

Genesis 2:4-17

Genesis 2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.

² By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven. ⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. ⁸ The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵ Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Kent Hughes on Genesis 2:4ff... an Introduction

"Genesis 2:4 begins a new section of the primeval history of the world. The six days of forming and then filling the earth had left a dazzling, complete creation under the rule of Adam and Eve. Upon the seventh day "God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." And because there was no evening "or morning that day, he still rests. Today his children partake of his Sabbath rest through faith (cf. Hebrews 4:1, 2, 9).

Overall observations...

Yahweh-Elohim...Introducing a new name for God

Up to this point in the story, Moses has used only one designation for God, the name Elohim. And he has used it with studied care some thirty-five times. Elohim is the appropriate word for the majestic portrayal of God as Creator of the universe, signifying omnipotent deity.

But now at 2:4 (where chapter 2 should actually begin), the name for God switches to Yahweh-Elohim, “the LORD God” as our translations have it. Yahweh-Elohim is the dominant name from here to the end of chapter 4, which concludes this second section of the creation account.

The reason for this is that Yahweh is the personal covenant name of God who relates to and redeems his people (cf. 15:7 and Exodus 3:14, 15). Yahweh-Elohim combines the Creator and Covenant-Redeemer aspects of God into one magnificent name.

Here, in the immediate context of the Sabbath, which for Israel became a day to celebrate God as Creator (cf. Exodus 20:11) and as Redeemer (cf. Deuteronomy 5:15), the name Yahweh-Elohim—“the LORD God”—proclaims both these realities. So for our own hearts, ***we must remember that whenever we come across the title “the LORD God” in Scripture, it signifies God our Creator and our Covenant-Redeemer....***

The appropriateness of this name to this section is everywhere apparent, because Genesis 2–4 focuses on man and woman’s relationship with God. We see it immediately in 2:4-17, which deals with man’s nature, position, and responsibility to God in creation.

Hebrew “Toledot”....

Another reason chapter 2 ought to begin at 2:4 is the telltale phrase “These are the generations [Hebrew, toledot] of the heavens and the earth,” which is used ten times in Genesis to introduce major divisions (cf. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1 and 9 repeated for emphasis; and 37:2). “These are the generations” followed by the duplication here of the phrase from 1:1 (“the heavens and the earth”) informs us that we are about to read another narrative about creation. It is not a second creation account...but rather provides a

complementary treatment of man's creation and his relationship with his Creator.

The earth...its "untended" condition prior to the creation of man

David Guzik on Genesis 2:5,6

When God first created vegetation (on the third day of creation, Genesis 1:11-13), man had not yet been created to care for the vegetation of the earth, and there was no rain. The thick blanket of water vapor in the outer atmosphere created on the second day of creation (Genesis 1:6-8) made for no rain cycle (as we know it) but for a rich system of evaporation and condensation, resulting in heavy dew or ground-fog.

"The "no"s in these verses tell us why the earth was untended: There was "no bush"—"no small plant"—no "rain"—and "no man to work the ground."

All this—the lack of rain and shrubs and plants—points to the untended condition of the earth. Thus, the essential missing element was man. The untended creation needed man to rule and subdue it.

Richard Phillips on Genesis 2:4-7 (Mankind fulfilling God's purpose in Creation)

Mankind was made to fulfill God's purpose. There was not yet a "bush of the field," and "no small plant of the field" (referring to plants such as grain that require man to plant, cultivate, and harvest), for two reasons.

The first reason was that "the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land."

The second point was that "there was no man to work the ground" (Gen. 2:5). ***These verses set the stage by describing the state of the earth before the appearance of man.***

The world as we now know it did not exist, for the primary reason that we live after the fall, when God said to Adam: "cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field" (Gen. 3:17-18).

As Genesis 2:6 anticipates the details of man's creation, it makes the point that the earth needs Adam and his offspring to be its caretaker. It is true that God had made a wonderful provision for the vegetation, which was itself so essential to the other living creatures, in the springs that flowed from the deep. But God's purpose looked forward to man's coming as the servant of God who would direct and shape these natural resources to cause life to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28).

On a more personal note, this means that you were made with a purpose by God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches that our chief aim is the glory and enjoyment of God. So your earthly callings are important, and it is vital that you pursue them with passion and competence in fulfilling your earthly service to God. Paul's rule for man's work in Colossians 3:17 was fully in line with these anticipatory verses before man's creation: "whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Richard Phillips on mankind and his Dependence Upon and Relationship With God

Turning to Genesis 2:4–7, vital points are made in the beginning of man's dependence upon and relationship with God.

The initial description of man's creation in 1:27 reads "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" whereas the account in chapter 2 provides a wonderful and complementary insight... "The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (v. 7).

Mankind Made in Dependence on God

Genesis 2:7 and its description of man's forming is joined to the preceding verses, since verses 5–7 form a single sentence in the Hebrew text. ***Mankind was important to God's purposes, so, in famous words, "the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man***

became a living creature.” This description of the first man’s creation makes a second point: mankind’s dependence on God, his Creator.

First, we note that God “formed the man” (Gen. 2:7). When God created the stars, the sea, and the land, he merely spoke and they became. But when it comes to man, God engages in personal artistry and careful design. The word “formed” is used for a potter molding his clay (Isa. 29:16; Jer. 18:4–6).

Thus, the amazing genius of the human anatomy reflects the glorious mind and power of God. David sang, “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14).

Lest we become proud because of God’s investment in our bodies, Moses tells us of what we were made: “the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground” (Gen. 2:7). Dust is of little value, reflecting a lowly origin. Abraham abased himself before God, saying, “I . . . am but dust and ashes” (18:27). Matthew Henry comments that while dust is not evil, it is still lowly, saying that man “was not made of gold-dust, powder or pearl, or diamond dust, but common dust, dust of the ground.” John Calvin notes that “Since the body of Adam is formed of clay, no one should exult beyond measure in his flesh. He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility.”

All these facts in man’s creation conspire to show our dependence on our Creator. God did not make mankind of indestructible materials or infinite capacity. It is true that our current experience reflects the effects of the fall, whereas prefall Adam would have been comparatively glorious. Yet he was still made of dust and relied on the Spirit of God to convey life to him.

Man was not made with an intrinsically eternal nature, but was formed of the very ground. If man is to live forever, as Genesis 3 will show, he must eat from the tree of life, receiving eternity in dependence on God. As a natural being, man depends on water, food, and air. God designed us to rely on what he provides.

Alasdair Paine thus writes: “No wonder, then, that we are only going to flourish in relationship with God. We have not been designed to make it on our own. This is a reality that sinful mankind, in rebellion to God, makes every effort to ignore.

The choices that people make with their time—sometimes even Christians—show that they believe they can make it in life without God. In light of how we were made, this is a remarkably foolish way to live, and its effects are seen in the vanity and dissatisfaction of our experience. How different it will be if we only turn to God.

The truth is, though we are wonderfully conceived and formed by God, yet because of sin we will return to dust.

By the sweat of your face

you shall eat bread,

till you return to the ground,

for out of it you were taken;

for you are dust,

and to dust you shall return. (3:19; cf. Job 34:15)

Mankind Made for Relationship with God

The final point in this passage is that man, made with a divine purpose and in dependence on our Creator, was also created for a relationship with God. This reality could not have been more eloquently stated than in the personal involvement displayed in Genesis 2:7: “the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”

Whereas God made the glories of the physical nature, along with the other creatures, by his mighty Word, God reached out with his hands in the creation of man.

We saw in Moses’ transition to the use of God’s covenant name Yahweh that this noted the context for the history in Genesis 2. He is a covenant God, and in making man he shone his own face upon us, creating us for a personal, covenant relationship that reflects the perfect love within the triune Godhead.

Adam: God-breathed...

God literally “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” There is such intimacy here, as Kidner memorably explains: “Breathed is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was an act of giving as well as making; and

self-giving at that.” Furthermore, “breathed” (literally, “blew”) suggests a good puff, as one that would revive a fire (cf. Isaiah 54:16; Haggai 1:9).

It is very much like what happened in Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones when the reconstructed skeletons of the slain were brought to life by the inbreathing of the Spirit:

“Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. (Ezekiel 37:9, 10)

Distinct above all the other creatures, man was made to know and love God, and enabled by God’s Spirit to obey and worship him. As we gather for corporate worship as a church or in our personal moments of quiet devotion, we should remember the relational desire that prompted God to make us in this personal way.

Man’s Position (Genesis 2:8-14)

In Eden...

God positioned Adam in Eden: “And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed” (v. 8). The designation “in Eden, in the east” is from the perspective of Moses, in the Sinai. So the garden was most probably in the area of Mesopotamia in modern Iraq.

Verses 10-14 contain a digression about the garden...What is clear according to verse 10 is that a river rose from a subterranean source, perhaps as already described—“a mist [or river] was going up from the land” (v. 6). Eden’s abundant river then watered the garden and flowed out and then separated into the headwaters of four rivers: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates.

While the Tigris and Euphrates are identifiable with rivers today, the Pishon and Gihon are totally unknown. Efforts to equate them with other rivers in the area fail...

Responsible guessers place it in Mesopotamia near the head of the Persian Gulf. But we cannot be sure. We must allow for topographical change like what certainly would have come from the great flood.

In paradise...in God's presence

What is sure is that “in Eden, in the east,” Adam was in paradise! The presence of a great river flowing from Eden is indicative of the life-giving presence of God (cf. Psalm 46:4 and Ezekiel 47:1-12). Later in Genesis it is called “the garden of the LORD” (13:10). God’s presence was concomitant with the garden.

The common Hebrew meaning of Eden is “delight”. Verdant, luscious trees were the signature of the garden. “And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (v. 9a). What a remarkable setting for the eye and for the body!

Adam lacked nothing. He was made in the image of God. God had kissed life into him. He was perfect. He was the human sovereign of creation. He had the blessing of God and the unparalleled presence of God. Adam “speaks and walks with God as if they belong to one another,” writes Bonhoeffer. Paradise it was.

Man's Responsibility (vv. 9b, 15-17)...

His incredible position did bring with it singular responsibility.

The two trees...

The last half of verse 9 introduces this: “The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The two trees stood side by side in the very center of the garden. And through those two trees the destiny of man would be decided.

Life was at the center of the garden, and eating fruit from “the tree of life” would result in continued life. After the fall Adam was excluded from the garden “lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever” (3:22b). But the tree of life will appear again: “To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7; cf. 22:2, 14, 19). The tree of life gives life—and grows in eternity. Adam was not tempted to partake of the tree of life because he had life.

The commandment...

Adam's responsibility was made clear by the commandment of God himself: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the

day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (vv. 15-17). The verb “put,” which describes God’s placing Adam in the garden, carries the nuance of rest and suggests a connection to God’s Sabbath rest. His tending the garden and caring for it was an act of rest.

God’s word to him was first permissive: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden” (v. 16). Adam was to partake of everything in the garden to his heart’s content, which included the tree of life. This is lavish, extravagant abundance, and Adam could take from the tree of life if he wanted it. Everything was there for him—everything he could possibly want.

But God’s permission was paired with his prohibition: “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (v. 17). To disobey and eat from this tree would bring sure death.

Matthew Barrett writes...

The negative covenant command was a test of obedience but also a test of man’s trust in God—that God knew what was right for man better than Adam did. Death, first mentioned here in the Bible, was not part of God’s original creation (1:29–31), but came through the violation of God’s law by Adam (Rom. 5:12).

The first solemn charge that God gives to Adam. Man had choice and only in his prefall condition did he have perfect liberty to do that which is good. The first man received this positive command alone, a sign of his sole headship in representing mankind before God in the covenant of works. Positively, Adam could eat of the trees in the garden freely.

Here we must note that this passage does not suggest that Adam was immortal and that, had he not sinned, he would live forever in the garden. There is a difference between man’s creation when he received life by God’s inbreathing (2:7) and the perpetuation of that life by appropriating from the tree of life (cf. 3:22). Adam was not intrinsically immortal. Only God is immortal (1 Timothy 6:16).

John Calvin explains this, saying of Adam, “His earthly life truly would have been temporal; yet he would have passed into heaven without death, and without injury.” ***Perhaps the translation of Enoch, who “was taken up so that he should not see death” (Hebrews 11:5), shows what God would have done with Adam.***

So what was the temptation for Adam in light of the “every tree” abundance of the garden and the “surely die” threat of the forbidden tree? Simply this: The temptation to eat from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” was to seek wisdom without reference to the word of God. It was an act of moral autonomy—deciding what is right without reference to God’s revealed will. This is confirmed by Ezekiel 28 (the closest parallel to Genesis 2–3), which tells how the King of Tyre was expelled from Eden for his pride and for claiming that his heart was “like the heart of a god” (cf. 28:6, 15-17). ***Adam and Eve desired wisdom, but they sought it outside of the word and will of God. They usurped God’s role in determining what is right and wrong. So here we get to the very heart of original sin. It was to sidestep God and his word and will in order to become wise. Moral autonomy brings death. “I did it my way” is an autonomous dirge of death.***

Jesus, the second Adam, lived by “by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Jesus lived every second of his life in radical dependence on God’s word (cf. Matthew 4:4).

But the first Adam decided to be autonomous, to willfully disregard God’s revealed will and seek wisdom on his own. And Adam did obtain “the knowledge of good and evil,” but it killed him—because he got his wisdom his way.

And so it is with us. What we do with the word of God is everything. Imagine for a moment you do not know how this is going to end. Adam has the whole garden before him. He could have partaken of the tree of life and all that it promised! But he decided to seek wisdom from the tree of knowledge, apart from God’s word and God’s will. And in doing so he died.

And that is the great temptation for all of us today—to establish our wisdom apart from God’s word. As fallen men and women, our only hope is to trust in the bare word of God. And the choice remains—the tree of life or the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We know how the story ends.

The great question for each is us is...how does our story end?

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

Excerpt From: R. Kent Hughes. “Genesis.”

Closing Thoughts...Mankind Saved by the Second Adam

In closing, we must remember that the history that begins in this passage goes on to tell of the severing of man's relationship with God through sin. This is the world in which we live—a fallen world that, though made good by a loving God, remains under the curse of his just wrath against transgression. Yet God took the initiative in overcoming the breach.

A later passage of Scripture makes clear how God provides for sinners not only to be forgiven but to be restored to his covenant love.

One is 1 Corinthians 15:45, which points out that Jesus came to be a second Adam who overcame where the first Adam failed. Paul writes: "The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." ***This verse looks back to Genesis 2:7 and notes that Adam became a living being by means of the breath that God blew into him. But Jesus Christ, God's own Son, came into this world not needing life but granting it. This means that we can enter into a new life, like that of Adam in the garden only more so, by the true spiritual life that he gives. Jesus offers: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water' " (John 7:37–38).*** The God who provided subterranean waters to irrigate the earth's original land will through the Spirit of God cause life to go not only into you but out of you for the blessing of others. ***James Montgomery Boice therefore writes, "We are to live physically and spiritually only as we turn to and are united to [Christ]."***

Countless Christians have received the life of God as they opened their minds and hearts to his Word. If you are down, God will set you on your feet. If your life has fallen apart, God's Word will bring you back together again. More than that, God will restore you to a loving fellowship with him. He will grant spiritual power to walk in his ways and a new heart to worship him with joy through the life that he breathes through his Spirit-inspired Word that brings us to faith in Jesus Christ, who gives the life of God. Jesus promised that "whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life" (John 5:24)."

From Richard Phillips "Genesis"