

Genesis 2:4–17

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 February 2021

Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 0 0] is taken from Genesis 2 verses 4 through 17. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. 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. 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 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. 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. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there he put the man whom he had formed 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. A river flowed out of

Eden to water the garden and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah where there is gold and the gold of that land is good. Delium and Onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush and the name of the third river is the Tigris which flows east of Assyria and the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden 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. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. It's great to see many of you here in the loft and a special welcome to those of you who are at home. I still long for the day when we're all in the same room for the first time. But we'll gather in this way as the Lord gives us strength.

I hope you're enjoying this series in the book of Genesis. I know I am. And today marks the first transition point in that series.

The opening of the book of Genesis, chapter 1-1 through chapter 2-3, and I hope you have your Bible open before you today, is behind us. Let me put it this way. The introduction to the book of Genesis Genesis took us four sermons in our series to cover. The God who created all things with the intention of being celebrated by all people, pinnacled creatures really, who share his glory and are entering into his rest, is by the end of chapter 2, verse 3, look at it, said to be finished with the work that he's done. So, with the verse that Amy opened with today, then 2-4, the prolegomena, just a fancy word for the introduction, the prolegomena to Genesis is complete.

[3 : 4 1] Which ought to make you ask, how will this storyline develop? What happens once everything is in place?

Where will part one, because that's really where we've arrived, where will part one take us? And if you're like me, when I'm reading a book, I'm always flipping through the pages to see how far the part I'm reading will actually carry through in the text and give way to a successive movement in the story. You know, when I opened Genesis a few weeks ago, I outlined a few reasons why I felt the book would be a good one for us at this time in our life. And I find myself again today, as we open part one, feeling the need to just lay down a few things before I actually even launch into the text. So, let me put four things before you. First, right away, part one reinforces what we said at the outset, that Genesis is centered on the theme of family. And normally, people don't throw that word in when they consider the book of Genesis. But just take a look at the way this part one begins.

These are the generations of. A genealogy of sorts. As though the God who created the heavens and the earth in the prolegomena now gives way to that which the heavens and the earth will create by way of their own progeny. It's a family story. You should expect then, in these next weeks, we're going to take seven weeks in part one, you should expect that we're going to be learning about the generational lines of our universal family. Second, I want you to see that part one of Genesis is a fixed literary unit from family to fixed. It's going to run from 2-4 through the end of chapter 4, verse 26.

If you're looking at your Bible, it might be good just to even turn that page and take it in. And we know that that's the fixed unit because look at the way 5-1 starts. This is the book of the generations of Adam. This same phrase. These are the generations of the progeny, or what originally comes from the heavens and the earth, and it gives way to the generations of Adam. In fact, if you like writing or literature, you might be interested to know that astute readers have read Genesis and seen this as a structural way of moving the story along. This little phrase, these are the generations of, will be used 10 times to almost subdivide the book into its progression and its fullness. Third, not only family, not only a fixed unit, but this highlights our failure as a human race. You want to know why the world is as it is?

Pay attention over the next seven weeks. You want to know what went wrong along the way or why we can't seem to get it right? Pay attention to part one of Genesis. If I were to put a header over part one of Genesis, chapter 2-4 to 4-26, I would label it from wonder to ruin. And I mean that from our humanity's wonder to our own ruin.

[7 : 40] Chapter 2 is the wonder. Chapters 3 and 4 begin our descent into ruin. We are going to explore over these next weeks, next weeks, the story of our own demise. It's an immense tragedy that speaks with incredible applicability into our present condition. And it's all in contrast, isn't it, to what we have given ourselves to in the introduction. Genesis 1 was organized to reveal that the God who created the heavens and the earth completed it in six days. And as we saw last week, he punctuated the seventh day with a word of his blessing and an entrance into his rest. That's what Genesis 1 was doing. But look what this does by way of contrast. In Genesis 2-4, the heavens and the earth will produce not six days, punctuated in a seventh, but six generations of Adam, punctuated with a seventh by the name of Lamech, who will, with a word, not bless all that are around him, and not under rest, but with a word, will ask for 77-fold revenge on whatever occurs to him on this earth. I mean, take a look. Chapter 4,

Now Adam knew Eve, his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. That's first generation to second. By the time you get to verse 17, you'll see Cain to Enoch. That's third. And from Enoch to Erad, Erad to Mahujael, Mahujael to Methushael, that's the sixth. And Methushael will father Lamech, the seventh generation. And Lamech's words will be, I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is 77-fold. Do you see the way the story is moving? God, in six days, creates, punctuating the seventh with blessing and rest. Man, in six generations, produces revenge 77-fold. I think that this is really important for you to know. And yet I want you to know that you're not just left alone with your failure over the next seven weeks or our failure. We all know that a family tree does more than simply tell us who we are or where we came from. When you begin to research the stories of your own line, perhaps you've been on Ancestry.com, it's those stories that actually begin to inform not only who created you, but what it was that sustained those who came before you. And when you get to this unit, you've got to see this small, tiny, but potent word of hope. And it's the word, Lord.

In Genesis 1, all we get is God as creator. But take a look back at Genesis 2, 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. It's the first time we've seen in the text, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, Lord. Or according to the Hebrew readers, Yahweh, this one who had a particular name that exploded at the appearance of God in the bush before Moses, and then was God's name given to him again after the golden calf incident. On both occasions, self-describing himself, God is, as one who will come, one who will enter your failure, one who will make a covenant, one that will redeem you. And so while we're reading about the failure of the human race, seven times in this very chapter on the man, verses 4 through 17, seven times, the Lord God is undergirding and sustaining all that has taken place. Finally, family, fixed, failure. Today we're going to come to the first.

Genesis 2 opens with creation of the first man, and that he's formed, interestingly, surprisingly, before the woman. This is anything then but a repeat of what we saw in the introduction in Genesis 1 26.

This is not some second alternative full-orbed creation account. This is a zeroing in on the creation of man as male and female in succession, one from the other. That's what God wants us to see. He wants us to see something about first. I'm thinking of Genesis 1 then as being in an airplane looking at the whole creation at 30,000 feet. But when you actually come to our text, and we'll begin to look at it now, you're looking through the lens of a movie camera that evidently was placed at eye level somewhere in the first chapter of Genesis, and it was left, and it was left running. And so while in chapter 1 you see

[13 : 59] God creating man, male and female, he created them as though it happened in one simultaneous moment of combustion. Secondly, you've come along this b-roll, and when you plug it in and begin to read it, you see that you are so much closer to what actually took place, and that there is a slowing down, there is a detailing, there is something for us to be learned, and that is what we're going to look at.

It's the great wonder of creation. Namely, we learn that man and woman were made in succession, one before the other. A man from mud came first, a woman from the man next. And the question we ought to be asking is why. Why the man first? Why is the woman not here yet? He'll need to return next week.

We spend the whole week on her. And what mystery does God intend for us to take from this surprising insight, without which we would have had no understanding. Let me lay it down to you this way and then see if I can prove it over the next 20 minutes. From this text, I want to persuade you that God sustains all things, here's the first surprise, in his only son, by his spirit, through his word, and that as such, he is calling you to place all of your hopes in this life and the next, in the rule that belongs to Jesus alone. Now, I'm going to concede that my argument might not square with what you think ought to be coming out of this text. I get it. More often than not, preachers use this text to convey something fundamental about you and your job.

It becomes material for the dignity of vocational work. And certainly, all those things are true. And they certainly can be truths said from this text, but I've become convinced that they are not the truths that this text would have us know. I'm out to persuade you that the Bible takes this text to teach us more about Jesus than your job, more about what he alone can do for you, rather than turning this into something that is all about you. Now, how do I get there? Two simple steps.

We're totally into the text by this point. Look at verses 5 through 8. He does this first by providing a person. A person is needed to sustain God's place. Look at the way it's written.

[17:13] When no bush of the field was yet in the land, no small plant in 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, and a mist was going up in the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. Then, then, at that time, then, the Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature, and the Lord God planted a garden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Five through eight, a person is evidently needed to sustain God's place. The writer is taking us back to a moment in time when creation was yet, when you look at verse 5, untended. Creation was unmastered. The earth, as of yet, appeared as an unending wilderness without rain, wherein things would flourish.

On the whole, then, we are meant to see that only at this point we find God forming man, God planting a garden, and God putting the man in it to work. On the whole, you and I are meant to read these verses and see the necessity of this man to fulfill God's eternal intention for all that he created. And the misstep we make, I've been thinking about this all week, is to think that the text wants our minds to move from Adam to us, when I actually think he wants our minds to move from Adam to his son. And he intended it from the very beginning. We become the hardworking Adam of the text.

I'm sure I've preached sermons like this from this text. We become the hardworking Adam of the text, endowed with vocational dignity. And that may be true, but that's a dignity that belongs not only to men, but to women. And that is the elephant in the room, as it were. She is not here, and it's denigrating to women to simply look at a text where God is trying to give us the man on his own and principalize it out to her. In fact, what the church has done over time with texts like this is arrive at a de facto understanding that's the man that goes out to work, and the woman, of course, we'll learn later is to help her, and she stays home. And we know nothing of a full-orbed understanding of womanhood that is like the Proverbs 31 woman who's completely at work and at home and running many, many things in complimentary fashion to the man. And so this can't simply be about the fact that we are now endowed with some vocational dignity, wherein she is left out.

It does damage to all. Secondly, and this is really where I think we need to understand this, the New Testament grabs hold of verses 5 to 8 to move from Adam to Jesus, not Adam to us.

In other words, when Paul got a chance to preach this text, he did not do vocational ministry. He did God's only son. The first Adam here, the appearance of a man solitary is meant to move us to the appearance of the man from heaven who saves. Let me see if I can show it to you. You need to look at it. When I came across it again this week, I just spent time lingering on it. And it is in 1 Corinthians, and it is in 15, where he's bringing his whole hopeful resolution to our imperiled world, to a complete fulfillment in the resurrection, which is going to be given to us by Christ.

[21 : 31] And he takes the words of our text about the Lord breathed into him, and he became a living being, and he quotes it right there in verse 45 of chapter 15.

Thus it is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being. And what does he do with it? Therefore, you've got good work to do? No. What he does with it is, the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are all those who are of dust. And as is the man of heaven, so also are all those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. And as we look at Adam, a solitary creature in the garden, who's given this incredible creative movement to bring tending to all of God's creation, you and I are to think, oh my, this is what he has given to my Lord.

And we share things with Adam, but we share things with Christ. Or in the language, the tense of the verb in chapter 15, which is disputed, but verse 49, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. It's something that we should be trying to bear now, but there's no way back to the garden for you and me. There's no way back to how do I get back to what Adam was on about? We forfeited that. And it now all belongs to Christ.

See, it isn't just Paul that makes the move from Adam to Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews did the same, and we noticed it two weeks ago. He took the rule and the dominion and the what is man that thou are mindful of him. And the writer in Hebrews 2 says, and all these things about that first created moment were fulfilled in his Lord Jesus Christ, even though we don't yet see all things subjected to him, he was nevertheless the fulfillment of all that was appearing here in Adam. And so in Adam, we share his earthliness, his dustiness, his clayiness, his fallenness, but in Christ we share his life and all things that are from him.

[24 : 19] Given the contribution of the apostle Paul to the understanding of our text or what he used it for, and given the complimentary nature that the writer to the Hebrews letter uses it for, we should now see that in Adam we have from the very outset God's intention to sustain all things in his created order by his son. That's what he was moving to. And so when you look at it that way, everything then in this text is moving to Jesus. Let me make one last point. It is fascinating, and we'll see it in a little while when we get to chapter 9, when there is a new creation mandate given to Noah and the sons after the flood. The idea that we now still possess Adam-like rule over all creation is not listed. We are told still to be fruitful. We will be told to multiply.

We will be told that given who we are in our fallen state, God is protecting the animal kingdom by giving them fear from us. We are also told that we will nevertheless run over all of the created order. And we are not told in Genesis 9 to be the one who completes all rule over the world. Why?

Because that all now goes to his son. Let me see if I can put the relationship this way. Here is the relationship between this text and your job. Our work in the world is to do all we can to establish the rule of Jesus. Because all rule has been given to him. The first Adam prepares us for the second Adam. The second thing, though, in the text and in the argument, if this text, then I'm trying to persuade you that God sustains all things in his son, I yet have to reveal from this text how that is by his spirit and through his word. And from that, we look not just at the first person who was created for this place, but we see the provisions that are given this person to sustain him in this place. What are the provisions? Look at verses 9 through the end. Threefold. You're going to see the provisions of food and water and a word. The first two provisions, food and water, are material provisions. The third provision, that of his word, is a moral provision. So the man is given all things necessary materially, all things necessary morally, in food, water, and word. Look at verse 9.

And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that's pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And he moved from food to water. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden. It divided and became four. The names are now given and they flow, as it were, from that place out to the ends of the earth. Food and water.

Interestingly, with that mysterious mention of two trees in the middle, one of life and one of good and evil, I won't unfold the treasures that are there because the text does it in ensuing weeks. But just note this, that material provisions are embedded with the spiritual-like force of life-giving structures around.

[28 : 26] Let me put it this way. Just as the physicality of the one man, Adam, is treated in the Bible to mysteriously be embedded with heavenly import about Jesus, so too with these provisions.

They are pregnant in the Bible with spiritual underpinnings. Fruit is always connected and associated with the work of the Spirit. Trees, even the one in Psalm 1, always with that which gives life.

Waters, well, they've already been shown to us back in chapter 1 and verse 2 to be connected to the Spirit, for the Spirit Himself is hovering over the waters. In Ezekiel's prophecy, where you have the complete rebuilding of the temple, you'll have waters going forth from the temple. In Jesus and His own ministry, He will tell one that He has to be born again of water and the Spirit. It is Jesus who will stand and say, in a sense, pouring out the waters, come unto me all who are thirsty. It is Jesus who will say, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And at the end, in the book of Revelation, chapter 22, you will see from the very throne where there is the Lamb, both the tree of life giving fruit in all of its seasons, and the waters flowing forth from His very person. Food and water, material provisions here for the man, are displayed throughout the Scripture to be connected to the work of the Spirit. The Spirit of God sustains life. I'm convinced more than ever that when we read Genesis 2, 4 through 17, we ought to be persuaded that God sustains all things created in His Son by His Spirit, and then finally there it is, through His Word. Verses 15 to 17, the Lord God takes Him,

He's working it, and the Lord God commanded the man, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. And in Jesus, we have the very eternal Word of God, the one man, the only man, who completely adheres to the moral provisions of God's Word.

The only one to whom we could turn to begin to understand how we go about living under His Word. And if you're wondering today how you start getting your life in order, it's as simple as the text we've read.

[31 : 23] If God sustains all things in His Son by His Spirit in accordance with His Word, then He will call you to begin learning now how to live under His rule.

You give yourself to Jesus, and in doing so you try to establish His rule.

You give yourself to Jesus, and you begin to devour His Word. Charles Malick, and I'll close with this, Lebanese scholar, highly influential man in the late 20th century.

I heard him speak once. I was sitting on a grass incline, and he was giving a dedicatory address to a significant building.

And he opened with these words, I speak to you as a Christian. I mean, he was learned and held in high regard throughout universities around the world. He said, I can live, this was the surprising thing, I can live without food.

[32 : 50] I can live without water. I can live without air. But I cannot live without Jesus. And in His Word, I live in and on the Bible long hours every day.

If that needs to be true of you, then give yourself to Him. Because it is true. It is true.

And it's all in seed form. In the creation of Adam. On his own.

To point me to Jesus. It's true. In regard to the way the New Testament will handle marriages. There is something mysteriously in play between the man and the woman who are husband and wife in the way that they relate in regards to what it puts on display about Christ and His church.

It's true and asserted by what happens when we gather as a church family. And the ones through whom we hear the word given.

[34 : 08] And why authority in the local church and the exercise of the word in the corporate setting stands as it does. It's because we are continually giving ourselves to this pattern that was laid down wondrously at the very beginning.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, as we reorient our minds around why You want us to see this.

Why you want us to separate out in our minds for a moment. This order within creation between the man and the woman.

I pray that it would cause all of us to identify with our Lord. Amen. Amen. And to be grateful that from eternity past, You saw fit to sustain the created order through Him.

For indeed, from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory. To Him may our lives be given.

[35 : 38] Amen.