

GENESIS 2:4-15 (TO WORSHIP AND TO SERVE)

Some time ago, I started a through-the-Bible study class and we've gone slowly and methodically through each verse in an attempt to miss as little as possible, but while preparing for this sermon, I was stunned to see how much I missed in Chapter 2 of Genesis.

There are patterns and parallels which are wonderful to see and yet I'd never considered them until I looked more deeply into things in preparation for today. It makes me realize how immense God's word is and how arrogant we can be to assume that we could ever understand everything that He's give us in the pages of this wonderful book. An infinite mind is, after all, infinitely intelligent.

I chose the title for today's sermon "To Worship and to Serve" based on a translation of verse 15 which is completely different than any translation you've probably ever read and yet it's one which is more than likely correct based on patterns in the rest of the Bible, including the very last page in Revelation 22.

What was the reason God created man? Was it to work the ground of the earth as most Bibles indicate? Or was there a completely different reason which is actually reflected in the Westminster Shorter Catechism's first tenet and which we've looked at before –

What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

If this is true, and it is, then it only makes sense that the Bible would proclaim this as well – and actually, it does.

Introduction: We need to remember that God is complete in and of Himself. He lacks nothing and therefore anything that He has created is a demonstration of His own goodness and should reflect His infinite worth. Man pursuing works doesn't fit this particular picture very well and so what we need to do is look deeper into God's intent for man in the Garden of Eden – the spot where God dwelt and fellowshiped with him.

Text Verse: Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth. Psalm 96:9

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Man Became a Living Being

⁴This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

Liberal theologians claim that Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis are a completely different account than Chapter 1 and were written by different people at different times. Their claim is that the two accounts just don't fit.

The obvious reason why someone would come to this conclusion is that they don't want to believe that the Bible is really what it claims to be – God's word to mankind. If different people wrote the two accounts, then by implication God didn't author the Bible and it is just a book, like any other – full of myths.

Instead of this, all one needs to do is simply evaluate the chapters to see that they are merely a detailed insert into what's recorded in Chapter 1. Imagine getting instructions for assembling something, say a computer. There will be general instructions of how to put everything together and then there will be separate instructions for specific parts – like the printer. Chapters 2 and 3 are simply these finer details inserted into the larger overview of Chapter 1.

Because this is God's word, then the account is included to give us specific insights into something that must be rather important for us to know. A jillion unimportant details weren't recorded, such as the height of Adam or the color of Eve's hair. They're not recorded because they have no importance to the story and no bearing on what would occur later. The name of Adam's first puppy, which could have been Fido, is irrelevant...

Remembering this is a good lesson for each of us. When you're reading the Bible, always ask yourself why a particular passage is included. If God included it, then it has importance to the plan and relevance to the story.

In the verse we're looking at we see a new name of the Creator – the LORD God or Jehovah Elohim. In Chapter 1, only the word "Elohim" was used, signifying the God of Power – He's the Creator. Elohim is what's known as a "majestic pronoun." Here in Chapter two, the title Jehovah Elohim or the God of Power and Perfection is seen.

Matthew Henry describes Jehovah this way, "*Jehovah* is that great and incommunicable name of God which denotes his having his being of himself, and his giving being to all things; fitly therefore is he called by that name now that heaven and earth are finished."

We continue with verse 5 and onto 6...

⁵ before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no man to till the ground;
⁶ but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

In what I just read, it appears that man's purpose is to "till the ground." From this verse it would seem hard to assume otherwise. Why else would tilling the ground be included here? And so, it's from this perspective that later verses in the same account have been translated, even though there's a large problem with this.

⁷ And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

A few weeks ago, we looked at what it meant to be created in God's image. We bear His image mentally, morally, and socially, among other ways, but in this verse we learn that Adam consisted of both heaven and earth. Man was formed out of the dust and then the divine Creator breathed life into him.

This doesn't imply that he or we are in any way divine, but that the life of man came from God, not by random chance. The spark of life which quickened the clay jar was none other than the breath of the Creator. The man has become a living being. He is the final act of creation. He is the highest form of what has been made. And he is fearfully and wonderfully sculpted.

From God's hand and His breath
Is how man came to be
From an act of His wisdom and love
Man came not from the slime or from the sea
Nor from a meteor that rained down from above

In His image He created the man
And for His glory and praise
This was for us the original plan
To see Him face to face all of our days
To worship and serve in eternal peace
Was God's intent for us from the start
Our days were intended never to cease
This was the desire of the Creator's heart.

God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing on the first day of creation. Five days later, on the sixth day, He created His final and most stupendous work of art – in fact a masterpiece – out of the simplest and most common part of the creation, dust.

First there was nothing, and then there was dust. God took this “next to nothingness” material and after forming it, breathed His life into it. If we jump ahead just a little bit we'll see that Adam disobeyed God and died spiritually at that moment. Because of this, the thing that made us most like God disappeared at that moment too. Isn't that a humbling thought?

We walk around as if we're pretty big stuff when in fact we are as close to nothing as the breath in our lungs. From the dust we came and to the dust we shall return... Without a new birth, our next to nothingness is all we have to live for. *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*

The dust of the earth is what man was created from; the most common stuff on earth. He didn't use gold dust, He didn't use silver dust, He didn't even use zinc... Instead, he used the earth. And to this day we are of the dust of the earth.

Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 15, but so does the psalmist in the 139th Psalm. He says there, "My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."

We are so closely tied to the earth that David describes the womb in which we're formed as *eretz*, or "the earth." In the same way, Job calls the place where we're going back to our "mother's womb," meaning the earth.

The word for womb in Hebrew is *behten* and is comprised of the Hebrew letters Beth, Teth, and Nun.

The meaning of the Beth is "house." The meaning of the Teth is "mud." And, the meaning of the Nun is "heir" as in continuance into the next generation. The womb then is the house where the one of mud continues on. Even in the word itself we see our lowly state. Mix a little water with the dust and you have the man...

On our own, we simply can't get away from the dust from which we were created. We live by what it produces and when we die we will return to it.

However, and despite the unappealing material, the Bible says God "formed the man." The Bible uses the Hebrew word *yatsar* and it implies a careful and attentive shaping of him. This same word is used in the books of the prophets when describing a potter shaping a bowl from the clay. In the case of man, the Latin phrase rings true –

Materiam superabat opus – "The workmanship exceeded the materials." We marvel at the detail of a watch made of intricate tiny pieces of metal; we look with wonder at sand sculptures and finely constructed artwork of hand blown glass. And yet nothing man has ever made comes even close to the intricate beauty of the human form.

Thus the man became a living being. God shaped man into the form He determined and we are as He decided. In the New Testament Paul asks the obvious question –

Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, “Why have you made me like this?” Romans 9:20

Oh, but question we do! But God formed us for His purposes.

The book of John records two wonderfully beautiful parallels to the passage we’re currently looking at where it says, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life..”

“When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.” John 9:6, 7

And again...

So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. John 20:21, 22

This God, Jehovah Elohim, who created the heavens and the earth and who formed man out of the dust, breathing into him the breath of life, also formed new eyes for a man to see and gave the same breath again to His apostles in the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, God incarnate, gave both instances as a confirmation of who He is and the power He displays in creation and in the regeneration.

II. The Garden of Eden

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

After creating man – only after creating man – does it say that Jehovah Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden. Eden means “delight” or “pleasure” and was, if man obeyed, a place not for work, but for a different purpose.

This is an important point to consider when looking at the previous verse that said there wasn’t yet a man to till the ground. This garden is something special and something intended for the man He formed. The ground which needed to be tilled was outside of the Garden, not in it.

If you stand back and look at the larger picture of the Bible, it’s clear that God knew before the fall that man would fall. And so the garden, despite being made as a place where God would fellowship with man, didn’t fill the entire earth. Instead, the Garden was a localized place of grace, of abundance, and of provision from God above, not from the ground below.

It was, as God knew from the beginning, a temporary place for Adam to dwell. This isn’t readily apparent though. In this verse the word “put” is translated from the Hebrew word *sum*, but as we’ll see in a little while, a different word is used later which is also translated as “put.”

Appreciating the garden meant they would need to leave the garden. This is how we learn to appreciate anything, by contrast. If there is no contrast, then we have no ability to appreciate our current state.

God knew that we would start in a garden and then be removed from that garden because of our interaction with, believe it or not, a tree. But God’s plan is that we are to be restored to the garden because of our interaction with another tree. The plan is so intricately woven and presented in the Bible that it’s almost beyond imagination. Everything fits so beautifully.

III. A Tale of Two Trees

Verse 9 continued...**The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

Of the many plants of the garden, only two trees are named and there they were, right in the midst of the garden. And of these two trees, the fruit of only one is forbidden. As we'll see next week, the LORD said to Adam, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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."

More than a little is tied up then in these two trees. Choices are tied up in them, conditions are tied up in them, blessings and curses are tied up in them, life and death are tied up in them, the law and grace are tied up in them, and even the Lord's Supper, our Holy Communion is tied up in these two trees.

As a choice:

The tree of life – you may eat of it.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – you shall not eat of it.

It's important to note that although Adam was told to not eat of this tree, the choice was still his. God placed the tree in the Garden when he could have simply not have placed it there at all. By placing it there then, it was possible for Adam to eat it even though he was told not to. Obedience is always a test of our priorities and allegiances.

**I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live. Deuteronomy 30:19

As a condition:

The tree of life – Life is granted through its fruit.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – Death results from its fruit.

**I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

As a blessing and a curse:

The tree of life – you can live with me forever.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – you will be separated from me. Admittedly, Adam had no idea what death really meant, but innocence dies not negate guilt. And death was to be the penalty for guilt.

**I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

As life and death:

The tree of life – eat and live.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – eat and die.

**I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

As the Law versus Grace:

The tree of life – Eat and find eternal life – God’s grace; His unmerited favor.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – eat it and be punished. As Paul says, “because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.” Romans 4:15

**I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

As the Lord’s Supper:

The tree of life – Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:54

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil Believe and be saved, disbelieve and be damned: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” (John 6:53) In other words, go back to the tree of life and by faith receive what God has given you.

**I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

God set the parameters in Eden, He set them for Israel, and He sets them now for the world. Choose life. To me the most magnificent aspect of what He does though is that He gives man the choice.

IV. The Water of Life

¹⁰ Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

¹¹ The name of the first *is* Pishon; it *is* the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold.

¹² And the gold of that land *is* good. Bdellium and the onyx stone *are* there.

¹³ The name of the second river *is* Gihon; it *is* the one which goes around the whole land of Cush.

¹⁴ The name of the third river *is* Hiddekel; it *is* the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river *is* the Euphrates.

The theme of the Water of Life goes literally from Genesis to Revelation and winds throughout both testaments. Right here in the Genesis account, we see that one river flowed out of Eden to water the garden and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

This is amazingly similar to the gospel message in which the Lord delights, and in fact, Eden as I said earlier means “delight.” From both the Garden of Eden and from His Gospel we see amazing parallels. The rivers names are Pishon, meaning “increase;” Gihon, meaning “bursting forth;” Hiddekel, meaning “rapid;” and Perath, meaning fruitfulness.

Each of these rivers came from one source and together they wound their way around the world. In the same way, the gospel comes from one source and yet it branches out into four different accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of these gospels reflects the glory of the Lord as was revealed in a vision of God to Ezekiel –

As for the likeness of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of

an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. Ezekiel 1:10

The Lion's face is the Gospel of Matthew which describes Jesus as the King of Israel. This is also symbolized by the river Gihon which means to "burst forth." Later in the Bible, the Gihon is where the king was anointed as ruler of Israel. In Ezekiel 32, the king of Egypt is said to burst forth (geeakh) like a lion or a sea monster. This is actually the root of the word Gihon.

The Ox's face is the Gospel of Mark which describes Jesus as the Servant, the ox being a servant animal. This is symbolized by the river Pishon which means to "increase" which parallels Proverbs 14:4 – Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox.

The Man's face is the Gospel of Luke which describes Jesus as the Son of Man. This is symbolized by the river Perath which means "fruitfulness." Just as man was told to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:22

And the Eagle's face is the Gospel of John which describes Jesus as the Son of God. This is symbolized by the river Hiddekel which means "rapid." The rapid nature of the eagle is noted in Jeremiah 4:13 – Behold, he shall come up like clouds, And his chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles.

Together, these four accounts which stem from a single source go out to water the world with the knowledge of the Lord and to proclaim the Water of Life which was symbolized by the four rivers flowing out of the Garden of Eden.

In the first Psalm, we see that a person who delights in the Law of the Lord
"shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper." –Psalm 1:3

And from this we can learn a few more things about the rivers of Eden. They symbolized spiritual life but after the Fall of Man the rivers' origins have changed. The Pishon is no longer flowing at all, symbolizing death. The Euphrates and the Tigris run through the lands which in the Bible are opposed to God – Babylon. These symbolize spiritual enmity with God.

Only one river flows out of God's chosen land of Israel – the Gihon. If you know the size difference, there is no comparison. The Gihon is a small spring that is almost unnoticeable. This is comparable to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Though the Gihon is just a small brook today, it is symbolic of the wellspring of spiritual life in a world dead in sin; this, in opposition to the immense amount of water flowing through the rivers of apostasy and false world religions which is symbolized by Babylon. The 46th Psalm says –

There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High. God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; -Psalm 46:4

This is represented by Jerusalem, the city which is in spiritual opposition to Babylon. Again, the psalms help us understand this –

By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion. ² We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. ³ For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us *requested* mirth, *Saying*, “Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion!”

⁴ How shall we sing the LORD's song In a foreign land? –Psalm 137:1-4

The Jews exile from their home to Babylon is symbolic of our exile from Eden and God's presence. The good news is that in the near future, Isaiah

prophesied that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

This is symbolically represented by the river which Ezekiel says will flow out of the south side of a future temple in Jerusalem. It will be the Gihon, which will “burst forth” – just as its name implies – to bring the dead back to life. –

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side. ³ And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water *came up to my ankles*. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water *came up to my knees*. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water *came up to my waist*. ⁵ Again he measured one thousand, *and it was* a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. ⁶ He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen *this*?” Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.”

Ezekiel 47:1-6

V. To Worship and to Serve

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Let’s look at how different translators of have worded this verse, but notice how each variation follows the same theme –

to dress it and to keep it // to take care of it and to look after it
to tend and keep it // to tend and guard and keep it
to tend and watch over it // to till it and to guard it
to cultivate it and keep it // to cultivate it and guard it
to serve it, and to keep it // to care for it and work it

to farm the land and to take care of it
to work it and to keep it // to work it and take care of it
to work it and watch over it // to work the ground and care for it
to work the soil and take care of the garden

If you noticed, despite the flowery changes in terminology, every one of these translations demonstrates work is being proposed for the Garden of Eden. If you look at the purpose of the Garden, this makes no sense. Earlier, in verse 5, we read that man was to till the ground. However, this was **before** God planted the Garden of Eden. Man was formed outside Eden and then placed there.

I quoted John Sailhamer last week, let me refresh your memory – “The man was ‘put’ into the Garden where he could ‘rest’ and be ‘safe,’ and the man was ‘put’ into the Garden ‘in God’s presence’ where he could have fellowship with God...”

The word for “put” in verse 15 is the word *yanach*, a completely different word than what was used in verse 8. Dr. Richard Howe of Southern Evangelical Seminary notes this about the word *yanach* –

“... the sense of the verb is causative, meaning that God ‘caused Adam to rest’ in the garden.”

If God “caused Adam to rest” in the garden, then why would man need to tend and keep it? Dr. Howe notes, “The problem with these translations is that the pronoun in the verse does not agree in gender with the word ‘garden.’”

The word ‘garden’ is masculine in Hebrew and so ‘garden’ can’t be the object of the verbs. Because of this, either this verse is an exception to the rule of the Hebrew language or the verbs aren’t referring to the garden at all and instead something else is meant.

Doctor Howe’s conclusion is that the verbs should be taken as abstract in meaning and that “The significance of “resting the man in the garden” is not to demonstrate man’s relationship to the garden, but rather to provide

a setting for the story to demonstrate man's relationship and responsibility to God."

Therefore, his translation has an abstract meaning. Instead of "tend and to keep" he says they should be translated "worship and serve," as both words **are** translated elsewhere in the Bible.

And isn't this exactly what the gospel itself proclaims? We can't in any way supply for ourselves our own good. Instead, Jesus is the One who supplies our every need. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

It wasn't the garden to which Adam was responsible, but to God – to worship and to serve Him. Dr. Howe notes that, "Before the fall, Adam's attention was directed upwards toward God." He was to serve God through keeping His commandment and he was to worship Him through trust and obedience.

But "After the fall, Adam's attention was directed downwards toward the ground." Instead of looking to God for sustenance, he had to look to the ground. Instead of looking to God for eternal life, he would look to the ground as his final resting place.

The lesson here is that we also have a choice. We can look upward to God, to worship and serve Him as He determines, or we can look to the ground and attempt to have our own works justify us. In the end, the ground is a hard master, one of bondage and pain, but the Lord – Oh, the Lord is gentle and mild.

Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30

The Garden was lost to man, but through Jesus, it can be restored. In the Garden was a river of life. There was no curse – just the chance to worship

and serve the Creator. Jesus promises the same to us on the final page of the Bible –

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”

Rev 22:1-4

To worship and to serve the Lord our God
Eternal fellowship in a land of Delight
On hallowed soil our feet will trod
And the Lord shall always be in our sight

In His light, to walk and also to praise
The Lamb of God who was slain
Illuminated by His ever-glowing rays
No tears, no fear, no sorrow, no pain

Come to the waters and be restored
Drink and receive Grace from the Lord

Heaven’s door is open for all to go through
But you see it’s guarded with cherub and sword
So to pass through the gate, this you must do
It is the gospel, “Call on the Lord”

By faith in His work and by faith alone
Access is granted past Heaven’s sword
His blood was shed for your sins to atone
Again I beg you, call on the Lord
Again I **implore** you, call on the Lord

A while ago, I said that we learn to appreciate things through contrast. If there is no contrast, then we have no ability to appreciate our current state. Beauty ultimately derives from comparison; hence, the infinite beauty of the cross.