

Creation and Relationships

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[0 : 01] Let's turn for a short time now to Genesis. Genesis chapter 2, mostly we'll look at some parts of chapter 1 as well. At verse 15 of chapter 2 we read, 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.

Now we've seen through chapter 1 how God went about ordering the creation and how that is in a very real sense a preparation for the creation of man and to provide a suitable environment for man.

And he created man as we saw last time. And we did see that he created them male and female as mentioned there in verse 27 of chapter 1.

But chapter 2 is going back over some of that ground and telling us more specifically how God created the female gender when he took out of the man Adam that yet created this robe that he actually formed into the woman.

[1 : 16] So that's adding another interesting detail for us there. Whereas in the first chapter you've got the summary that man as a human being is in fact comprised of male and female gender.

So there's man created by God and both of these genders as we saw have fully the image of God in their creation.

And now we're coming to see what we can really look at in terms of relationships. Because when man was created and when the man and his wife were set in the environment that God had given to them there were certain things that then they had to give regard to by way of relationships.

And these chapters give us the relationships that man had to fulfill in three directions. He had a relationship with his environment, with the physical environment around him.

Both the animals, the plants, the very things that God had created specifically for his benefit. He had a relationship with that.

[2 : 27] He also had the relationship within himself, within mankind. Which brings you to the relationship between the two genders. The actual ordinance of marriage as it is set and grounded in God's work of creation.

So he's got a relationship that he has between the two genders. A relationship that belongs to humankind. And involves both genders in the way that God created them in a complementary fashion.

So that they would in fact complement one another. Thirdly, and in the highest sense, man has a relationship with God. That is the relationship that he had before the fall.

Where he had communion with God. Where God was in fact his main companion. And indeed his only companion in the sense of having the capacity to hold fellowship, communion, conversation with God.

Now of course that third one affects the other two. The relationship with God affects the relationship that brings in. The relationship with his environment. And that relationship within himself.

[3 : 41] Relationship of marriage. All of these are affected by the bothies. Affected by the relationship he has with God. And in fact in many ways. His relationship with God itself is what informs him.

Or what ought to have maintained his relationship with the other two. In the perfect way in which he was created. But there is an overlap of course between these three aspects of relationship that man was created with.

And created for. What we are going to do is looking at the relationship with God first. And then we will see the relationship with his environment. And then look at the relationship that man has internally.

In the sense that male and female are related in marriage. As the chapter shows. Now that is just looking at it in a panorama tonight. Because we really want to look at this very, very important passage.

These opening two chapters of Genesis. Just to see how much is actually rooted here. And grounded here for our understanding of human life. Human relationships.

[4 : 47] Everything that we have mentioned there we are going to look at in a general sense. Then we will zoom in. And look more at the specific ordinances. Or ethics that you have in the passage.

There are three especially of huge importance. That you need to look at in themselves. Which we will do at some other time. The ordinance of marriage we have mentioned.

The ordinance of work. Or the ethic of work. Because man was created to work. Work did not begin after he fell. He was created to work in the Garden of Eden.

The third one is the ordinance of rest. He was given specific direction to rest a portion of his weekly cycle.

On the day that God had appointed. God sanctified one particular day. After he had finished the whole creation and pronounced it very good. God rested.

[5 : 48] And he sanctified that day. And made it a day of rest. The Sabbath day. As it came to be known. So let's look at man's relationship. First of all to God.

There you are in chapter 2 and verse 8. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east. And there he put the man whom he had formed. It wasn't enough for God with respect to man.

That he actually provided all of this environment that is mentioned in chapter 1. The plants. The verdure of the trees. The fruit bearing trees. All of that. We are told specifically here.

That God actually planted a garden. Amongst all the environment around him. God was so specifically careful to take account of man's needs.

That he actually made a specific garden for him. A place where he could actually have. And it was a specific place. Where he could actually have around him the ideal environment for himself as a human being.

[6 : 52] In terms of his needs as God had created him. God had that parental care if you like. And there is a picture really of parental care.

God the parent by creation of this man Adam that he had created. And in order to have the maximum care for him. He planted this garden for him.

He made this smaller environment if you like. Amongst the whole environment of the creation around him. So that it was specifically for him and his needs more immediately.

And that was just the perfect environment. Because everything about that garden actually was designed to fit in with man's abilities.

As God created man with the abilities. He had the ability to discern things. To look at things and to reach conclusions. He had the ability to think. He had the ability to make choices.

[7 : 50] He had the ability to discover things. He had the ability to admire things and be moved inwardly and emotionally. Because you read there that every tree that God made to spring up in the garden is pleasant to the sight.

He didn't just say here are trees for you that you can eat from. He's saying to man these are pleasant for you to look at. They actually give you joy in the very looking up on them.

With which I have given you the ability to look upon them. So that looking upon them gives you pleasure. And you know the word Eden in Hebrew is sure you know this already.

But the word in Hebrew Eden means delight. And that's such an important emphasis to take from these chapters.

From this chapter that describes the garden of Eden. Here is delight. Here is delight for God himself in taking delight in his creation.

[8 : 52] And especially in the creation of man. This man that he has created. Delighting in fellowship with him. Delighting in providing for him. Delighting in giving him exactly what he needs.

And here is man delighting in his God. Delighting in the environment God has given him. Delighting to the extent that as he has been made in the image of God. He has the capacity to be emotionally involved.

And emotionally affected by all that's around him. And that's still part. Even in fallen man. Of what you find in your own soul.

How do you feel when you look out on a bright summer's evening at a glorious sunset? How do you feel when you find waves pounding the rocks in different kind of weather?

You don't just look at it stoically and not really be affected by it. You feel something. How do you feel when you see a masterpiece of a painting?

[9 : 57] And you realize the incredible skill that has gone into the creation of such a work of art. You're moved by it. Some people are moved to tears by it.

How do you feel when you listen to an absolutely stunning piece of music? It doesn't just wash through your ears and through your brain without affecting you.

It's aesthetically beautiful. It's something that hits your emotions. Why does it do that? Why does it do that? To human beings. More than any other creature.

Because God has created you with a capacity to enjoy. To admire. To be emotionally moved. That's what God was doing in giving this kind of environment to man.

Not only that, but he placed him there in the garden in verse 15. To work it and to keep it. You see, God didn't say about this man that he had created.

[10 : 55] He is so perfect, he doesn't need to work. I'm not going to give him something as undignified as work. Because you see, work in the garden of Eden was not undignified.

Work was specifically given to man in such a way that for his body as well as for his mind, it was a necessary thing for him to do.

To exercise the faculties, the strengths, the mind that God had given him. He gave him work in the garden to dress it, to keep it, to look after it, to be its grounds man.

Only after the fall of man, as we'll see in a minute, did work become something else to human beings.

In the creation, it's part of the beauty that there's work for this man that exactly matches what he is as created by God.

[12 : 00] And there's also discovery. And that's an important element as well. Where you look there in verses 10 and 14, 10 to 14 of chapter 2.

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden. There it divided and became four rivers. And it goes on to tell us the various ways in which the rivers divided and what their names were.

Two of them we know, two of them we don't know at all. But it's interesting that that is there. Why is that included in the description of what man was actually provided with?

Because he was given right from the very first to look beyond the immediate. To look beyond the garden that God had placed him in.

To, as it were, follow the rivers that went out of Eden to water the garden. And then see it divide into the four rivers. He was given the mind that inquired into things.

[13 : 00] And as he inquired into things, even there and then in the creation, he would inquire into where is this going? Where does that lead to? What else is there to discover?

And right from the very start, discovery and the ability and the urge to discover was built into man. And it was built into his environment so that he'd be able to exercise that urge to discover.

And that's why we have the urge to find things out. It's something that we have been created with. And our fall in sin, in chapter 3 there, our fall, while it's disturbed all of these things, and brought them into a very, very disorganized and corrupt state, you can still see the root of them in every human being.

These aspects of what Eden describes for us in the garden setting. There's the first part of man's relationship with God, this garden setting, and those things that you can see develop from that.

But there's secondly in man's relationship with God, there's his probation. He is given a specific word from God.

[14 : 20] Now that itself is very interesting and significant, because it's part of the way that man was made in the image of God, that man is able to speak with God.

And God is able to hold conversation with this creature that he's made, because he's made him in his image. He's made him with the capacity to hear God's word, and to respond to God's word.

None of the other creatures have that capacity. And the command that is given man in chapter 2 there, verses 16 and 17, the Lord commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of every 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.

And you know, from chapter 3, you know very well that the serpent, Satan and the serpent, actually set before the woman, first of all, that God was really undoubtedly, surely, being somewhat unfair.

He's kept one tree from you. Why didn't he give you access to all the trees of the garden, if he was really fair? He would have given you access to all the trees of the garden, and you wouldn't have had to have this thing called a command, in order to place a command against one tree.

[15 : 39] Isn't that really God being somewhat niggardly, somewhat really, if you like, as a kind of a miser? Surely he should have given you everything in the garden.

Well, you see, giving man this word of a command is exactly what man needed to actually show his love for God.

Because keeping the word of the Lord out of love for the Lord is exactly what man was designed for. And so you can see, without that word, and if you follow Satan's suggestion, that this was really a bad idea, that man was given a commandment, that man was restricted from one tree of the garden, where surely it would have been better to have given him access to them all, no, God is saying, this is for your good.

This is to actually put you on probation. This is to test you. This is to show if you are indeed going to love me with all your heart or not. And this is giving you the opportunity and the means to show your love for me.

You know, that's something that we have to hold before ourselves and before the world, especially of our day, where the commandments of God are looked at as so incredibly over-restrictive, so out of date, so old-fashioned, so unnecessary, that you just have to get rid of all of these things and put something secular, something man-made in its place, something more up-to-date.

[17 : 19] Why do we have the commands? Why has God given us these instructions? Because that's his means provided for us to either show our love for him or not. If, said Jesus, if a man loves me, he will keep my commandments.

And my father and I will, my father will love him and we will come and make our home with him. It still stands that keeping the word of Christ out of love leads to further fellowship and intense fellowship with God.

That's what man was created with in the beginning. He was given the means by God giving him this word of command through which man could show his love for God by complying with it, by being obedient to it, and by being obedient to it, God would have led him into further avenues of delight and fellowship with himself.

And, you know, that's the same principle, in fact, incredible as it may seem, that God actually gave to Jesus himself.

When Jesus came into the world, he came, as you know, as a servant. A servant of the Father. And in John 14, and verse 31, Jesus said this, I do as the Father has commanded me so that the world may know that I love the Father.

[18 : 56] You see, Jesus is saying, how does the world come to know that I love the Father? Because I keep his commandments. Because I do his will. Because I am living obediently as his servant.

Therefore, the world knows that I love the Father. And that's man's relationship with God from the first.

But of course, Jesus came to undo and to make up for what Adam did in his fall. That's why it's called the last Adam.

He lived successfully by the word God gave him. Adam did not. he didn't capitulate to any of the temptations placed before him.

Adam did with the very first one recorded in Scripture. Man's relationship with God, the garden setting and the probation, the testing of man for his good.

[20 : 02] Secondly, man's relationship with his environment. You cast your mind back to your eye back to chapter 1. You can see there in verse 28. God blessed them and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Two things there, the subduing and the dominion. But first of all, God blessed them. Sometimes perhaps we just think of the blessing of God as something that comes to you spiritually and fills your heart with delight and moves you inwardly.

Of course there's that to it. But the blessing of God is far more than that. The blessing of God involves the functions and the roles that God gives to his people, including what he gave to Adam and indeed to Eve in the relationship together, in the relationship with the environment.

God blessed them. God gave them a specific place that was fitting for them. The blessing includes their function, their purpose, what God gave them to do.

And it's to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds, and every living thing that moves on the earth. Because man is made in the image of God.

[21 : 21] This is one of the consequences. God is the king. Man is the king's representative in the world. And therefore he has dominion over everything else in the creation.

Now that's become very distorted by the fall. Once man sinned, his relationship with the environment became distorted and corrupted.

Which is why you see so much in the world, in the environment, physically around us that has to do with exploitation, with pollution, with wastage, with man's greed being fuelled by his misuse of the environment.

That doesn't come about through the way that God created things, the order that God placed there at the beginning. This is a result of our sin. This is a result of what we have brought upon ourselves and upon the creation and upon the relationship between ourselves and the environment.

This is something that is an effect of sin, the consequence of sin. The very environment itself, as we'll see in a minute, has become distorted and even cursed, as Romans 8 puts it, through the fall of man and because of the fall of man.

[22 : 41] But, you know, that's when you begin to marvel again at the comprehensiveness of the redemption, the salvation, the redemption that's in Christ.

Colossians chapter 1, I'm just going to point it out and leave it to yourselves to read it. I think, in fact, we read it last week if I remember rightly, but anyway, we refer to it, I think, chapter 1 of Colossians where the apostle is dealing there with the preeminence of Christ in verse 15.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For all things were created in heaven and earth, visible and invisible. All things were created through him and for him.

He's linking it with the creation and why they were created and who created them. He did. And he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. For in him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. And, and this is the point for this evening, through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

[23 : 56] To reconcile all things to himself and you have to fit into that the way that elsewhere in the New Testament you have the new heavens and the new earth described which will be God's final order for his redeemed creation all achieved through the wonder of the work of Christ.

And here you have it in Genesis that that dominion as it was intended to be distorted by the fall and yet comes to be restored in perfection when the final order of things will be as God and man redeemed inhabit the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.

No corrupted relationships, nothing out of place all restored. Man's relationship then to his environment has dominion. Secondly, it has work.

That too is from being made in the image of God. He put him in the garden to work it, to dress it and to keep it. God himself is the great worker.

He brought all of this into being and pronounced it very good. And because man is in his image, God gives him the capacity, the privilege of work.

[25 : 20] Work only became a drudgery after the fall. And if people nowadays regard work as something of a drudgery, well, the reason for that is the effect of sin in our hearts, in our minds, in our attitude.

As you go into chapter 3, you can see that the immediate consequence of the fall is in fact the way in which in chapter 8, in verse 18, there you shall eat as cursed as the ground, in verse 17, because of you, in pain, you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, for out of it you are taken, for to you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

There is the environment changed into being at enmity with man, an environment that he now has to really work at to the extent that he sweats in his labour instead of having pleasure in it as before.

Sin has brought that about, his own sin, his fallenness, has distorted his relationship with the environment. But a God, of course, has redeemed that as well, because heaven is not going to be a place of inactivity.

[26 : 45] If you go to Revelation, chapter 22, you can see the final order described there where God's people are placed with him, and his servants shall serve him, or shall worship him.

The environment of heaven, this garden, if you like, of heaven in its final order, is not a place of inactivity. It is a place primarily of worship, of course, we believe.

But that's serving God. It's an activity. It's something that man is designed for. His servants shall serve him. And it's very interesting, isn't it, when you come across, well, let's say, people whose hearts really are set on something like winning the lottery, and dreaming of the day when they can just put their feet up, even if they're just in their twenties or thirties or whatever, put their feet up and really be able to say to themselves, that's great, I don't have to work another day supposing I live till I'm 80 or 90 years old.

And that's great. No, it's not great. It's contrary to the ethic of work. It's contrary to God's created order.

It's contrary to what man was created for, or one of the things for which man was created for, which was work, labour. Labour in the sense of good work that pleases God and glorifies God.

[28 : 18] Laziness is not an aspect of God's created order. It's part of the fall and the curse that came in as a result. But there is rest, thirdly.

There's dominion, there's work, and there's rest which also reflects the Creator. Verse 27 of chapter 1, where, sorry, not verse 27, you've got it in chapter 2 and verses 1 to 3.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them, and on the seventh day God finished his work, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, or sanctified it, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

When did the Sabbath begin? When did the Sabbath day, as a day of rest begins? When did it have its beginning? Not on Mount Sinai. I know it's part of the Ten Commandments, it's number four in the Ten Commandments, but the day of rest and the Sabbath rest and the principle of rest did not begin with the fourth commandment.

The fourth commandment reiterates it, it reminds of it, that's why it begins, remember the Sabbath day. That's not God creating a day of rest, that's God reminding mankind of the day of rest.

[29 : 40] In other words, the day of rest was not just something given specifically to Israel, or nowadays you might say to Christians. It's part of what God built into the order of creation.

When he set about ordering the creation, one of the prominent emphases in his creation, order is a day of rest for the man that he has created. And you know something else very interesting there.

If you ask somebody the question, what's the first thing that God called holy, or God made holy? What is the first thing God specifically sanctified according to the teaching of the Bible?

This day of rest. What do we think of the Sabbath day? What do we think of its desecration? What do we think of how it's so openly violated?

What do we think of the way that even in the last week, aspects of church teaching in parts of our land were actually suggesting instead of having a Sunday as a day of worship, that it should be really up to everyone to make up which day it was.

[30 : 49] Let's just have the church open. Let's just make it so that whichever day is convenient for people to come and worship if they're doing their shopping on the Sunday and if they can come to church on the Thursday and worship on the Thursday, great.

Let's just provide that for them. That's the teaching that was in the news this last week or so. And it's the teaching from what passes off itself as the church.

No more than that, but that's what it was like. What is that? How does that fit in with God's created order? It doesn't. It simply takes it completely out of its context.

God specifically gave us a pattern. Six days you work, the seventh day is the day of rest. That doesn't mean that everybody has to cease doing anything except going to church on the seventh day.

There are certain works of necessity and mercy, as you well know yourselves, that require to be carried out. Leave that for looking at the Sabbath principle itself. But what we want to really emphasize there just now is this is a day of rest and it's a day of rest that marks accomplishment, not inactivity.

[32 : 11] The accomplishment of God in the creation and that's matched when you come to use the Sabbath day as a day of rest for worship particularly.

It's a day that marks the accomplishment of God's new creation in Christ and by Christ as it looks to the rest that he has provided for his people.

So there's two things, man's relationship with God, the garden setting and the probation, man's relationship with his environment, dominion, work and rest, side by side and fitting into each other.

Then man's internal relationship, chapter 2 verse 18 there, the Lord God said it is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him a helper, suitable for him, I think it's a better term than fit for him, suitable for him, complementary to him.

When he says it's not good that the man should be alone, that doesn't mean that singleness is bad. That doesn't mean that single people are living a secondary kind of existence.

[33 : 20] It doesn't mean that they are not able to fulfil their creation place just as much as anyone else. In fact, as Paul, who was himself single, teaches, there are distinct advantages to being able to remain single.

That too can become distorted when it's as with some traditions like where priests are not allowed to marry and where celibacy is enforced, that too is contrary to the scriptures.

What we're saying is though that this is what God ordained in the beginning as this principle of marriage that is then expanded on throughout the scriptures.

I will make him a helper suitable for him. In other words, there's a social relationship within male and female, within mankind himself. Nobody else could do this for Adam but the woman God created.

Really, you've only got to look at that and see how dishonoring it is to think of things like same-sex relationships. Not only are men and women physically complementary to one another, but God specifically ordained at the beginning a man and a woman that they should together form that bond.

[34 : 44] which socially is of God's making. And to distort that is actually to deliberately flout the ordinance of God.

Now we'll see too when we come to it that that sets for us the basis for the structures that we know of. The structure in the home, are husbands and wives equal?

I thought that would wake you up. Are husbands and wives equal? Let's leave the question open. Will we? Well, no, they're not equal in every sense. They're equal in Christ.

They're equal in terms of what they have as rights in the way in which God has created them. Their right to communion with God. Their right to live according to God's standard.

Their right to a dignified life. Their right to live in such a way that's free from abuse which many women particularly don't actually have in this world of hours. But God has nevertheless given a specific ordering and pattern to family life.

[35 : 52] There's such a thing in the Bible as the headship of the man. It doesn't mean that he is necessarily the boss in every sense. But it does mean that God has given a certain pattern there within the home where chief responsibilities lie with the husband and the home.

And you translate that into the church as well. Why did Jesus not have female disciples? Was it an oversight? Did he just forget about it? Was he being anti-feminist?

No. He was being true to God's created order. Why should there be no female elders in the church or female preachers in the church? Because God has specified who it is of the two genders take up these roles.

God's blessing establishes the roles that human beings are to be given in God's creation. That's why it is something of an affront to God to suggest that actually God didn't know what he was doing or that we know better now than when Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

This is God's created pattern and it follows through into our home structures and the church structures as well. And of course there is also the element of procreation.

[37 : 12] He blessed them and said be fruitful and multiply. And that too has ethical implications which we'll need to have a look at because we're living in days when procreation itself is something which has gone well beyond the bounds of biblical integrity and you get that especially with areas such as human genetics and modifications through genetic modifications.

There are ethical implications to all of that. Where do you draw the boundaries? Where do you draw the line of what's acceptable and not? Well there are certain principles that God has built into the order and we have to maintain these though we accept there are grey areas.

in some cases but having said that these are pretty clear most of the time and we'll need to come back and look at that. So there's man's relationship to God, man's relationship with his environment and man's relationship internally with himself male and female.

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