

The Creation of Mankind: Part 1

God and Man in the Garden

Scripture: Genesis 2:4-17

Sermon Series: *Genesis: The Beginning*

Topic: Creation, Mankind, Marriage, Male, Female

Introduction

Today the text focus our attention on *the creation of mankind* and their place in the garden of Eden.

Verse 4 serves as an introduction to chapter 2 and we should note three words; generations, day, and LORD.



⁴ These 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.
Genesis 2:4 (ESV)

These are the generations. This opening phrase will become very familiar to the reader of this book. This is the first of 11¹ occurrences of this phrase, which functions as a kind of section heading that more narrowly focuses attention upon something that has just been introduced in the previous section. It's like a literary zoom lens intended to focus the readers attention on a smaller part of the larger picture that was previously mentioned. Thus, chapter 2 zooms in to focus on specific aspects of God's creative work which was previously introduced in chapter 1, namely on the creation of man, which was generally introduced in 1:27-28, but which will now be more specifically expounded upon.

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..."
Genesis 1:27-28 (ESV)

¹ Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2.

We are simply told that God created man in His image, as both male and female, but we are not told if they were both created at the same time or different times or if they like everything else were spoken into existence out of nothing (ie. *ex nihilo*) or if God formed them from some material that he had already created. All of these questions will be answered in this chapter.

'Man' (אָדָם *ādām*) is a general term and a collective noun that refers to humans, both male and female, who were both created in "*God's own image and likeness*" (1:26-27). Both were also blessed with the command to "*be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*" and to exercise *dominion* over all the animals and over all the earth itself (1:26, 28).

The word **'generations'** translates the Hebrew word תּוֹלְדוֹת (*tôlēdôt*), which in the Septuagint—Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible dating to third century B.C. (LXX)—was translated by the word γένεσις (*genesis*), from which we have the title of this book.

In the day the LORD God made the earth and the heavens (v..4). This vs. explicitly connects this chapter with the first. The author is referencing the same event of creation. Here we see again the use of the word **'day'** (יּוֹם *yôm*), which in this case is use as a summary word referring to the whole creative event, rather than one particular segment of it.

Last week, as we surveyed chapter 1, I noted that this word was used six times and in each of those uses it is defined by the author as a period of time including an "*evening and a morning*."² I argued, based upon this and two³ other references, that Moses intends for us to understand this to be a normal 24-hour day.

Someone came to me privately and very respectfully shared with me that the way that I framed this last Sunday made it appear that if one did not agree with my interpretation then they were not believing the word of God, but rather the word of man. I did not intend to communicate that my interpretation is the only right one and that if you disagreed with me then you were not believing the word of God. I apologize for that.

What I did intend to do was to provoke us all—no matter how you may interpret the meaning of 'day' in Genesis—to ask one question, What is the source and foundation of our interpretation of the Bible? Is it grounded in our study of Scripture or is it grounded in some other source of authority outside of Scripture?

There are many good and godly biblical interpreters who hold to the divine inspiration and authority of Scripture and yet come to a different conclusion than do I regarding the question of the interpretation of the word 'day.' I personally cannot escape the conclusion that the intended meaning of 'day' in Genesis 1 is a normal 24-hour period

² Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.

³ Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13-17.

of time, but I know there are faithful, biblical interpreters, whom I love and respect, who come to a different conclusion. My aim last week was to force all of us to ask ourselves, in what do we have more faith; the word of God or the word of man?

LORD. This verse marks the first occurrence of this word in Scripture. It occurs 6827 times in the whole Bible. When in Scripture you see the word LORD (in all caps), this represents the Hebrew word YHWH (Yaheweh, Jehovah). This is the personal name of God. Moses wants us to know that The Creator of all things is the God of Israel. He is a *personal* Creator. He has a personal name, just as you and I have a name. He is a relational being who personally relates to His creation. He is personally invested in, not distant from, His creation.

Overview

The remainder of the chapter divides into three sections. The first is vs. 5-7, in which we will see the creation of the first man. The second is vs. 8-14 where we will see that God planted the first garden. Finally, in vs. 15-25 (which we'll have to save for next week) we will see God's purposes for man, the creation of the first woman, and the first marriage.

I. God Created Man (vs.5-7)

In this first section, we see not a second creation story, but rather a more detailed expansion of the creation already summarized for us in chapter 1. We see the first hint of God's purpose for creating man and we see God's personal involvement and spiritual investment in man.



⁵ When 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, ⁶ and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— ⁷ then 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. Genesis 2:5-7 (ESV)

When no bush of the field was yet in the land (v.5). Some see here a contradiction and many skeptics have concluded this creation account is a second and different creation account from that contained in chapter 1. The reason for this is because these verses say that there were “no bushes or plants” yet in the land at the time that man was created. But if you go back to chapter 1 you'll see that man was created on day 6 while “vegetation, plants, and trees” were created on day 3. These argue that this is a contraction. However, if you look closely with the eyes of faith you will see this apparent contradiction can be explained.

The word ‘*field*’ is used two times in v.5. This word was not used in chapter 1 and it refers to a particular place and a specific plot of land. The word use for ‘*land*’ or ‘*earth*’ in chapter 1 is a

more general word, whereas the word 'field' used in chapter 2 is more specific and particular word. The focus is zooming in. God is taking us from the thirty thousand foot view of the whole earth down to the 100 foot view of a specific field. We are moving in from a view of all the earth in to a view of a particular place, which will soon see is a place called Eden.

There was no man to work the ground (v.5). The reason there was no bushes and small plants yet was because there *"was no man to work the ground."* Here we see the first hint of one of God's purposes for man. He intends him *"to work the ground."* God is preparing the ground for him by causing a mist use rise up and water the *"face of the ground."* The land is ready for man, but it lacks fruitfulness because man at this point is absent. This mention of ground and it's present lack of greenery sets the stage for the arrival of man.

LORD God formed man of dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (v.7). God *"formed"* man of dust of the ground." He did not speak man into existence, rather he *"formed"* man from dust. God did not create man *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, but rather He took dust and *formed* man. God took what He previously created and from it began the work of creating the first man.

The word *"formed"* is related to the word for *"potter"* (Jer 18:2). It may be that the image intended here is that God is Almighty Potter who is fashioning unshaped dust into a *"shaped"*⁴ human body. Notice the connection between the man and the ground. Dust is the origin of man. This connection is seen in the Hebrew language, for the word for man is *'adam* while the word for ground is *'adamah*.⁵

Not only did God *form* the first man, but He then *"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."* The image is close and personal. It is face-to-face and intimate. It is an image of God giving of Himself, pouring His own breath into His creation. God breathes life into lifeless dust. The very life in man comes from the breath of God. This act is unique to man. God only does this to man. He does not breathe life into the nostrils of any animal, but only of man. St. Augustine said, "We should understand that the soul was at this point joined to the body."⁶ This creative breath gave life to the body God had formed. God not only creates our bodies, but He also creates our spirits (Zch 12:1; Is 42:5).

In this first section, we see a particular place is in view, a place that God has prepared for man and then we see the creation of the first man who was formed out of dust but given life by the breath of Yahweh.

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 59.

⁵ Iain M. Duguid, "Genesis," in *Genesis–Numbers*, ed. Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Jay Sklar, vol. 1, ESV Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2025), 52.

⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees; And, on the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, ed. Thomas P. Halton, trans. Roland J. Teske, vol. 84, The Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 104.

II. God Planted at Garden (vs.8-14)

In this second section, we see that after creating the first man God then put him in a place called Eden, wherein God planted the first garden and in this garden are two particular trees.



⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ And 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. Genesis 2:8-9 (ESV)

The LORD God planted a garden in Eden (v.8). God is revealed to be a gardener. God planted a garden which was located inside the land called *Eden*. Notice that this is not called the garden of Eden, but rather, “a garden *in* Eden.” Eden evidently was a land larger than the garden itself. God then took the man who he had formed and “*there he put the man.*”

Attention is now shifting for a moment away from the man and to this place called Eden and to this particular place called a garden. Our focus is continually drawn deeper into a specific place. The word Eden “means ‘delight,’” thus, “we may assume that the name was intended to evoke a picture of idyllic delight and rest.”⁷

This place is a beautiful place. It is full of trees that are *pleasant* to see and *good* to eat. This is true of “*every tree*” (v.9). All the trees are both beautiful to behold and good to ingest. Now our focus is taken into the “*midst of the garden*” where two specific trees are mentioned. The first mentioned is “*the tree of life*” and the second is “*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*” This is the first time we learn of evil. Something evil has happened and someone or something has already violated God’s good will and broken His good word.

¹⁰ A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. Genesis 2:10-14 (ESV)

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden (v.10). One river flows out of Eden and into the garden. Eden is at a higher elevation than the garden for this single river from Eden flows down into this garden and provides water for it. It is inside the garden that this one river is divided

⁷ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 41.

into four rivers. These four rivers then flow out to various lands and may be intended to communicate that they flow to the four corners of the earth, giving life as it flows.

A life-giving river flowing from God is mentioned by both Ezekiel (47, flowing out from the tabernacle) and John in The Revelation (22 flowing out from the throne of God). Eden then is place that is the source of life which flows from the presence of God Himself.

Also mentioned is gold and many precious stones. The location of Eden is often debated, but the intent of the passage is not to disclose the particular location, but rather that Eden is the source of joy, life, beauty, goodness, and treasure. Eden is a wonderful place and a paradise of God's particular care, attention, and presence and that this is the place where the first man was placed.

III. God's Purposes for Man (vs.15-25)

This third section reveals God's purposes for man, the goodness of His plan, the creation of the first woman, and the first marriage.



¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ 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." Genesis 2:15-17 (ESV)

The LORD God took the man (v.15). The author repeats in v.15 what he has already written in v.8. Repetition in Scripture is always intended for emphasis. God's sovereign work and good plans are on display. God here is the sole and primary actor. God is active and man is passive. God is working out His own plan.

Put him in the Garden of Eden. The little Hebrew word '*put*' means, "settle down; rest; repose."⁸ It is used of the 'rest and safety' Israel found in the Promised Land (Dt 3:20; 12:10; 25:19). It also refers to something being dedicated *to be in the presence of God*, like the jar of manna that was to be '*put*' before God's presence at the ark of the covenant (Ex 16:33-34) or the holy garments that the priests were to '*put*' on when they went into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies (Lev 16:23).

Thus, God "*put*" the man in the garden to find "rest" in God's presence and be "safe" in "the presence of God."⁹ If this is correct, then this garden was a sweet and safe place where the man could experience perfect peace and *communion* with his God who created him. God

⁸ Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

⁹ John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 45.

was at work in this garden and God put the man in the same garden to be with Him. *Enjoying peaceful communion in the presence of God is thus the first purpose of man.* God created man to be with Him and to enjoy His company.

To work it and keep it (v.15). Here we learn the second and third purposes of God for the man, to *work* and *keep* the garden. The word '*work*' (עבד 'abad) can also mean, "til, toil, or serve."

"The word is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut 4:19), and in priestly texts, especially of the tabernacle duties (Num 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26)."¹⁰ The verb '*keep*' (שמר shamar) means, "keep, watch over, guard." The word "is commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (17:9; Lev 18:5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle (Num 1:53; 3:7–8)."¹¹

The man in Eden was expected to *work*, by serving God doing productive labor not lazily lounging around all day doing nothing. Man was created to *keep* the garden by *productive working* and *protective guarding*. That evil is a reality has already been established and thus God has put the man in the garden on watchful guard duty.

The second and third purposes of God for man are *productivity* and *protection*. Work is not a result of the curse or the fall of man, but rather is part of the divine purpose and plan for mankind.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying (v.16). This is the first command of God to man. God is here teaching the man His word and giving to him the responsibility of rightly handling that teaching. God's first command gives permission to the man to "*eat of every tree of the garden*," all of which have already been seen as "*pleasant to see and good for food*" (v.9). The first words of God to man is a permissive invitation to enjoy the goodness of God's creation. *God created man, thus He knows what is good for man.* God gave the man man pleasant and fruitful trees to enjoy.

Only after inviting him to eat of the good trees does God limit that invitation by prohibiting one tree, namely "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*." That tree alone is to be avoided, for if its fruit is eaten then "*you shall surely die*." This teaching is serious. It is a matter of life and death. You will also note that the exact kind of fruit of this particular tree is not mentioned. It is not a particular kind of fruit that kills, but rather the act of disobeying God's word that leads to death. Thus, man's fourth purpose is to obey God's commands and to guard God's word and His teaching.

IV. Conclusion

We can draw at least two conclusions related to *life* and *work*.

1. The origin of life: ***Human life came about directly and personally from God.***

¹⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 67.

¹¹ Ibid.

- A. First, Adam became a living breathing human being by the direct, intentional creative action of God. Adam was not formed by the accidental processes of random mutation, but rather by the intentional, purposeful, and skillful hand of God out of dust, not out of preexisting biological material.
- B. Second, every living human being is animated by the breath of God is with in them. This is why God commands “no murder,”¹² which is literally what the sixth commandment says. Every human being—no matter how young or how old, no matter how small or how large—is created in the image of God. To intentionally attack the life of another human being is to make an attack on the image of God in that person.

This is why our state governor’s new law allowing the murder of unborn children all the way up to the point of birth, is so reprehensible. If you would like to participate in an effort to repeal Chapter 188 then Laura Chaboya will be in the lobby to give you more information.

2. The meaning of work: ***Work is not the result of the curse of sin, but rather is part God’s original plan for creation.*** We were built for work. We are his workmanship, created to do good work (Eph 2:10). Therefore, let us do all our work with all our heart as unto the Lord who created us.
3. ***There are four purposes of mankind.*** The first purpose of man was to enjoy sweet and peaceful communion with God who created him. God’s second purpose of man was to work. The third purpose is to guard his work from evil. And the fourth purpose was to rightly handle the word of God; hearing His teaching and obey His commands.

Thus, everything in this chapter still applies to us today. All principles rooted in God’s original creation design, still apply today. These principles are transcultural.

- Every human being is still to be thought of as created in the image of God.
- Human life on earth is to be understood as resulting from the intentional, purposeful creative will of God, not from the accidental, purposeless results of random biological processes.
- Work is to be viewed as good and fulfilling part of God’s plan for humanity.

May the Lord helps us to embrace these truths in our lives today.

¹² Exodus 20:13.

V. Discussion Questions

1. Is Genesis 2 a second and different creation account from Genesis 1? Why or why not?
2. Genesis 2 presents God as personally involved in creating and caring for humanity. What does it mean to you that your life is the intentional work of a personal Creator rather than the result of chance or accident? How should that affect the way you view yourself and others?
3. Genesis 2:7 describes God forming Adam from dust and breathing life into him. What does this teach us about both our dependence upon God and the value of human life?
4. God placed Adam in the garden "to work it and keep it." What does this passage teach us about the biblical purpose and dignity of work? How might this change the way we approach our jobs, responsibilities, or seemingly ordinary tasks?
5. God gave Adam abundant freedom but also one clear prohibition (Genesis 2:16–17). What does this teach us about God's commands? Why is obedience to God ultimately a matter of life and death?
6. Looking at Genesis 2 as a whole, what is one truth about God's design for humanity that you most need to remember or apply right now? What is one specific change you could make this week in your relationship with God, your work, your family, or your marriage as a result of what we have studied?