

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

GENESIS TO REVELATION

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## *The Climax of Creation*

Genesis 2:1-23

### ***Introduction***

Genesis, chapter 1, is focused on God's creative acts of creating the universe. And the last few verses of chapter 1 into chapter 2, verses 4-23, focus on God's climactic creative act in creating man and woman.

It is interesting that, as I studied these passages in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2 again, it struck me that the name used for God in chapter 1 is the Hebrew name "Elohim," which is the name that speaks of God's power; His majestic strengths. And, as I mentioned in our last discussion, John Wesley wrote, "God created the heavens and the earth and He did not even half try."

That is so true – for God, with all of His power, snapped everything into being and into existence by His word. The name "Elohim" is used for Him in this text, and it refers to His power. However, when we read the accounts of God creating man and woman, we are introduced to a new name – the name "Jehovah". Your English translations will probably, in chapter 2, add the word "Lord" to God, so we read, "Lord God".

### **Two meanings of the name "Jehovah"**

Jehovah refers to two things worth noting.

#### **The personal God**

1. Jehovah refers to the personal God. Jehovah speaks to God's loving covenant care for mankind. Isn't it interesting that as He moves to the account of His creation of man and woman, the name changes. Now the name is not referring to the majestic powerful God, but the loving God, the personal God. You will see Him directly involved in creating man and woman.

#### **The covenant keeping God**

2. Jehovah also refers to the covenant keeping God.

This is the name that emphasizes God's covenant with mankind. It is a covenant that is not fragile nor self-centered; it is one that will last forever; it is sacrificing. That is the thought used in this passage, because God created man and woman, knowing they would sin; knowing they would fall. God knew man and woman would need a redeemer. The covenant keeping God still brought them into existence, as if to say, "I will provide a redeemer for you."

Now, at the end of chapter 2, He will bring man and woman together with the same idea. The covenant between man and wife should resemble the same as the covenant of God to man. It is not fragile, it is permanent; it is not self-centered, it is self-sacrificing. We, as man and wife, represent the covenant that Jehovah God has for His creatures. So, there is a name change that means so much.

#### **The triune God created male and female "in Our image"**

Now, I want you to notice that there is going to be a change as we read through Genesis, chapter 1. You may remember, as we have been studying through Genesis, chapter 1, that it talks about every thing 1 being spoken into existence. Repeatedly – in verses 3, 6, 9, 14, and 20 – it says,

**Then God said, “Let there be . . .”**

However, in verse 26, notice the difference as it says,

**Then God said, “Let Us make man . . .”**

It is as if the triune God was calling into a conference the fact that They were about to create man.

We know from the New Testament writings that it was actually Jesus Christ and that the words of Christ formed and created the universe and man. He was the person in this triune God that did the creative act. However, it is interesting that He changes the wording and then, notice the next phrase, Let Us make man in Our image . . .

This is not a physical image, for God is spirit. He is speaking to the fact that man will be created with a mind, with emotions, with a will, with immortality, just like God. Man is made in the image of God. Ladies and gentlemen, the reason you are able to laugh is because God can laugh. He created you like Himself, with the ability to laugh. The reason you can cry is because God can weep. He created you in His own image, with the ability to weep. The reason that you decide, love, choose to do all that you do is because you are created like your creator God in His image. You are capable of doing the things that He has given you to do that resemble His own character.

Now notice verse 27,

**God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; . . . (note this and underline it), . . . male and female He created them.**

God created both male and female in His own image. They are both immortal souls. They are not toys; they are not objects, they are immortal beings, both male and female. Notice also, in this verse, that God strikes a death blow to the unisex idea that there is no difference in males and females. I have been startled at things that I have read that suggest the reason boys act like boys and girls act like girls is because the parents condition them culturally when they are little. Parents always give a little boy a hammer – and regret that they did! They give a little girl a doll. And because of this, parents cause them to act the way they do.

This verse tells us that God created them male, with all the inherent masculine traits, and female, with all the feminine traits.

It has been a real joy for my wife and I to parent both boys and girls. It is fascinating to notice the differences in our children. The boys act a certain way – they are different and yet, they follow the same pattern – usually destructive! They are so much like little boys. Our girls are on an entirely different wavelength. Even at a young age they begin to reveal the feminine qualities inherent in the female nature; inherited from their mother and on back to their mother Eve.

## **The Forming of Adam (Genesis 2:1-7)**

Now notice in chapter 2, verse 7, the creation of man.

**Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; . . . (the immortal soul), . . . and man became a living being.**

Man became a living being, or literally, he became living lives; he would never die. Though the clay carrier of his soul would pass away, his soul would live forever. He is immortal. He will live one day either in hell or in heaven.

The words “dust from the ground” could literally be translated, “a lump of earth”. God literally took a lump of earth and from it, formed man.

The word “formed” is the same precious word used by the prophet Jeremiah as he talks about the potter taking a lump of clay and putting it on the potter’s wheel and forming a vessel. God took infinite care and the nuances of mankind are from the fingers of God, as He created man.

Your bones, though unappreciated at times, are created to withstand enormous wear and tear. A normal person will stalk on his poor feet nearly three times around the world in a lifetime. It is interesting to know that no engineer has been able to match the simple human bone. They would love to be able to develop a substance as strong and light and efficient as bone. Imagine, it grows continuously, lubricates itself, requires no shutdown time, and repairs itself when damage occurs.

These are only a few facts. We do not have time to get into the miracle of the skin, the senses of touch and taste, or the way that our hand is created. We are, by the way, the only living creature that has the thumb shaped as it is and able to grasp like it does. In fact, Isaac Newton wrote, “If there was no other evidence than the human thumb, I would believe in the existence of God.”

It is interesting that we can make a machine and know, even as the machine is being made and before it is even put to work, that we will have to work out all the “bugs” until it finally works. One engineer was looking at a chart of the anatomy of an individual – at all the nerves, muscles, tendons, and all of the different things that make up the human body – and he was heard to exclaim, “Imagine, when God put it together, it worked the first time!” Imagine that! There were no “bugs” in God’s creation of the human body – before the fall.

## **The Planting of Eden (Genesis 2:8-17)**

Now notice verses 8 and 9 of Genesis, chapter 2. This is the planting of the garden of Eden.

**The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden;**  
...

(the word “Eden” means “delight” – this was paradise),

**... and there He placed the man whom He had formed. Out of the ground the Lord caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then, the next few verses will talk about the different rivers, the water, and the location. Some, in fact, think Eden may have been located near the Persian Gulf because of the geographical references to the rivers.**

Skip to verse 15.

**Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to cultivate it and keep it.**

The word “garden” is the Hebrew word “gan,” which literally means, “enclosure”. This was paradise – in fact, the planet earth was paradise itself, and yet, within paradise, God created an enclosure; it had boundaries. It was fertile; it was the place where man would spend his life managing, ruling, dominating, enjoying. This was Eden; this was the garden inside of paradise where man and woman were to live.

### **The importance of two trees**

Now we have already read the references to two specific trees. Let me give the importance or the significance of these two trees.

#### **The tree of life is the symbol of immortality**

1. First, the tree of life is the symbol of immortality.

This tree is the symbol whereby man and woman could live forever. Now we know that the ability to live forever was directly given from God and yet, He used the tree as the symbol of that. Eating of that fruit would be the means, the method, the vehicle through which we would live forever.

#### **The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the symbol of choice**

2. Secondly, there is another tree called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that is the symbol of choice.

Why did God give man and woman choice? Because God did not want robots, even in the garden. He created man and woman with the ability to choose.

Now, in His sovereignty, God knew what the man and woman’s choice would be. Yet, in His wisdom, He gave the ability to choose whether to obey Him or to disobey Him.

God wanted a relationship, even back in the garden with Adam and Eve. A relationship is a two way street – they would love Him and He would love them.

This tree, of course, was the test and, as you know, after man ate, he was kept from the tree of life.

One of the blessings that God has given us is death. We will not live forever as sinners. Forgiven as we are, it would be a tragic thing to live forever like we live today. Death will open the gate to heaven where we will be given glorified, perfect bodies and our souls will match the Savior’s in its perfection.

So God kept them from that and then, gave them another symbol – the symbol of forgiveness. In the coats that He gave them to wear, the animals died evidently in atonement for their sin; the blood of the animals was shed.

# The Sculpturing of Eve (Genesis 2:18-23)

Now notice in verse 18a, God's first statement of displeasure. **Then the Lord God said, . . .** (note God's displeasure for the first time), . . . **"It is not good for man to be alone; . . ."**

What struck me about this verse was the fact that man was living in a perfect environment. He has a perfect occupation – one that he loves. He gets up in the morning ready to go; ready to take care of the garden. He has a perfect relationship, as perfect as it can be with God. He communes with God and God sums all of this up and says, "It is not good . . .".

So God, in His perfect timing, plans to create a woman. What I like about God is His timing. He did not rush up to Adam, and say, "Adam, you need a wife. I'm going to create one for you."

Adam would have said, "I need a what? I need a wife? I'm not so sure I do."

Then God, as a perfect matchmaker, sets him up. Will you notice what God does in the next few verses. Look at verse 19a,

**Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast . . .**

Now note that God, in verse 18b, has already decided to make him a mate

**. . . I will make him a helper suitable for him.**

He has not told Adam yet. But first, in verses 19b through 20a, He,

**. . . formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man, . . .**

**. . . to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave the names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, . . .**

Here is Adam, just naming them off. Here comes two more and he, in his brilliance, notes the characteristics. In fact, the original text gives the implication that he gave them names matching their characteristics.

He was brilliant and he is naming all of them. Then, Adam comes to the very end, and almost as if it were his thoughts, in verse 20b,

**. . . but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.**

In other words, Adam is starting to look now. He has named a few hundred animals and is now on the lookout, "Let's see. There is only one of me and there are two of them."

What is God doing? He is setting him up! He is making Adam come to the point where he realizes he is alone; he does not have the other half. Then, in verses 21 and 22a,

**So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, . . .**

Now, the word translated "fashioned," in verse 22, "The Lord God fashioned" or "formed," is different than that used when God formed man. This word is a beautiful word that could be translated "sculptured". It is as if God, as any master who would paint a beautiful portrait, knelt over that rib, that flesh and sculptured a beautiful woman – one who would become the counterpart of Adam.

## **The importance of the rib**

We need to answer the question, "Why the rib? Why was it the rib that God took to fashion or sculptor a woman?" Let me give three reasons.

### **To show the unity of the human race**

1. First, to show the unity of the human race.

We all come from Adam. This is a tremendous theological truth that will come out in our study of the book of Romans. Because we are all in and out of and from Adam, we are all sinners; we all have Adam's nature. But the second Adam will come, who is Jesus Christ. And we who are in Him, the second Adam, will be forgiven. So this truth will be revealed later in the New Testament and is a beautiful theological truth.

## **To guarantee the dignity of woman kind**

2. Secondly, to guarantee the dignity of womankind. Woman is not made from an inferior substance. She is made from the same thing that man is made from. Do not picture in your mind that God just took a bone, a rib, He actually took flesh and blood around that rib. He took a chunk, as it were, and fashioned her in the same substance He had used to create the man.

## **To illustrate the closest of kinship**

3. Thirdly, to illustrate the closest of kinship.

God did not take a bone from the foot, as you may have read or heard, as if man would tread upon her; as if man were above her. God did not take something from his head, as if she was to be superior or above him. God did not take a bone from Adams's hand, as if she was to be a servant of man and do his work. God took a bone from his side, to illustrate the closest of companionship. She would be by his side. She would serve as queen of the garden, of paradise, and Adam would serve as king. We will develop this further in our next discussion.

I love the next part, in verses 22 through 23a,

**The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; . .**

Now just use your imagination in this. I really do not think this was the first thing Adam said. The text does not say this is the first thing Adam said. I think the first thing that happened was man probably looked at his counterpart and said, "Wow!"

This is the first time man whistled in the history of mankind! What a beautiful lady. And then, I think they probably talked for hours, as if they were long lost best friends. I think what is happening in verse 23 is that the man is introducing her to all of the other creatures. It is as if he says, "Now listen up. "This is now . . .

(in fact, the literal Hebrew can be translated, "This is now at last . . .), ". . . bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh; . . .". Continue to verse 23b, . . .

**she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.**

I believe that this was the introduction of woman to everything that God had created.

## **Application**

This is as far as we are going to go in the text today. Let me apply a couple of things that strike me from this chapter.

### **The garden of Eden – a place where mankind would choose who he would obey**

1. The first application is found in the garden of Eden itself. The garden of Eden, men and women, would represent a place where mankind would choose who he would obey – the tempter or the creator.

It reminds me of another garden where Jesus Christ struggled with the will of His Father. We are told in Luke, chapter 22, that He sweat drops as if it was blood. And finally, in verse 42b, He said, in the agony of His soul,

**. . . not My will, but Yours be done.**

No, we are not in the garden of Eden and we are not in Gethsemane, but ladies and gentlemen, I believe you and I are in a garden, as it were. We are in a place of choosing who we will follow, who we will obey – the tempter or the creator.

### **The tree – symbol of the choice of eternal healing through Christ or eternal death**

2. The garden is not the only thing in this chapter that points to Jesus Christ – a tree does also. A tree has been used throughout scripture to symbolize some powerful truths. The tree in the garden represented choice.

Another time, when Moses was in the wilderness, the children of Israel were being very rebellious. We are told in Numbers, chapter 21, that God sent poisonous vipers to bite them. He then told Moses to make a serpent and lift it up on a tree, and whoever would look at the tree would be healed. That represented healing, and those who looked were healed.

Of course I also think of Calvary. I Peter, chapter 2, verse 24, records,

**And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross [tree], so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**

My friend there is a tree in your life as well. You either stand before the tree called Calvary as a forgiven individual or you stand before it as an unrepentant unbeliever. The tree is lifted up today bearing Christ, and it is ours to choose. We may choose to accept Him; to accept that atonement as our own; to take Him as our personal savior.