediate state. This powerfully suggests that soul-body dualism is not just a metaphor or a figure of speech, rather it is ontological. There really is a soul which survives the death of the body and which will eventually be reunited with the body at the return of Christ. Compare in this regard what Paul has to say in Philippians 1:21-23. Here Paul is contemplating his own possible execution and martyrdom and he writes,

[blockquote]For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am

hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

So for Paul, even though the death of the body would mean a state of disembodiment which is a less than fully desirable state, nevertheless it brings him closer to Christ and therefore it is actually better to die and go to be with Christ.

For Paul's doctrine of the resurrection of the body, look at 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17. Paul says,

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.

What Paul is describing is the second coming of Christ – the return of Christ – bringing with him those who have died (those who have fallen asleep). He brings the souls of the departed dead with him to receive their resurrection bodies. Then the Christians who are still alive at that time are immediately transformed into their resurrection bodies. So on Paul's view, the immortality of the soul does not imply that our ultimate state is to go into some sort of ethereal disembodied heaven. Paul's view is not the Platonic idea of the escape from the prison house of the body, but neither is it the annihilation of the soul during that intermediate state. Rather, the soul upon death goes into a conscious, blissful communion with Christ to await the date of Christ's return and the resurrection of the body and its reunion with the body – the reunion of the soul with its body.

In summary of Paul's view, when a Christian dies the soul goes to be with Christ until the second coming. When Christ returns, the remains of the body (if any) will be transformed into a resurrection body which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15 as incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and spirit-filled. The soul will be simultaneously united with that resurrection body. Then those who are still alive will be similarly transformed into their resurrection bodies. I think you can see that Paul's view is essentially the same view as the traditional Jewish view of the judgment and resurrection except that now Christ is the agent who will conduct the judgment on that day. It is at the return of Christ that the dead will be judged and raised. So although Paul changes the Jewish view by adding this Christological element to it, he basically affirms the same dualistic view that was traditional in Judaism at that time.

START DISCUSSION

Student: Are there any Old Testament addresses to this? I can only think of Job when he says, *Those worms destroy.*

Dr. Craig: There are only three references in the Old Testament to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. One is Isaiah 26:12, I believe, where it predicts that the dead will be raised. Daniel 12:2 describes the resurrection of the good and the evil alike. And then you have this vision of Ezekiel of the valley of dry bones where the resurrection is so vividly described in terms of the bones (which is the principal object of the resurrection in Jewish thinking, as I said) are raised and then clothed with muscle and sinew and flesh, and they live again. So it's only very, very sketchily mentioned in the Old Testament. But as I indicated, during the intertestamental period this belief in the resurrection flowered and became the standard view in what's called Second Temple Judaism – the Judaism of the New Testament era – being defended, for example, by the Pharisees, though it was denied by the sect of the Sadducees who held to the view of the Pentateuch where you don't have the resurrection mentioned.

Student: It seems kind of unusual that we have a whole history of the Old Testament and questions like that weren't raised or addressed it seems. After a certain period of time suddenly there was this awareness of what happens.

Dr. Craig: It's not really sudden. It's gradual as you can see from what I've just said.

Student: But it hadn't been addressed in . . .

Dr. Craig: Yes. This is what is typically called progressive revelation. The supreme example of this would be Jesus himself. Jesus himself reveals the nature of God in a way that was not disclosed to the Old Testament saints. Paul talks about the mystery hidden for ages in God but now made known to the apostles and Christian prophets through Christ that the Gentiles and the Jews are in fact one and will be united as the people of God. This would be another example of progressive revelation. So the doctrine of the resurrection would be similar in that it's hinted at in three places in the Old Testament. It's not unknown, but it's not prominent. But then it emerges during this intertestamental period, and then is affirmed not only by the Pharisees but by Jesus himself – remember in his disputes with the Sadducees who tried to trick him by giving him a brainteaser about a woman who has been married seven times and whose wife is she going to be in the resurrection? The Sadducees thought they had him on that one, but Jesus clearly affirmed the resurrection of the dead in talking with them.

Student: Is there anything in the Jewish writings about the nature of the resurrected body being glorified?

Dr. Craig: Yes, definitely. When you read 2 Baruch, for example, it talks almost in language like Daniel about how the righteous will shine like the stars in heaven. So this is not just the resurrection of a corruptible, mortal body. These are going to be glorious bodies that will be immortal. Definitely in these pseudepigraphal writings you have descriptions of glorified bodies.

Student: I'm going to throw some idea to chew on and see if it's out of the box. When I was working in Boeing, because the new technology came out they were trying to implement the computer and the graphics and the database into their existing airplane building process. Basically, it's put away (the existing system) and to resurrect a new airplane-building process with all the technology at hand. That process involved new documents that exist in system. Then you logicalize it and then you optimize the logical system and then you implement physical technology to it. I was thinking about this resurrection. The problem with our body is our sin. That is like . . . if we basically . . . our physical system, and then we spiritualize it. That spirit if it's aligned by the deceiver it brings destruction, so we realign that spiritual system with Christ, and then we physicalize that aligned spiritual life. To me, could we think of resurrection in that term?

Dr. Craig: It seems to me that what you've said is unobjectionable if that's helpful to you. Paul does describe the transformation of the physical body from being dishonorable, corruptible, mortal, and weak to a glorious, powerful, incorruptible, and imperishable body. You could think of it in terms of, as you say, realigning this body so that it will be appropriate for a regenerate spirit or soul that will live forever. So if that's a helpful analogy to you, I don't see a problem with it as long as you don't think that the soul is like a software program or something. The soul here is a self-conscious person, not some sort of an abstract computer program. But I think as an analogy it seems like that might be helpful.

Student: With this dichotomous view, where would be what I'm going to call "the mind" – that is, our ability to think as we might share with animals, and to function? Because it's with the body and the soul. Where does that part of the human rest – body or soul? And also with animals – where does it rest?

Dr. Craig: On the dualist view, the mind is another word for the soul. As I say, the vocabulary isn't so important here. Whether you call this mind, soul, spirit – all of these words refer to that immaterial component of human being which is a self-conscious, rational person endowed with freedom of the will. With animals, if they have souls, they would be souls that are less richly endowed in terms of their faculties and capacities. They wouldn't have a capacity for self-consciousness. But they would still have sentience, for example, in many cases. They would be aware of what's going on around

them. They could experience emotions and communicate. So there would be souls there on this view, but they would be more primitive souls, less endowed in their capacities.

Student: So all dogs do go to heaven, right?

Dr. Craig: Well, now, let's be careful here. When I talk about the immortality of the soul, I'm not saying that the soul has the intrinsic property of immortality. I haven't taken a stand on that. Maybe the reason the soul survives the body is because God preserves it in existence beyond the body, and maybe he declines to do so with the souls of dogs and other animals. But maybe not! I think Jan would very much like there to be cats in heaven! And I hope they're going to be rhinoceroses! So, yeah, there could be. Why not?

Student: On that note, J. P. Moreland says the same thing about animal souls – that they have souls, but they're simple souls. He uses that phrase. I found that helpful.

Dr. Craig: Yes. My colleague J. P. Moreland specializes in this area and has written a number of books like *Body and Soul* or the chapters on philosophy of mind in the book *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*. He's my go-to guy on these issues as well.

Student: This is a more practical or maybe pastoral question. The thing you said – the phrase you mentioned – about that the dead in Christ will raise. Their remains, if they have any, will be transformed in the resurrection. The pastoral question would be the tradition or maybe trend of Christians cremating remains of loved ones. Is that practical? Is that biblical? Is that appropriate? Versus the more historically Jewish and Christian process of burial?

Dr. Craig: In Second Temple Judaism, the standard procedure for funerary practices was to bury the body or put it in a sarcophagus for a year for the flesh to decay away and rot away. Then the bones would be collected, and the bones would be placed in bone boxes called ossuaries. These ossuaries would then be stacked in the tombs, and they would lie there to await the eventual resurrection of the dead on the Judgment Day. This seems to be the view that's presupposed in the New Testament as well. Therefore, I think that it's best to err on the side of caution and not destroy the remains of the dead through cremation where the bones are ground up into some sort of powder and then scattered. It seems to me that we should err on the side of caution and inter the bones in some way with a view toward the return of Christ and the resurrection. Now, Jews were aware in the case of Jewish martyrs that sometimes even the bones were destroyed. When the rabbis discussed this question they believed that in these exceptional cases God is perfectly able, being omnipotent, to create *ex nihilo* new bodies for the Jewish martyrs. So it's not as though they would be denied the resurrection. In the case of Christians who have been cremated and their remains scattered, it's not as though God can't and won't raise them

from the dead. But I'm just saying why go against the pattern that God has laid down for no good reason? I think that one ought to adhere to the standard Jewish funerary pattern.

Student: I was always told that the bones represented the law, the truth, you held in yourself. When you become a Christian you let Christ change you. The Holy Spirit convicts you of sin. He becomes the plumb line within you. Therefore the bones represent what's going to be raised at the truth you were living. That's why bones have unique properties – they heal completely if you live long enough and use them even after they were broken. As you said it's not those who say Lord, Lord but if you are born again a new hope, you follow Christ, and you let his truth become closer and closer, and then the bone left in you is the plumb line of Christ.

Dr. Craig: It just seems to me that that is a product of pious imagination. I don't see any grounds for that sort of interpretation in the biblical text which I think is much more down to earth in the way I've described.

Student: You spoke earlier about the materialist view and kind of the view of the body being a thing on its own, and you speak of the mind being separate – kind of like a ghostly quality rather than a dualistic nature. My question is how would a Christian materialist reconcile the idea of a spirit like the Spirit of God acting on behalf of the visible world?

Dr. Craig: You really, I think, pulled a thread here that is important. I remember meeting Nancy Murphy, who is a Christian materialist from Fuller Seminary, at a conference at the University of Notre Dame. I forget how we got to talking about this, but she said to me, *Oh, I'm a materialist.* I said, *You're a materialist?* And she said, *Yes. I don't think that there are any immaterial minds.* I said, *Well, what about God?* And she said, *Oh, well, I make an exception in his case.* To me this just seems completely ad-hoc. If your ontology already includes an unembodied mind who is God and has created the universe then what grounds remain for thinking that finite minds connected with bodies and active in this universe are impossible? It seemed to me to be completely ad-hoc. The serious point here would be is that once you start going the route of anthropological monism and materialism it does seem to me you've greased the skids toward atheism and naturalism because that view would naturally exclude there being this unembodied mind that is physically active in the universe.²

² ?Total Running Time: 39:33 (Copyright © 2020 William Lane Craig)