

The Garden and Companions

Genesis 2:4-25

Introduction

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
to declare your steadfast love in the morning,
and your faithfulness by night,
to the music of the lute and the harp,
to the melody of the lyre.

For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work;
at the works of your hands I sing for joy.
How great are your works, O LORD!
Your thoughts are very deep!

Psalm 92:1-5

I want us to sing for joy over Genesis 2. I wish it were in my power to unfold for you the greatness of what is here. I pray that in explanation there will also be exhilaration. God's mighty work brought all things into existence by the wisdom of His knowledge, by the word of His power, by fashioning of His hand and all very good. We ended chapter one with God at rest in the completion of His work.

Moses, through the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit now goes back and expands on the account. This account focuses on the details of a portion of day six. Some have thought that this account contradicts chapter one; we do not believe so. Chapter one is a wide angle, long lens view of creation. Chapter two is a close up of day six and a portion of that day, at that. Rather than approaching the text looking for contradictions, we should approach the text expecting expansion and explanation.

The Tol*Dot opening of this section (v.4) gives us the first two generations on the earth. It covers from the creation of Adam to the beginning of spiritual searching in days of Seth. These two generations will launch the course of human history and the redemptive story line.

The drama of this chapter unfolds here in two scenes. The first shows the provision by God for man in his place to live. The second shows the provision by God of his spouse to love. We have the garden and the companions.

The Garden

(v.5-17)

Redemptive history begins in a garden and ends in a city. There is movement from man dwelling in the Garden of Eden with God to God dwelling in the City of Zion with man. This is one of the trajectories and themes of the Bible. From the Garden they will be expelled but into Zion God's people will come and all the people groups will stream up to it.

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷then 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. ⁸And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

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

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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.”

Its Surrounding Circumstances

(v.5-7)

As to the General Environment

(v.5-6)

This paragraph describes the general conditions on the earth when God created man. The earth had produced grasses, plants and trees, but they were wild and uncultivated. What is being referred to in verse five as the bush and the small plant of the field is difficult. Whatever had not sprung up yet was what needed the cultivating hand of man. The reason as Moses gives it is that the world before the flood was very different.

The world then apparently was not watered from the atmosphere as it is now. The difference in temperatures across the earth, the evaporation of water from the oceans and the movement of the air currents cause moisture in the air to be carried to different places and then to fall as rain. The world before the flood had a different system. The great waters that were stored in the deep fed springs and rivers. These provided mists that rose up during the evenings and dew in the mornings sufficient to sustain life. From the evidence all over the world, the earth before the Flood was almost universally tropical or sub-tropical. There appears to be a uniform temperature all over the earth. This may have come about because of the presence of what is referred to as the “vapor canopy”.

The vapor canopy theory has some support from the Scripture and helps explain many things about the pre-flood world. This canopy would have been a clear water

canopy probably located where the ionosphere is now. It would have provided a uniform greenhouse effect and shielded the inhabitants of the earth from some of the life-shortening harmful rays from the sun.

As to the Creation of Man

(v.7)

Moses expands on how Adam was made. Chapter one tells us about the design of humans in relationship to his spiritual environment. Chapter two tells us the fabrication of man, that is, Adam, in relationship to his physical environment. We have already seen from chapter one that we are not animals. We have been made in image of God. These two phrases here teach us several important truths about how God made us and what we are as humans.

We have a physical part, called our bodies.

Our bodies are how we interact with the physical world God has made. Our bodies are made of earth and will return to earth. There will be a day when God will refashion the bodies of His saints so that they will both be uniquely their own and fully conformed to the intent of God's original design.

We have an immaterial part, called our souls.

While not mentioned here directly, the rest of the Bible teaches us that we have a soul, sometimes using words like heart and spirit to refer to components of our immaterial part.

We are a unity of parts.

Understand this. The real you is both your body and your soul. I have tried to get away from saying the real you that is in your body. The Bible teaches us that the body and soul are wholly integrated together into the "you" yet they are distinguishable. Again, even in this there is a reflection of God and an anticipation of the incarnation.

God gives man his life.

God breathes into inanimate flesh so that Adam becomes a living creature. This life-giving breath causes Adam to awaken to life from the very mouth of God. This theme then runs through the Bible: God's breath, His Spirit and His Word, causes us to come alive. In our spiritual fleshiness and deadness, the Word and Spirit quicken.

Man is the direct creation by God.

We are not the product of long evolutionary change from lower species to a higher order. Adam (and later Eve) were made directly by God. They were made mature; that is, they were full grown on the first day of their existence. Contra almost every other theory, philosophy, myth and religion, man is made and made immediately and directly by God.

From this, I want to make one more observation, again. When God made the universe, He made it mature, full-grown. Some have called this "with the appearance of age." It is evident from the Genesis record and the complementary texts throughout the Bible that this is so.

Its Divine Creation

(v.8-9)

Into the uncultivated wildness and with the man now made, God sets about to plant a Garden. The Garden was designed by God as a separate place from the general wildness and uncultivated chaos of the earth. From it man was to learn how to extend his dominion into the rest of creation. And here God provided all that man needed for food in the garden.

God placed two important trees in the Garden. These trees are very important for the flow of redemptive history. Let's take just a moment to consider them.

The Tree of Life – No explanation is given as to what kind of tree this is. It was a tree that gave life. Later, we will find that it could have been the source of sustaining life indefinitely. In the new heavens and earth, it is a multi-fruited tree associated with the river of life in Zion and the throne of God for the healing and life of all the people groups. From my own study of the Word the tree of life represents the Lord Jesus, who is the source of everlasting life.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – Again, we do not know what kind of tree, but it was placed in the garden to be that which would be forbidden in God's testing of man. It is through the commands relating to that tree that the experience of good and evil would come.

Speculation about the function of these trees if man had not fallen is foolish and wasteful. The fall was planned from eternity past. The earth and all that God made was designed from the beginning to live a fallen world. So let us stay with what the Scriptures actually say and stop speculating about what would never have been. We know that they are important to the storyline of the Bible as it unfolds in fallenness.

Its Strategic Centrality

(v.10-14)

It is always important to note the language of texts. We often accept things as true which the text does not actually say. This is true of the Garden east of Eden.

The Garden is not named Eden. Eden is the place where God dwelled on earth before the flood. The Garden is in its environs. It was in the east of Eden, as some of the other translations note. The wealth and importance of kings were often measured by the greatness and grandness of the gardens they planted near their residences. Thus, this wonderful Garden is the place where man will dwell near the dwelling of God.

The Garden is watered by the river out of Eden. Notice carefully verse 10. Out of Eden, God's dwelling, flowed a river to be the source of the Garden's life. That river then branched off at the Garden into the four great rivers of the Fertile Crescent. Thus, the river from Eden flowing through the garden becomes the source of blessing and sustenance to the rest of the world.

So the point in this paragraph is not primarily to locate the Garden geographically. It is possible that it may do that since these were rivers known to Moses and the Israelites. These were the great rivers that formed the fertile crescent. However, the point here is metaphorical. Eden, God Himself in His dwelling place, pours a river into the Garden out of which comes the flow of blessing for all the earth.

Its Related Commands

(v.15-17)

Many argue that these elements are a covenant with Adam. I believe that good Biblical theology should reserve the word *covenant* in its formal sense beginning with the covenant with Noah. Is there a covenant here with Adam? I don't believe so. There is no statement in the Bible that clearly states that there is covenant with Adam. The first time the word is used is with Noah.

But God is still Adam's God. It is God who will order Adam's life. What is ordered here is in view of the fall. God sovereignly places Adam in the Garden to live. He assigns Adam two responsibilities and announces one restriction. Here is God giving the terms of Adam's life and well-being. Man may be a regent who is to extend God's dominion over the earth. However, he is not God and must serve under and be submissive to the rule of God.

As to Adam's Responsibilities

(v.15)

Adam's responsibilities are defined in two simple words. Yet there is enormous potential for living out his identity as given him and defined for him by God.

HE IS TO WORK THE GARDEN. The idea here is all the labor that would be put into learning, understanding, and applying the pattern of order that God placed into the Garden.

HE IS TO KEEP THE GARDEN. The idea here is all the labor that would be put into maintaining the Garden as a steward under God. Adam was responsible to preserve the order that God had created.

These two words, *work* and *keep*, are used all through the Old Testament to refer to spiritual service. Man's physical work is invested with spiritual importance. This breaks the secular/sacred dichotomy showing that from the beginning, man was to work and to ward under God's rule.

As to Adam's Restriction

(v.16-17)

Here is the first time in the Bible we find the word "command". In the context of unimaginable bounty and blessing, with all that God had provided in the Garden and in the wider world for food, only this certain tree was not to be eaten from. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the place of testing. There was nothing innate in the tree itself either to give a knowledge of good or a knowledge of evil. It was obedience to God that was in question.

In other words, God did not deny them the tree because it was dangerous. He denied them the tree as probation, a test. There already were responsibilities for man. But God's decreed will and sovereign purpose placed this tree in the Garden, commanded Adam not to eat as a means by which the fall could take place.

Now I want to be clear about this. The course of redemptive history was not set *after the fall*. We are not living out Plan B. Everything that is being done in Genesis 1-2 is designed by God to bring us to Genesis 3 and Adam and Eve's fall into sin. How can I say that? Because all through the Bible, God declares His intention to show aspects of His character which can only be manifested in the context of sin. In other words, God is merciful. But if there are no creatures needing

mercy, then it is only something that can be talked about, but never expressed. God had determined to show all these grand attributes and to put them on public display by all that He would do to save His people.

Note: One implication of this is to refuse to speculate over what if Adam had not sinned. As I read the Bible, this was not a possible world. The original creation, the Garden itself, and the trees placed there were there, not to provide two possible paths for the future, but to make the determined path possible.

Now God has provided for Adam, a place to live, food to eat, responsibilities as servant-king, direction and a pattern for dominion and clear commands and warnings about consequences.

The Companions

(v.18-25)

But something is not yet complete...

The Evident Need

(v.18-20)

For the first time in the text, something is not good. God, who in His Trinity of Persons and singleness of essence is a community of love, fellowship and oneness, declares that it is not good for man to be alone. If God dwells in community and companionship, then man cannot dwell alone. So, God declares that He will make a companion, a helper, who will be a good fit. He will design a perfect helper to be a companion for Adam.

In chapter one, we are told that God choose to make humankind in His image. Here is the basis for equality. All humans are equal as image bearers. God also choose to make humankind, male and female. Here is the basis for roles and responsibilities. Now in chapter two, we are shown the process of these creative acts of God. Adam is made from the ground, placed in the Garden and given his servant-king task in life. Now, God will complete the making of humankind by making the woman, Eve.

But God aims to teach Adam a practical and personal lesson. Adam is surrounded by heart fulfilling creation. Part of the creation is all the animal life. He needs to see and feel his incompleteness. So God assigns Adam a project. In essence the project is: find a suitable companion mate for himself. In order to do that intelligently, search through all the animal kingdom by examining them, categorizing and characterizing them, giving them suitable names. In this important task, Adam is beginning to fulfill his dominion mandate. He is also on a search for God's kind of companionship.

Verse 20 comes to the end of the task. In all the creation, no one is a suitable companion for him. He is alone in his humanness. This is not as a result of sin in earth or fault in God. This is his place now in God's order. No animal can or ought to be the sort of companion that God has ordained in human community.

The Wonderful Provision

(v.21-23)

Now that Adam understands, God moves to provide that suitable helper-companion. God causes Adam to fall into a deep sleep. While he is asleep, God removes a portion of his side, here called his rib. Then God closes up his surgical site. From this flesh and bone removed from Adam God builds the first woman, Eve. While Adam is made from

the dust of the earth, the woman is made from the flesh of the man. And God brings her to Adam.

Why does God go about this as He does? Why does He not simply make Eve from the dust at the same time He made Adam? And why from Adam's side? Lot's of sentimental reasons have been proposed. But what is God's point? Let me suggest some answers grounded in the tapestry and trajectory of the text.

Eve being made after Adam has been created and made the regent, establishes who is head of the human race and the home. It is clear that Adam is responsible before God for his rule and his obedience before Eve is made. Yet, she shares a subordinate oversight with him.

Adam was made first and then Eve. Paul observes that this order in the creative work of God establishes the authority of a husband over his wife. Headship and authority in the home *are not the result of the fall*. The fall and sin have made submission hard. The fact of God creating the male first and the woman second makes submission necessary.

This reflects the mysterious reality of Christ and the church. The church is formed out of and as a part of the Christ's body. Her existence and her life come from Christ. The correspondence between Adam's rib and Jesus's riven side may be significant as well.

Verse 23 simply sings with the delight of Adam. Frankly, I think that Adam "saying" this is a serious understatement. In the Hebrew, this is poetry. He recognizes her as one with him. He rejoices that she is wonderfully and fearfully made by the great Creator. He resonates with her as God's gift of marriage to him for their mutual oneness and companionship. He names here as being all that God intended: a suitable companion and marvelous completer.

So what was sought has now been provided. Adam and Eve, joint image bearers of their creator, companions and completers are now united by God in a covenant union.

The Scriptural Lessons

(v.24-25)

The Holy Spirit through Moses now draws two very important lessons from this text.

God has established the institution of marriage (v.24)

He is its designer. He has defined it and implemented it. True marriage is the complete union of one man and one woman in a covenant bond to serve God's purposes. In marriage, physical union is not only permitted, but commanded. The physical union is to be an expression of the union and communion of souls.

Where there is no sin, there will be no shame (v.25).

Moses is highlighting their innocence. The point of the text is to begin to show that shame is connected to sin. They had nothing to hide. After their sin they tried to hide from God and hide their nakedness. Both are connected with guilt. This is before the fall. There are no other humans than this married couple. So yes, nakedness is not sinful in a marriage. But that is not really the point. Moses is showing us that they have no sin and therefore no guilt, no shame and nothing to hide. So here are Adam and Eve living naked and open, unashamed in the

presence of their God and in the presence of one another. They are in a right relationship with their God and with one another.

Reflect and Respond

What an incredibly amazing chapter. So much mystery and wonder. So much delight and joy. Here is God providing for man all that he needs. Yet woven into all that God is doing is a preparation for the unfolding of His purposes for mercy and grace.

As we close, consider the following important lessons: (drawn from *The New Bible Commentary*)

GOD HAS ORDAINED THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAN. We are accountable to Him in worship, work and walk. We are not autonomous and independent. We were designed by God to keep His Word and to obey it.

A HUSBAND AND WIFE COMPLEMENT AND COMPLETE EACH OTHER. Thus, the differences in physiology are reflected in their souls as well. Difference and diversity are desirable. It is like the interlocking of the fingers of the hand. Yet, at the very points of where our differences are to make us stronger, they often are the places for conflict.

THE UNION BETWEEN MAN AND WIFE SHOULD BE PERMANENT. A man is united (lit. 'sticks') to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Jesus (Matthew 19:5) and Paul (Ephesians 5:31) quote this in decrying divorce. This verse is the foundation for a Biblical view of marriage. In every case where a wrong view or practice of marriage is being corrected, this verse is quoted.

A HUSBAND MUST PUT HIS WIFE'S INTEREST ABOVE ALL OTHERS, even his parents. He *will leave his father and mother*, by putting his responsibility to honor and to care for them second to his delightful duty to care for and nourish his wife's well-being (*cf.* Eph. 5:25–29).

THE WIFE IS UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF HER HUSBAND. Adam names her *woman* (23) and later Eve (3:20), just as earlier he had named the animals (19). This concept of the man's headship is taken drawn from this account and is woven throughout the rest of the Bible.

GOD CREATED ONLY ONE EVE FOR ADAM, not several Eves or another Adam. Thus, both polygamy (*cf.* Lv. 18:18; Dt. 17:17) and homosexuality (Lv. 18:22; Rom. 1:26–27) are condemned by the Scripture and corrupt the marvelous design and delight of the Word of God.ⁱ

Finally, *the Lord Jesus Christ delights in and desires for His Bride, the church.* In Ephesians 5:32, marriage reflects a greater reality and more wonderful mystery. Make it your aim to reflect that great reality for glory of God.

ⁱCarson, D. A. *New Bible Commentary : 21st Century Edition.* Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. 4th ed., Ge 2:18. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.