

Who Is The “Natural Man”?

by Wayne Goff

“But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” ~ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Our Calvinist friends will tell you that the “*natural man*” is anyone not directly infused with the Holy Spirit. But that does not consider the context and it does not jibe with other Scripture. Why would Paul write a verse which the “*natural man*” couldn’t understand anyway?

“*Natural*” comes from a Greek word which means “having the nature of animate life.” In the passage before us it is used in direct contrast to the “*spiritual*” man. It is used twice in 1 Corinthians 15:44 to denote our *present physical body* in contrast to *the resurrected spiritual body*. So the “*spiritual*” man is one who chooses to believe and obey God and become transformed into a spiritual-minded person (see Rom. 12:2; Matt. 13:10-16). The “*natural*” man is one who is obsessed solely with this life, and therefore cannot comprehend the spiritual, eternal realm. As Paul said, spiritual things are “*foolishness to him.*” When you mention to him such ideas as heaven, hell, angels, spirits, Satan, demons, and even the Godhead, they are basically meaningless to him because the concepts are beyond nature and therefore of no interest to him. Those like this often refer to Christianity as the religion about “pie in the sky.” *Invisible*, to them, means *non-existent*. Ironically, the Jewish sect of Sadducees were like this, and some brethren in Corinth seem to be afflicted with this to some degree, having denied the very resurrection itself!

So notice again the context of 1 Corinthians 2. Paul is *contrasting* the Divinely-inspired apostolic message which was “*in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*” (v. 4) with “*the wisdom of men*” (v. 5), “*the wisdom of this age,*” and “*the rulers of this age*” (vv. 6, 8). God’s wisdom revealed in the gospel is **completely hidden** from the material man (vv. 7-9). God *revealed* them to the apostles (v. 10) and through them to *us* who desired to be “*spiritual*” (v. 13). The two mind sets are diametrically opposed to one another. But everyone chooses one or the other.

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