

The Creation and Commission of Man

Text: Gen. 2:4-17

Introduction:

1. Genesis 2 does not present a contradiction to chapter 1 but it provides further details of day 6 with an emphasis on the creation of man. This makes complete sense since man was the pinnacle and crown of God's creative work. It also provides further details concerning the manner in which God made the woman out of man. Henry Morris writes, "The second chapter of Genesis describes in greater detail certain of the events of the sixth day of creation, especially of the formation of the first man and woman. It does not in any respect contradict the account of the first chapter, but instead is complementary to it." Concerning this chapter, Luther wrote, "We may note further that Moses here describes the work of the sixth day, of which he briefly spoke in 1:26-27. Now he enlarges on this report, devoting a whole chapter to man's creation. We should therefore firmly hold that God created the world in six days (and maintain this) against the delusion of Augustine and Hilary that everything was made in a moment."¹
2. The Book of Genesis often moves from the general to the particular. We are first presented with the big picture, and then the book focuses down on a detail of that picture and expands it out. After seeing all that God has made on the six days in chapter one, the Book focuses down on one species, Man, and in chapter 2 gives us the expanded details of his beginning.
3. Genesis 2 lays the foundation for chapter 3. In Genesis 2 we have Paradise formed, in Genesis 3 Paradise lost.
4. We will divide the text under four points for our expository study:

I. THE PREPARATION OF MAN FOR EDEN (VS. 4-7)

Here we have the first of eleven 'generation' statements that mark the progress of the story Moses wrote in the Book of Genesis.

A. The Revelation of the Creator (Vs. 4)

1. All through chapter 2 & 3 God is revealed as the "LORD God" (Jehovah Elohim).
2. "The reason why the two are combined in the Eden narrative is to bring together the title of the majestic, powerful 'God' portrayed in Genesis 1 with the title of the personal, intimate name 'Yahweh', of Genesis 2-3. This idea is that the transcendent God of Genesis 1 is the same as the immanent God of Genesis 2-3."²

B. The Description of the Creation (Vs. 5-6)

1. The State of Plant Life (Vs. 5)
 - a. It appears some forms of plant life hadn't grown yet because man was not yet created and available to tend to them.
"Although God created the land vegetation, certain groups had not yet sprouted at this time, just before man was created. The main reason is that man was not yet around to cultivate those

¹ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, April 2015, p. 292.

² Ibid, quote by J.D. Currid, p. 293.

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types of plants.”³ Reveals that even before the curse, God had ordained that man have a managing role over the world He had made.

- b. It is specifically noted that it had not rained upon the earth. The original hydrologic system was very different in the pre-curse, pre-flood world as the next verse reveals.
2. The Sustenance of Plant Life (Vs. 6)
 - a. The manner in which the earth was watered in the absence of rain is revealed in this verse. The earth was watered by a ‘mist’ (word means fog, vapor). This speaks of a daily water supply coming primarily from a process of local evaporation and condensation.
 - b. As discussed in our study of the firmament mentioned in Chapter 1, these conditions were on account of the water canopy above the earth that created an ideal, semi-tropical environment upon earth. This would mean ideal temperatures (Adam and Eve had no need of clothes before the fall) and ideal conditions for lush vegetation.

C. The Creation of the First Man (Vs. 7)

The narrative skips the work of the 4th and 5th days of creation and proceeds immediately to man himself.

1. The Unique Creation of Man (Vs. 7a)
 - a. Formed by the Creator – “And the LORD God formed man”
 - i. The manner of man’s creation. No other creature was fashioned in such a personal and direct way as man. The word ‘formed’ means to shape and is used in Jeremiah 18:2-4 to describe the work of the potter. As the Master Potter, God’s unseen hands personally shaped man. Man was destined to a special and privileged position in God’s Creation. His destiny was to bear the image of God and to be a friend of God. The Psalmist explained “I will praise thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:14)
 - ii. The material for man’s creation. Man was both an exalted and yet lowly creature, made from the “dust of the ground”. Man is “of the earth, earthy” (1 Cor. 15:47). Man is therefore related to the material universe through the body with its five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch). God’s understanding of our essential physical make up forms the basis of his tender dealings with us as His children. Psalm 103:13-14 “Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; **he remembereth that we are dust.**” Scientific discovery again attests to the truth of the Word of God. “In modern terminology, the basic chemical elements: nitrogen, oxygen, calcium etc... were to be the basic physical elements of the human body.”⁴ (Morris)

³ Ibid, p. 296.

⁴ Morris, p. 85.

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- b. Enlivened by the Creator – “breathed into his nostrils”
 - i. Again, the manner in which God gave life to man was unique. Man was made alive by a special, personal act of God. God Himself directly imparted life and breath to man. Life cannot come from non-life and as God is the only self-existent being, life must come from him.
 - ii. “Man is formed out of the earth by God’s personal activity...A personal, vitalizing act of the Creator imparts life to man – an honor bestowed upon none of the lesser creatures.”⁵
 - iii. Note: Due to sin, we are now spiritually dead. Praise God He is able to breathe new life into us at salvation (Eph. 2:1).
- 2. The Unique Character (nature) of Man (Vs. 7b)
 - a. Man is made up of both material and immaterial parts. In fact, man is a tripartite being, reflecting the triune nature of his Creator. He is a trinity in unity. The Apostle Paul recognizes this trichotomy in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole **spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. Man became a “living soul”. The same phrase is translated “living creature” in Genesis 1:24 in relation to the animals God made. The animals possess soul life but to a much lesser degree than man. “As man’s body was tremendously more complex and capable than those of animals so man’s soul was of a much higher order than the animal soul, requiring God’s direct energizing for its activation.”⁶ Man, by virtue of the way God made him, possesses not only natural life but also spiritual life. God not only gave man body and a soul (mind, will and emotions) but also a spirit. God in His pure essence is a Spirit (John 4:24) and He made man in His image. Out of all of creation, only man was endowed with a spirit and the capacity to personally know the Creator. In fact, the text reveals that man is primarily a spiritual being. He is not a body that has a spirit but he is a spirit housed in a body and there is a big difference here. While the body cannot exist without the spirit, the spirit can survive in conscious existence without the body. The spirit of man is the center of conscience (Rom. 2:15), worship (John 4:24) and intuition (Rom. 8:16).
 - c. Note: This verse refutes evolutionary theory. Man did not arrive at this stage by a long process of animal evolution. He was created by the direct action of Almighty God.

II. THE PROVISION FOR MAN IN EDEN (VS. 8-14)

The whole earth was perfect but God made a beautiful garden called Eden to be the home for the man He had created. The word ‘Eden’ means

⁵ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Baker Book House 1971.

⁶ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Michigan; p. 86.

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'delight' and the text describes a truly delightful place. Eden is called "the garden of God" in Ezekiel 28:13. Observe three details about Eden:

A. Eden's Beauty (Vs. 8-9a)

1. It's general description – 'garden'. Interestingly the New Testament Greek word 'paradise' is derived from a Persian word meaning an enclosed garden. Here we see paradise given. In Genesis 3 we will see paradise lost.
2. It's specific description – "pleasant to the sight". God filled this garden with trees that were beautiful to behold.

B. Eden's Bounty (Vs. 9b)

1. The permitted trees (Vs. 9b)
 - a. The sustenance trees – "every tree that is...good for food". God made abundant provision for man's happiness and fulfilment. Man's first impressions of God would be of One who loved Him and had generously provided for him.
 - b. The special tree – "the tree of life". It is of interest to note that this tree was included amongst those of which the man could freely eat. If eaten regularly, even after the fall, man would live forever (Gen. 3:22). The tree of life is restored in the New Jerusalem for the blessing and benefit of the glorified saints. Rev. 22:2 "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there the tree of life*, which bare twelve *manner of fruits*, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations."
2. The prohibited tree (Vs. 9c)

C. Eden's Brook (Vs. 10-14)

1. The source of the river (Vs. 10a)
 - a. Evidently the 'mist' mentioned in verse 6 was not sufficient to water the garden of Eden so it was watered by a river to guarantee its ongoing fruitfulness and freshness.
 - b. According to Genesis one there was one main body of water in the original creation. Perhaps this was a large inland sea or lake somewhere in Eden that then flowed out into the river described. Or possibly the river was fed from an underground spring.
 - c. The New Jerusalem also has a beautiful river described in Revelation 22:1-2. Eden's river is long gone, the original paradise lost. But we will one day enjoy the river of life in the New Jerusalem, paradise regained.
 - d. Gospel thought: The river of life is a theme that runs through the Scriptures. The river of life has flowed in mercy from the throne of God, offering salvation for thirsty sinners who will come and drink of its purifying waters. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: **But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst**; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14)
2. The course of the river (Vs. 10b-14)

The river must have been substantial as it is said to have divided into four separate watercourses. Some further descriptions of the pre-flood topography are also mentioned.

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- a. Pison – said to encircle ('compasseth') the land of 'Havilah'. The word 'Havilah' means sandy. This land was abundant in precious minerals – gold, bdellium and the onyx stone.
- b. Gihon – said to encircle the land of Ethiopia.
- c. Hiddekel – said to go toward the east of Assyria.
- d. Euphrates – should not be confused with today's river that bears that name. Evidently these names were familiar to the survivors of the flood and were used after the flood by Noah and his descendants.
- e. Sarfati explains, "In recent history, we have seen the new towns established by British settlers in North America, Australia and New Zealand were frequently assigned names that were familiar place-names in the land they had left; e.g., Liverpool, Hamilton, Oxford, Sheffield and Brighton. Similarly, features in the post-Flood world were given names familiar to those who survived the Flood."⁷
- f. "In general, it is evident that the geography described in these verses does not exist in the present world, nor has it existed since the flood. The flood completely changed the topography of the world (2 Peter 3:6)."⁸

III. THE PURPOSE FOR MAN IN EDEN (VS. 15)

At this point it would be profitable for us to consider the commission God gave to man as the male leader in the home and society. These are God-given drives that God has placed within the male species. We note 3 main drives God has placed in men:

A. The Drive of Reproduction (Gen. 1:28)

1. Man is the initiator and leader in the sacred matter of human reproduction. While this commission was given to both the man and his wife, the seed, or offspring, is attributed throughout the Scriptures to the father rather than the mother.
2. Sadly, since the fall, this drive has been misused for countless perversions that were never God's intent. In today's culture, most men don't embrace God's plan for marriage to produce offspring, viewing this area of their lives as primarily just for pleasure. Rather than viewing his wife as the potential mother of his children, the typical man simply views intimacy as being for the fulfillment of his passions only. Conception and child bearing is all but removed out of the equation in the thinking of the average Christian couple. Rather than embracing God's plan for child bearing, most have embraced the anti-baby, humanistic philosophies of the day.
3. The very first commandment God gave to the first couple was to "Be fruitful, and multiply." This reveals the mind of God for the marriage union. Child bearing was to be central to the marriage union. How opposite to the sinful society in which we live! The culture says, "stop having children" but God's Word says "be fruitful and multiply"!

⁷ Sarfati, p. 318.

⁸ Morris, pp. 89-90.

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4. Remember, God is seeking a godly seed through your marriage. Mal. 2:15 “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? **That he might seek a godly seed.** Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.”
5. If ever there was a time for Christian couples to go back to the Bible and re-embrace God’s original intent for marriage, it is in today’s pornographic society that is producing a generation of men (and even women) with a warped view of sex.

B. The Drive for Dominion (Gen. 1:28; Vs. 15)

There are three Bible words that describe different aspects of this:

1. **Dominion** – “have dominion” (Gen. 1:28) This commission was given to both sexes but the drive is most predominant in the male. As the God-ordained leader over his home, he must know where he fits in any authority chain. In order to exercise dominion, he must have a certain defined territory over which to rule.
2. **Subdue** – “and subdue it”. This God-given instinct in man, motivates him to harness the forces of nature, and bring it under his control. Inventiveness is a particularly male trait. By this drive, man brings to heel those threatening aspects of nature such as disease (this side of the fall).
3. **Tend** – “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it...” Adam was given the commission to work before sin entered into the world. God made man to serve. His service would have been completely enjoyable and blissful as his body was not under the effects of the curse but it was service nonetheless. Work became toil after the fall. Henry Morris writes, “It is noteworthy that, even in the perfect world as God made it, work was necessary for man’s good. The ideal world is not one of idleness and folic, but one of serious activity and service. Even in the new earth to come, after sin and the curse have been completely removed, Scripture says that “his servants shall serve him (Rev. 22:3).”⁹ Through this God-given drive to work, a man received a great amount of self-worth. In contrast to this, a woman receives much of her self-worth through bearing and nurturing children. This drive to tend, involves provision for his wife and family and upkeep and development of his territory.

C. The Drive of Protection (Vs. 15)

1. “and keep it” = the word has the idea of “to guard”. The KJV translators wisely used the word ‘keep’ in this context as sin had not yet entered the world. In this context it reinforces the concept of man being commissioned to oversee and manage God’s creation. He was to “keep it” in the sense of looking after it. Henry Morris writes, “Adam was told to “keep” the garden. The word means actually to “guard” it. There was no thought of protecting it from external enemies, of which there were none, but rather that of exercising a careful and loving stewardship over it, keeping it beautiful and orderly, with every component in place and in

⁹ Ibid, p. 92.

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harmonious relationship with the whole. The charge of certain latter-day evolutionary ecologists that the concept of man's dominion has led to exploitation of earth's resources is patently absurd. God's command was to keep the ecology, not to destroy it; and those who believe and understand the Bible have always taken it that way."¹⁰

2. The fall of Satan meant that man would soon need to exercise the guardianship aspect of this word. We could ask the question, "where was Adam when Eve was being tempted to take the forbidden fruit."
3. In relation to God given drives, man has a strong drive to protect his own persons and property. He will not hesitate to lay down his life for his spouse and dependents, and will always have a careful eye for their safety. This is a very vital part of the man's role this side of the fall when the Christian home is threatened by multiple spiritual and even physical dangers.
4. Note: One of the best things you can do as a wife and helpmeet is to encourage your husband in the right exercise of those God given drives. Encourage his fatherhood, encourage his headship (authority) in the home, encourage him in his work, encourage him as the protector of the home.

IV. THE PROHIBITION TO MAN IN EDEN (VS. 16-17)

A. What Man was Free to Do (Vs. 16)

1. We tend to focus in on the one restriction God placed on the man He created and forget the overwhelming bounty and provision God had graciously made for man's perfect satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness. God is a God who delights to abundantly bless His children, not a hard-hearted task master as some misrepresent Him.
2. It is significant that when Eve was tempted, she saw that the tree was "good for food" and "pleasant to the eyes" (Gen. 3:6) but God had already provided an abundance of trees that were "good for food" and "pleasant to the eyes" (Gen. 2:9). It is the devil's way to focus our attention on that which is forbidden rather than that which is freely ours to enjoy from God.

B. What Man was Forbidden to Do (Vs. 17)

1. Before the fall, there was only one command for man to obey. After sin entered, there would need to be so many more commands for God's people to govern their behavior.
2. These two important trees were in the center of the garden, representing the continual choice before man to choose either the way of life or the way of death.
3. Man was given a free will to choose to love and obey God. Freedom of the will is essential for true love. If God was to create man, He had to give him the choice of loving God or of not loving God. Without this possibility, men would be "mere passive toys of His sovereignty, mere creatures governed by instinct, in reality nothing more than highly gifted and more complexly controlled

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 92-93.

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animals. There could be no more talk of a nobility of man. Their 'morality' would in truth be a forced, only apparently moral mechanism, and they would be nature-bound beings without a will, puppet-like, living morality machines. The holy nature of God could never have glorified itself, and with this the chief object in the creation of man would have been missed."¹¹

4. "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" = evil can be defined as rejection of God's will. Disobedience to His will is therefore participation in, and experimental knowledge of, evil. Man already had knowledge of good. Everything God had made was described as "very good". Partaking of the fruit would give Adam a knowledge of evil as well as an understanding of the distinction between good and evil.¹²
5. "thou shalt surely die" = God is the source of life so to be separated from God is the essence of death. Man would die spiritually the very day he took the forbidden fruit and the principle of decay and death would begin to operate in his body immediately that would eventually result in physical death.
6. Illustration: If a branch is chopped off a tree and it falls onto hard concrete, one can say that it's already dead, cut off from the source of life. But the process of physical death takes some time – the cells in the leaves will continue to photosynthesize for several hours at least. Similarly, when Adam sinned, he immediately cut himself off from the Source of life, but the dying process took 930 years.¹³
7. Leupold puts it this way, "For a fact, after the commission of sin man at once stepped upon the road of death."

Conclusion: Bible history begins with a beautiful garden in which man sinned but the story ends with a glorious garden city (Rev. 21-22) in which there will be no sin. What brought about the change? The answer is found in a third garden that stands between the two called Gethsemane where Christ surrendered to the Father's will and went to the cross to die for the sins of the world to make our reconciliation with God possible. The only way you will see the garden city in eternity is if you repent now and received God's offer of forgiveness. Will you do that today?

¹¹ E Sauer, *The King of the Earth*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1967; p. 58.

¹² Morris, p. 94.

¹³ Illustration from Peter Sparrow (Creation Bus Ministry Australia), cited by Sarfati, p. 320.