

THEISM

What God Thinks About Man

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

- Genesis 1:26-28

Many there are in this world that have a low view of humanity. They believe that humanity came from the scum of primordial seas. They think that the natural world is self-existing and therefore greater than humanity. They think that mankind evolved from lower creatures of the earth and that mankind has only a physical nature. They think that humanity has resulted only from natural conditions. They believe that like all other things in nature, human beings die to live no more. People who think like that may have a very low view of themselves personally. An individual with that perspective may think that life has no meaning, may see no purpose for living, and feel an overwhelming sense of despair.

The word of God presents a strikingly different perspective on the worth of humanity. The Bible declares that humanity came from God and that our Maker thinks very highly of humankind. God thought enough of us to make us in his own image. Although God made man from the dust of the ground, He also breathed into human nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Thus, although God gave animals a physical nature, He created humanity with both a physical and a spiritual nature. Moreover, God made humanity with a purpose – to rule, to have dominion “over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). God intended for man to work (Genesis 2:15; 3:17-19). Even so, he prepared a day of rest, just as he had rested (Genesis 2:2; Exodus 23:12; Mark 2:27). Furthermore, the clear implication from scripture is that God created the world for humanity. After creating the world, God made the Garden of Eden, then placed Adam and Eve within it. God prepared a place for them to live (Genesis 2:8), and food for them to eat. Finally, when God made humanity, He intended for mankind to live forever. To this end, he placed a Tree of Life within the Garden (Genesis 2:9). People who believe like this see themselves as children of a benevolent God who loves them and cares for them. They readily see that life has meaning and purpose.

But this is not all that Scripture says about what God thinks of humanity. After Noah’s flood, when his descendents started to erect a tower to heaven at Babel, God looked at their work and said that, “***nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them***” (Genesis 11:6, NRSV). The high intelligence and physical capabilities of humanity have enabled mankind to achieve great engineering feats. We’ve created worldwide industrial, communication, and transportation complexes, spanned the globe with expressways, railroads, ships and airplanes, built pyramids and skyscrapers, gone to the moon, sent satellites and robots to explore the solar system, etc. Because God created mankind, he knew we had it in us.

But God also knew that mankind would sin. He promised that with sin death would come (Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 5:12, 18-19). Because God loves mankind, he therefore made provisions before he created mankind to save those who believe and obey him. The Apostle Paul declared that God chose us in Christ, “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy

and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:3-4). God thought well enough of humanity that, to overcome sin, he sent his only Son into the world that his death on the cross might pay for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). The Apostle John declared that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17).

God thinks enough of humanity not only to save us from sin and but also to give believers an eternal home in heaven with him. Jesus said to his disciples, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). He then went to the cross and thereby prepared a place in heaven for us. God values humanity more than the whole world. Jesus asked, “what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37)

Because God thinks highly of mankind, he is longsuffering, wanting everyone to come to repentance. The Apostle Peter wrote that the “Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Peter 3:9-15a).

Some folks wonder if there is life on other planets. The implication of scripture is against it. Did you observe in the above passage that with the coming of the Lord, “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”? Doesn’t that imply that when humanity is called before God in judgment, that then there is no longer any need for the heavens and the earth? If so, doesn’t that indicate that this whole world was made just for mankind? And that without humanity to inhabit the earth, God has no need for the universe? Doesn’t that indicate that God places great value on humanity?

What does all this mean? Does it not mean that since God thinks so highly of humanity, that we should act like God? Notice what the Apostle Peter said. “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:13-14). Human beings have it within their capacity to be holy like God! “As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16; Leviticus 11:44-45). That’s what God thinks of us! That’s what God thinks we human beings can be! If we think less of ourselves than what God knows we are and can be, then we’ll not live as God knows we can. To live better, think of yourself as God thinks of you.