

**Genesis 2:4-17**  
*The Garden of Eden*

The seven days of the creation week are completed

- What will God do now?
- What will man do in a perfect environment?

These questions and more will be answered as we continue our study in the book of Genesis

- We will covering most of chapter two this morning

The second chapter is not simple a repetition of chapter one

- It is not a second account of creation
- The two accounts are complementary, not contradictory<sup>1</sup>

Rather, the first part of the second chapter is the telling of creation from a human perspective

- Rather than a chronological perspective, this account provides more of a thematic perspective
- And man is the focus of the story!<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the history of mankind is the history of sin

- From what we see in Genesis, it doesn't take long for mankind to go from innocence to corruption

You might say that the second chapter of Genesis is the beginning of the end

- It is the story of the Fall of man<sup>3</sup>

Thus far, we have seen God's blessing on three occasions

- Over the next few chapters, we will see God's curse<sup>4</sup>

**God performs three (3) actions for man so that he might have the opportunity to worship God**

- God formed man from the ground
- God provided man with a perfect environment
- God commanded man with a simple prohibition

### **I. God formed man from the ground (2:4-7)**

This is the account of the heavens and the earth

For the first time in the book of Genesis, we encounter this phrase, "this is the account of the heavens and the earth"

- The English versions may have "generations" or "history" instead of "account"
- All of them are an attempt to translate the Hebrew word *toledot*

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<sup>1</sup> W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Leon J. Wood, *A Shorter Commentary on Genesis*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 117.

You may remember from the introductory message I preached on Genesis that this *toledot* structure will serve as the broad outline of the book of Genesis

- There are eleven (11) uses of the *toledot* throughout Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2)

Moses' use of this structure accomplishes three purposes<sup>5</sup>

- It narrows the focus to the elect line of promise – remember, we are tracing the lineage of the Redeemer Seed from Adam forward
- It introduces the subject matter of previous material – it is a transition between various families
- It looks forward to the future offspring<sup>6</sup>

*This term is a hinge or transition between two sections of Scripture*

You may be thinking, “Why wasn’t there a *toledot* back in Genesis 1?”

- Good question
- The reason why there is no *toledot* back in Genesis 1 is because God was the only One in existence!
- Mankind had not even been formed yet
- Hence, the starting place is naturally creation, “*this is the account of the heavens and the earth*” (italics mine)
- Not until chapter five do we read, “*This is the book of the generations of Adam*” (5:1)

So here in 2:4, we have the first use of the *toledot*

- Now that mankind has been formed, we can begin to trace the lineage

Most likely, this section was written by Adam himself

- Moses wasn’t alive during this time

It seems that Moses' use of the *toledot* is an assimilation of various written documents

- This was Adam’s perspective on the creation and the first events of human history<sup>7</sup>

This first *toledot* section will run from 2:4-4:26

- The creation of man
- The Fall of man
- The offspring of Adam and Eve

But there is something special about this introductory *toledot*

- Every other time this phrase is used in Genesis, the subject is a person
- This makes sense because the purpose of the structure is to trace a genealogy or lineage – people would be the natural subject

But here in 2:4, the subject of the *toledot* is not a person

- Moses writes, “*This is the account of the heavens and the earth*”

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Genesis 1-11:26*, 47.

<sup>6</sup> Griffith Thomas, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 83.

when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.

If you compare chapters one and two, you will find a difference as it pertains to the name of God

- In chapter one, the English word “God” is used to denote the Hebrew word *Elohim*
- *Elohim* describes God’s power

But in chapter two, the name switches to “the LORD God” which is the Hebrew words *Yahweh Elohim*

- The insertion of *Yahweh* tells us that God is personal and desires a relationship with humanity

This is the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses

- When Moses asked God what His name was, God told him “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you.” (Ex 3:14)

The latter part of verse four and verse five is a summary of creation before man

- Remember, Moses is not concerned about repeating every detail in chronological order
- Rather, he tells the story from the perspective of Adam

<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

This description resembles the summary statement of Genesis 1:2, “And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”

But Moses’ account anticipated the painful consequences of the Fall

- “the shrub of the field” and “plant of the field” foreshadowed the “thorns and thistles” that would come after the Fall (3:18)

<sup>7</sup> 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.

The second chapter of Genesis is not concerned with retelling the creation account of chapter one word-for-word

- Rather, it sets the table to tell the story of humanity
- Remember, this second chapter has its perspective and epicenter in man, not necessarily the whole of creation

This verse takes the thought of 1:27 and supplies additional details

- “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (1:27)

Remember, the account here in chapter two tells creation from a human perspective

- Obviously, the creation of man will receive more detail and emphasis than the creation of other things

Moses writes that God “formed” man

- This is the language of a craftsman or artisan
- It implies great skill and ability

This word is used of in a number of ways throughout Scripture

- A potter shaping pottery
- A goldsmith making idols
- God fashioning various parts of the human body<sup>8</sup>

God took pre-existing materials and formed man

- Not from water
- Not from air
- But from “dust from the ground”

Moses uses a wordplay here<sup>9</sup>

- “Adam” is the Hebrew word אָדָם
- “ground” is the Hebrew word אֲדָמָה

Humankind was made in the “image” and “likeness” of God

- However, to keep us from exalting ourselves too highly, God formed us from the base elements of the earth

Part of the curse on man is “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (3:19)

- What a sobering reminder!
- You were made from dust and when you die, you will return to dust!

Thousands of years later, the apostle Paul would write, “The first man is from the earth, earthy” (1 Cor 15:47)

- He is speaking of Adam!

In the creation, man arose out of the dust

- In the Fall, man returned to the dust<sup>10</sup>

God also “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”

- This indicates a warm, personal touch that is absent from any other creation that God brought into existence
- No bird or fish or land animal can claim that God did this to them
- It is the face-to-face intimacy that exists between God and man<sup>11</sup>

Until God breathed into Adam’s nostrils, he was a dead corpse

- His body was formed
- He was equipped with lungs, nostrils, and other necessary organs
- But he was lifeless

What Adam needed could only be provided by God

- His lifeless body needed to be energized<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 76.

<sup>9</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 1-17*, 156.

<sup>10</sup> John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Genesis*, 41.

<sup>11</sup> Kidner, 60.

<sup>12</sup> Morris, 86.

The intimate relationship between God and man is seen that God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”

- When God breathed “the breath of life” into that piece of clay, man became alive – he became a “living being”

This is the same word used to describe the sea animals (1:20, 21) and land animals (1:24)

- It denotes that which has breath – something that is living

So what makes man different from fish and land animals?

- We are made in the “image” and “likeness” of God
- We are also privileged to have God personally breathe into man the breath of life

*The first action that God performed was that He formed man from the ground (2:4-7)*

## II. God provided man with a perfect environment (2:8-14)

<sup>8</sup> And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

God not only breathes life into man, making him a living being

- He also provides a home for man, “God planted a garden toward the east”
- This was a perfect environment for Adam to flourish
  - o *Not a desert or a jungle*
  - o *But a garden*

As a Father, God provides for His children

- Adam is sheltered, but not smothered
- He is nourished and satisfied by the garden
- He is provided with a place to work and a purpose for working

The name of the area where the garden existed is “Eden”

- This word means “delight” or “pleasure”
- This is exactly what God originally designed Eden to be

Of course, the whole world was available to Adam

- But God singled out this one place in particular as a home and a haven for Adam
- It would be the area that God would fellowship and commune with man

In this garden, Adam had plenty to eat

- God had given him “every green plant for food” (1:30)
- Genesis 2:9 says that the trees were “good for food”

After creating the Garden, God “placed” Adam there

- Obviously, Adam was alive when God created the garden
- We can assume that Adam watched as God did this

Adam's first knowledge of God would have been one of love and provision

- God prepared a place especially for Adam
- He provided for him abundantly<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food;

In this perfect paradise in Eden, God caused growth of every kind

- Specifically, God “caused to grow every tree”

Let's keep in mind that when God created everything in chapter one, the creation had the appearance of age and maturity

- The birds could fly
- The fish could swim
- The animals could move
- All of these creations could reproduce as well

Thus, when God created the trees, they were already grown with the ability to produce fruit

- There was no delays
- There was immediate enjoyment of the fruit

Moses writes that these trees were “pleasing to the sight and good for food”

- They were both pleasant to the eye and enjoyable for eating
- This means that the fruit was available and was perfect for eating

the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Among this plethora of trees, God singles out two for special attention and focus

- “the tree of life”
- “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”

In my reading, it concerns me that some would undermine the literal aspects of these trees

- Some contend that the trees were merely symbolic
- Others argue how a literal tree could make man aware of life, good, or evil

But those issues are not sufficient to rule out the literal nature of these trees

- There was nothing magical about these trees
- They were simply two trees that God marked out for His special purposes

These two trees will play a big part over chapters two and three

- “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” will be especially important as we will see toward the end of this passage

“The tree of life” would have enabled mortal man to live forever according to Genesis 3:22

- What a thought!

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

The “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” would have given Adam the experiential knowledge of what is “good” and “evil”

- Up until now, he only knew what was “good”
- Everything around him was perfect and flawless

But if he ate the fruit of this tree, he would experience something he had never seen before

- The effects of “evil”

The tree that should have brought about freedom really brought about bondage<sup>14</sup>

- We will see more of this toward the end of this section

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

Verses 10-14 offer a bit of a pause to the account

- Moses attempts to describe the location of the garden of Eden
- He does so by landmarks – specifically, a river that runs through Eden
- This river split into four parts after flowing through Eden

Once again, these are four literal bodies of water that he is describing

- With a garden described in chapter two, a large amount of water was needed to sustain the trees, bushes, and other foliage
- This river that ran through Eden provided the needed water for the ecosystem

The names of two of these rivers are still known today, “Tigris” and “the Euphrates”

- But the other two are unknown to us, “Pishon” and “Gihon”

According to Bible scholars, the area described sounds very similar to the area around the Persian Gulf

- This area is near the “Tigris” and “the Euphrates” rivers

This area was gorgeous

- Beautiful, lush vegetation
- Bountiful jewels, gold, and other precious metals

But can we know for sure where the garden of Eden is?

- I don’t think so

You see, the universal Flood described in chapter seven upset the entire makeup of the Earth<sup>15</sup>

- Bodies of water were displaced
- Areas of land mass could have been changed
- Certainly, the garden of Eden would have been changed or destroyed altogether

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<sup>14</sup> C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 54.

<sup>15</sup> Davis, 83.

The before and after pictures of the Earth would have been staggering

- The only people who were allowed to witness the pre-Flood and the post-Flood Earth were eight (8) individuals in Noah's family
- They were privileged to bridge the gap

*Thus far, God has performed two (2) actions so that man might worship Him*

- *God formed man from the ground (2:4-7)*
- *God provided man with a perfect environment (2:8-14)*

### **III. God commanded man with a simple prohibition (2:15-17)**

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

We saw back in verse eight that “God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.”

- Here in verse 15, the same thought is conveyed
- But a different verb is used, “put” in verse fifteen instead of “placed” in verse eight

Now those two verbs look very similar in the English

- But they are quite different in the Hebrew

The verb in verse 15 indicates that God placed Adam in the garden so he could have fellowship with God

- It is a word that denotes rest and safety
- Not safety from danger – but safety in a relationship with Him
- Ultimately, Adam was in the garden to worship God<sup>16</sup>
- Adam's service in the garden was his spiritual service to God<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to consider Adam's schedule before the Fall of man

- We often think that he just sat back and did nothing but eat and enjoy creation

Isn't this the modern-day concept of retirement?

- Once we make enough money, we can stop working
- We can travel the country
- We can visit friends
- We can rest – the cessation from labor

But look at Adam in the garden of Eden

- God put Adam in the garden “to cultivate and keep it”

Why does Adam need to “cultivate and keep” a perfect paradise?

- There are no weeds
- What could he possibly do?

The garden was so fertile that it needed to be channeled and controlled

- Left to itself, it would have grown wildly
- But Adam was there to prevent that from taking place

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<sup>16</sup> Sailhamer, 45.

<sup>17</sup> Ross, 124.



- He was to be a faithful steward over the resources of the garden, keeping it beautiful and orderly<sup>18</sup>

As we read of Adam's labors before the Fall of man, we are reminded of a very simple principle

- Mankind was designed to work

We oftentimes buy into the lie that work is a result of the Fall

- But according to chapter three of Genesis, work is not the result of the Fall
- Rather, the Fall brought a new kind of dynamic to work – the toil and burden of working, “Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; <sup>19</sup> by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (3:17b-19a)<sup>19</sup>

Before the Fall, Adam enjoyed work as an act of worship to God

- It was his service for the Lord
- It was the Divine purpose for him at that time
- And Adam took great delight in it

As you and I look forward to eternity, don't think for a second that we will sit down sipping on lemonade in heaven

- Revelation 22:3 informs us that in heaven, “there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him”

#### <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man,

This is the first time that God commands man in the book of Genesis

- But it certainly won't be the last time

The fact that God commands man tells us that God is sovereign over creation

- Sure, Adam has not sinned up to this point
- But that doesn't mean that he is on equal ground with God!

Here is a question for you to think about

- Before God commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, did Adam have a sense of sin?

In Romans 7:7, Paul writes, “What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "You shall not covet."”

- Apart from the Law, Paul would not have known about coveting

It seems that Adam lived a very brief time without the awareness of obedience/disobedience

- Then, God issued this commandment not to eat from a particular tree
- Then Adam disobeyed that commandment

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<sup>18</sup> Morris, 92.

<sup>19</sup> Mathews, 209.

Each one of us moves along that same line of thinking

- When we were very young, we had a very limited concept of right and wrong
- Then as we grew in understanding, we were told to do certain things and not to do certain things
- Then we came to a place where we clearly disobeyed what we knew to be wrong<sup>20</sup>

saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; <sup>17</sup> 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 shall surely die.”

God’s commandment comes in the form of a warning

- He forbids Adam from eating from one tree, “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”

Notice that God did not give a reason why Adam was to obey

- He simply indicated that he was to listen to God’s commandment

God had taken care of Adam

- He had given him *everything* he needed
- There was no reason why Adam should have doubted God’s intentions

It is easy to focus on the negative side of this commandment and wonder, “Why couldn’t he eat from this one tree”?

- But Adam could have eaten from every other tree in the garden
- God was being extremely gracious!

Adam had almost limitless freedom!

- He could eat from any tree except one
- If he wanted, he could even eat from the “tree of life”!

But God was putting before Adam an opportunity for obedience<sup>21</sup>

- He could display his love, devotion, and loyalty to God by obeying
- Or, he could display his independence by disobeying

True love is built on trust

- Adam had no reason to distrust God
- He had every reason to trust God

God created Adam with a will

- Adam had a choice to make as it pertains to obedience

In the book of 1 Timothy, Paul states that God “**alone possesses immortality**” (1 Tim 6:16)

- Adam could have lived a perfect life in the garden
- He had that choice before him

But he chose to disobey God’s simple command

- As a cursed individual with a sin nature, his spiritual death now separated him from God

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<sup>20</sup> Morris, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Wood, 31.

To share in this state of “immortality” must be a gift from God<sup>22</sup>

- It is not something that Adam should expect or deserve

God specifically told Adam, “for in the day that you eat from it (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) you shall surely die”

- Adam had not known death
- Adam had not seen death

Death would not come until after the Fall

- All that Adam knew was life, life, life!

The idea of death was soon a reality for Adam

- After he ate the forbidden fruit, “they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (3:8)
- Separation and lack of fellowship was immediately the result of sin

Can you imagine God coming in the garden, desiring to fellowship with you?

- Think of it!
- Imagine the joy, pleasure, and delight that must have been
- You wouldn’t want it to end!
- You would look forward to it with great expectation

But as soon as the forbidden fruit was eaten, their eyes were opened to “good and evil” (italics mine)

- They had only known “good” until now
- But after eating the fruit, they experientially knew “evil”

This “evil” separated them from God

- God even asked where they were!
- But Adam admitted to God that he “heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself” (3:10)

Adam had only known perfect fellowship with God up to that point

- But with one act of disobedience, he was now separated from God

And if that isn’t bad enough, that separation extended to his children, and his grandchildren

- All the way down to you and me

You see, once perfection is broken, you can’t gain it back in your own power of efforts

- You can trace your family lineage all the way back to Adam and Eve
- All of our family trees have their base in Adam, a sinner

The very moment that Adam ate that fruit, the principle of decay and death began to operate<sup>23</sup>

- The sandglass was turned over and his life was now temporal

Adam lived to be 930 years old (Gen 5:5)

- But that is nothing compared to the eternal fellowship that he could have had if he had obeyed

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<sup>22</sup> Kidner, 65.

<sup>23</sup> Morris, 94.

Oftentimes, we have heard a doctor tell a friend or family member, “You only have \_\_\_\_ months/years to live”

- Perhaps it is cancer
- Perhaps it is other health issues

But imagine knowing that you will die

- And then living several hundred years

With every child born to Adam, he knew that he would be passing death onto that child

- None of his children would have the blessing that he forfeited
- None of his children could regain what he lost

Isn't that where we are today?

- Each and every one of us here this morning is a child of Adam
- Sure, our last names may be different
- But deep down we know that we are all related

We are born into this world as sinners

- By nature – from Adam
- By choice – of ourselves

Our hope for perfect fellowship cannot be found by looking to our parents, grandparents, or any other human

- Our only hope for fellowship with God can be found in Jesus Christ

He was the perfect Man who lived a perfect life

- He died on the cross as a substitute for sinners
- “God made Christ who knew no sin *to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.*” (2 Cor 5:21)
- God cannot accept imperfect sacrifices
  - o So only the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ will be accepted by God!

This morning, let me ask you a simple question

- Are you represented by Adam?
  - o Sin
  - o Spiritual death
  - o Decay
- Or are you represented by Christ?
  - o Spiritual life
  - o Fellowship with God

There are men and women here this morning who would gladly take the time to show and to share with you how you can go from being a child of Adam to being a child of God