Cavemen

Bible Study: Cavemen - Ancestors or Offspring?

Textbooks often depict our "evolutionary ancestors" as brutish, savage ape-men who dwelled in caves. Every couple of years the scientific world is excited by the discovery of fossil remains of a supposed ancestor of man. Each new discovery is, in its turn, debunked: proven to be modern man or some form of ape. But the public impression of the "caveman" as man's ancestor remains, unshaken by the discrediting of the supposed proofs.

What can the creationist make of these cavemen? Is it possible to describe them in some other way than as the evolutionary precursor to man?

Some have suggested that the caveman is not an earlier form of man from which modern man has arisen. They have pointed out (as in the 'Five Minutes for this month') that they may well be men who have degenerated, rather than pre-men from whom we evolved. This study will look into the Scriptures and see if they shed any light on our question, "What are cavemen: ancestors or offspring?"

It is not surprising that we do not find the word "caveman" in the Bible. There are few records of cavemen in the Bible, by any name. But they do exist! The first cave dweller specifically mentioned in the Bible can be found in Genesis 19:30. Who was it? Why did they live in caves? Did this make these individuals prehistoric or ancestral (to any but their children)?

A quick survey of the Scriptures shows that many people used caves. Use a concordance to find each reference to a cave. You will find that David, and Saul, and Elijah, and many others used caves for dwellings. Some were temporary and some were more permanent. Does this reflect on their humanity? Does this require that they be more brutish, hairy, or savage than modern men?

Now turn to Job 24:4b-8. Read the description of the people here. What words might we use to describe these people today? Make a list of their characteristics.

Again, turn to Job 30:3-8. These people are actually described as dwelling in caves (v.6)! What sort of people were they? Were they "modern man"? How would we describe them in contemporary terms? Make a list of the characteristics of these people.

Now take your lists and discuss these people. Were these people savage? Were these people brutish? It may come as a surprise to some, but they appear to have been both brutish and savage! They are described as not-so-very intelligent as well. Job describes these people as wild, like animals, scavengers, eating what they could steal or dig up (even when it was not normally human food); naked; unhoused; not smart enough to "come in out of the rain," and so forth.

Is there any hint of what made these people this way? Read chapter 24 from the beginning. What is the lament of Job about here? It appears that the wicked have had a hand in the degeneration of these people. They were the poor who had been abused, cheated, and robbed. Job appears to hold them also responsible for their animal-like existence, and rightly so! Nevertheless, we see not ape-men who will one day evolve into modern man, but modern man who has been brutalised and chosen (or resigned themselves) to become savage and wild.

Sin played the part of the destroyer. The sin of the wicked, which Job decries, and the sin of those who chose to live and behave like animals. Degeneration is not an unusual concept in Scripture. Look in Romans, chapter 1, verses 18-32.

This is not simple social degeneration, but a moral degeneration. Does this affect the way the individuals described here live? Notice that as man wallows in sin, and refuses to be turned back to God, his intelligence and ability to reason are distorted, darkened and destroyed (verses 21,22,28, and 31). This degeneration of man is what Job was lamenting (as he grieved over his own affliction), and it is what pushed others into
the animal-like state of the "cavemen" we read about in Job. Scientifically, it is not necessary to see a simple, savage cave-dweller as a prehistoric ancestor. There is the possibility of need, or sinful corruption and despair, as in Job, to account for modern men living as primitive, half-animals. Biblically the second analysis is warranted. The problem is sin, and the same cure is needed; forgiveness purchased and won by Jesus Christ.

Close this study with a discussion of the ways that we can deal as Christians with these conditions among men, and what you can do. Share a prayer of thanksgiving for the rich blessings of God in your life, and in Jesus Christ. Sing a hymn, such as "Chief of Sinners, Though I Be", and try to focus on how the regeneration through the Spirit combats the degeneration among men.

by R.D.F

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