

Genesis 2:4-17 "The First Man"*

Proposition: In Genesis 2:4-17 we learn three important insights about man.

I. We learn about man's origin (4-7).

A. God formed the earth *for* man (4-6).

B. God formed man *from* the earth (7).

1. He used existing material to make us.

2. Our worth is derived, not inherent.

II. We learn about man's environment (8-14).

A. It was a real paradise (8-9).

1. There was beauty.

2. There was food.

3. There were two special trees.

B. It was a real place (10-14).

III. We learn about man's purpose (15-17).

A. We were created to *serve* God (15).

1. We're supposed to work in God's world.

2. We're supposed to take care of God's world.

B. We were created to *obey* God (16-17).

1. One option is to choose God's way.

· God is God.

· God is generous.

· God is good.

2. The other option is to choose your own way.

Implications: It boils down to two Adams...

1. To understand what we lost, look at the first Adam.

2. To regain what we lost, look to the second Adam.

What is man? Mankind is facing an identity crisis these days. And the "experts" are doing little but add to the confusion.

R. C. Sproul explains, "I have talked to college students who no longer sense that they are being educated in the confines of a university, but rather that their experience is of a pluriversity, a multiversity, where there is nothing to unify the various approaches to knowledge to which they are exposed. They go into the psychology department and hear man described in psychological categories. They say, 'Oh, yes, that's interesting; that's correct.' Then they go to the biology department and are led to understand man from a totally different perspective. Indeed, statements are made about man that are not only different but in many

cases contradictory to what they have just learned in the psychology department. From there they go to the theology department and hear man's existence defined in terms of social activity and behavioral patterns, again in ways that are contradictory to what they have heard elsewhere. They go to the history department, the philosophy department, the chemistry department, and so on down the line of the various disciplines, and by the time they are finished they have Excedrin headache number nine. They have no idea how to put this together. They cannot integrate these various views of man into one single, coherent view. And the reason why they cannot integrate it is not because the students are muddle-headed but because the information is itself contradictory."

Is Sproul right? Think carefully. From the zoological perspective we are told by Desmond Morris that man is merely one of some eighty-odd varieties of primate apes, his distinguishing characteristic being his nakedness. Man is an ape, like every other ape except that man is not covered with a hair-coat.

Then we go to the biologist and hear that man is a mistake of nature. He has oozed from the slime as a result of a cosmic accident. Edward Carnell once put it like this, "In the modern man's view of man, man is a grown up germ sitting on a cog of a wheel of a vast cosmic machine which is destined ultimately to blow itself up."

Then we go to the social historians. We listen to people like Karl Marx as they analyze man. Marx tells us that the essence of man is found in man's labor. If we are to understand man properly, we must do so in terms of economic forces.

Ask most people the question, "Who are you?" and what do you hear in return? "Hi, my name is Mike Jones. I'm a school teacher." Or, "I'm Billie Smith. I'm a nurse." We tend to define ourselves by our work.

We may approach the psychologist, and ask the question, "Dr. So-and-so, tell me about man." And we'll learn that man is a highly developed animal with basic instincts in conflict, and that his greatest need is 'ego strength' (if the Dr. is Freudian). Or that man is a conditioned animal, a blank slate, his greatest problem being his environment (if the Dr. is Skinnerian). Or that man is basically good and has everything within himself to mature, his greatest problem being a restricting social environment (if the Dr. is Carl Rogers).

What's the truth about man? Just who are we? We need not wonder and wander. The fact is, we have a schematic, an *owner's manual*. It's called the Bible. Our Maker tells us who we are, how we got here, and why.

That's why we're going back to Genesis in our current series. What is man? In Genesis 2:4-17 we learn three important insights about man.

I. We learn about man's origin (4-7).

Verse 4 begins, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created." Notice the phrase, "This is the account" (or "These are the generations," if you have the KJV). The word translated "account" (or "generations") occurs ten times in Genesis, each time beginning a new section.

Which raises the question: what's the relationship between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2? Genesis 2:4 states, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created." But wait. Isn't that what chapter one was?

At this point some conclude, "See! There are contradictions in the Bible, and that's because it was written by men." But Genesis 1 & 2 don't contradict each other, but *complement*.

Sure there are differences, but not disagreements. The differences have to do with perspective and purpose. That's often the case with the supposed "contradictions" in the Bible.

Genesis 1 gives the panoramic view of creation, whereas Genesis 2 puts the spotlight on man's creation. In Genesis 1, equal attention is given to what God did on all six days, but in Genesis 2 the material revolves around the arrival of man on Day 6. Genesis 1 gives us the telescopic view of God's creative work, whereas Genesis 2 offers us the microscopic look into the apex of God's creation, man.

Even the name of God changes in chapter 2. Throughout Genesis 1, it's *Elohim*, a title which extols God's transcendence and greatness as Creator. He is *God*. But in chapter 2 He is the "LORD God," *Yahweh Elohim*. *Yahweh*--that's His covenant name, the name by which He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush.

In the 1800's Old Testament higher critics said, "Here's the solution to the dilemma. Moses didn't write the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is the compilation of the works of at least *four* men. We don't know who they are, but we'll call them *J, E, D, & P* to represent the different name of God used in their respective portions of the Pentateuch. So said proponents of the "Wellhausen" (or documentary) theory.

Julius Wellhausen (who lived from 1844-1918) was deeply influenced by the teaching of evolution spreading in his day. He did to Old Testament study what Darwin did to biology. He denied that Moses wrote the Pentateuch in the 15th century B.C., and asserted that it was the product of process that happened over time--the *J* source wrote his material in the ninth century B.C., *E* in the eighth century, *D* (which stands for Deuteronomy) came in the seventh century, and *P* (which was a priestly source) came in the fifth century B.C. It wasn't until around 200 B.C., according to Wellhausen, that some editor compiled these four sources into the Pentateuch as we have it today.

You say, "Pastor, why did you take the time to tell us all that? It doesn't affect our lives, does it?" It sure does. If you go to a secular university (and sadly, many so called "Christian" universities) and take a basic course in biblical studies, chances are good your professor will assert some form of what I've just explained as *fact*. And why? Because your professor's evolutionary bias affects his theology, just as it did Wellhausen's.

Your view of origins will affect every other aspect of study. If you believe man is on the planet today as the result of random acts of chance over time--and not because of the creative act of God, you will have no problem asserting that we got the Bible the same way--through a man-made process over time, and not by the inspiration of God.

So let's zero in on the subject of man's origin. According to Genesis, what is true of our origin. Based on verses 4-7, we can affirm two truths.

A. God formed the earth **for** man (4-6). "When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens--and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground."

So God formed the earth. Does this account sound different than the one in chapter one? Sure. Someone has observed, "The first account has a lofty dignity about it, while the second is much more simple and down-to-earth. The first narrative has stylized expressions and repeated formulas, while the second is lively and full of surprises...In the first story God is the transcendent and all-powerful Creator, while in the second 'the LORD God' is closely and intimately involved in the life and experiences of the people He has created."

But the differences aren't contradictions. They have to do with emphasis or perspective. Keep in mind that in Genesis 2 the spotlight is on God's creation of man. And verses 4-6 inform us that God formed the earth *for man*.

The verses are actually difficult to translate. There seems to be a parenthesis of thought in verses 5 & 6, as reflected in the use of the hyphens in the NIV. Moses is describing what was true of the earth when God first made it--*before* man appeared.

Certain types of plant life were missing, namely, the "shrub of the field" and the "plant of the field." The earth was lacking these. Why? Because two other things were lacking at this point--a water source to nourish the plant life, and man to cultivate the ground for the plant life.

God is about to take care of both needs. In verse 6 He meets the water need by providing sub-cavernous streams (or possibly "a mist"), and in verse 7 the need for a cultivator by creating man.

The evolutionist asserts that present processes are the key to understanding the past. But notice carefully how very different the created world was from our world. It didn't rain there. According to 1:6 there was some sort of water canopy in the atmosphere.

Creation-scientist, Henry Morris, remarks, "The 'greenhouse effect' of this blanket would have prevented strong temperature differences or rapid temperature changes anywhere on the earth. This in turn would have prevented strong winds and storms. The present hydrologic cycle, which waters evaporated from the ocean, are moved inland by winds, finally to condense and fall to the earth again, would have been impossible under these conditions. Rather, the waters evaporated daily from the many 'seas' (Genesis 1:10) would have moved only short distances from their source before condensing again at night on the adjacent land surfaces (Genesis 2:6)."

The weather patterns were a little different than the ones we see on *The Weather Channel* these days! You say, "When did they change?" When the Flood came, as we'll see future weeks.

For now, don't miss this. When God formed the earth, He did so *for man*. In terms of man's origin, that's truth #1. Here's #2...

B. God formed man **from** the earth (7). "The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

Follow the text carefully. Yahweh God formed *the Adam*--that's the literal Hebrew rendering of the word "man." From what? The "dust of the ground." The term "ground" is the related Hebrew word *adamah*. So the literal reading of the text goes like this, "Yahweh God formed the Adam out of the dust of the adamah."

The play on words emphasizes man's relationship to the land. He was created from it, his job will be to cultivate it, and when he dies he will return to it. Concerning man's relationship to the land, someone has well said, "It is his cradle, his home, his grave."

Perhaps you've heard the story about the little boy who in Sunday School learned about Adam. His teacher explained that man is made from the dust of the ground and that when he dies, he returns to the dust of the ground.

Later that week the boy was playing in his room, and looked under his bed for a toy. What he saw shocked him, so much so that he yelled for his mother in the other room, "Mommy, I think there's a man under my bed, but I can't tell if he's coming or going."

We can make a couple of deductions about ourselves based on verse 7...

1. *God used existing material to make us.* Genesis 1:27 simply stated, "So God created man in his own image." Genesis 2:7 tells *how* He did it. He used existing material, namely, "the dust of the ground."

There are about fourteen chemical elements which are the basic components of living flesh, including hydrogen, carbon, and oxygen. The same elements are found in the dust of the ground. It's noteworthy that 1 Corinthians 15:47 states, "The first man is of the earth, earthy."

God *formed* the man. The verb "formed" carries the idea of a potter shaping his clay. The descriptive "breathed into his nostrils" indicates the warmly personal, face-to-face intimacy, as it were, involved in God's forming of man. A second deduction...

2. *Our worth is derived, not inherent.* Beloved, apart from God we are "nothing but dust and ashes." That's how Abraham put it in Genesis 18:27. I read that from a strictly financial standpoint, the chemicals in the average human body are worth a mere \$7.28 (Youngblood, 40)!

Don't misunderstand me. Human life is sacred, but why? Our worth is not inherent, but *derived*. God made us, and He made us to reflect *His* image.

The text states that God made the man and then God gave something to the man. What was it? Life, the breath of *life*. And what was merely lifeless material moments before was now a *living being*.

When we go back to Genesis we discover three insights about man. The first has to do with his origin. God formed the earth for man, and God formed man from the earth.

II. We learn about man's environment (8-14).

It is said that man is a product of his environment. Is that true? Let's take a close look at man's first environment which God's Word describes in verses 8-14. Two things were true of that environment.

A. It was a real paradise (8-9). "Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grown out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

You get the sense that in the created world man was sheltered but not smothered (Kidner, p. 61). God tailor-made a home for Adam.

The text states that God *planted* a garden. Not *created*, but planted. It was a perfect environment. Indeed, it was *paradise*.

Notice the garden was located in the *east*. East of what? East from the standpoint of Moses, apparently. Moses was in the Sinai wilderness, en route to the Promised Land.

Moses states the garden was "in Eden." The meaning of the name "Eden" is uncertain. It may be related to the Hebrew term for *bliss* or *delight*, or to another term that simply means *a plain*. It's not quite right, then, to refer to the garden itself by the name Eden. The garden was located in the region known as Eden.

Just where was the Garden of Eden? Supposedly there's a plaque on a tree stump in southern Iraq that designates the spot as the home of Adam (Youngblood, p. 41). The fact is, we don't know *where* the garden was. However, we do have information as to what it was like. Moses highlights three features of the first paradise.

1. *There was beauty.* Verse 9 indicates that the Lord caused a variety of trees to grow in the garden, trees that were "pleasant to the eye." What a sight to behold!

2. *There was food.* The trees were "good for food." This was some garden! Not a weed in sight, but rather

luxurious, fruitful vegetation. That's not all. In the centerpiece of the garden...

3. *There were two special trees.* They were right in the middle of the garden. Moses calls the first "the tree of life," and the second "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Interesting names for trees, huh?

This is the first mention of "evil" in the Bible. According to Genesis 1:31, God created a *very good* universe, so what's the purpose of this tree that contains the knowledge of good and evil? The answer will come shortly.

What else was true of man's first environment? First, it was a real paradise...

B. It was a real place (10-14). "A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates."

The skeptic says, "Ah, come on now! You don't believe there really was a garden of Eden, do you? The whole thing's just a man-made myth, isn't it? It's just a story, right?"

Wrong. The biblical narrative goes to great length to show that the garden was a *real* place. In preparation for this message I pondered why God included verses 10-14 in this account. Why does He want us to know about this river that flowed out of garden, and that broke into four tributaries? And why does He record their names? And why does He tell us features of the lands through which the headwaters flowed?

There may be other reasons, but this one strikes me as predominant. This is no make-believe story. This is no *Treasure Island*. The garden of Eden was a *real place*.

Is man simply a product of his environment? If he is you'll have a hard time explaining what happened to Adam and Eve. The first couple lived in a *perfect* environment. They had everything, I mean *everything* they could ever want.

What went wrong? We'll find the answer in chapter three, but for now, don't miss this. Good or bad, our environment may affect us, but it doesn't dictate what we will be.

Someone has remarked that the seven ages of man are as follows: spills, drills, thrills, bills, ills, pills, wills. That may be how it goes *now*, but how was it with the *first* man? We've considered man's origin and environment. In verses 15-17 we discover insight #3...

III. We learn about man's purpose (15-17).

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"

Why are we here? For two reasons spelled out right here.

A. We were created to **serve** God (15). God put Adam in the garden and gave him a very specific task. He was to *work it* and *take care of it*.

That's interesting. Why *work it* if it's already perfect? If I was God--that's a frightening thought!--I'd have put a sign up in my perfect garden that read, "LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH...AND PLEASE DON'T PICK THE FLOWERS!"

But not God. He's so gracious. He gives us all things to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17). Consider a couple of lessons from verse 15.

1. *We're supposed to work in God's world. And...*

2. *We're supposed to take care of God's world. Work it and take care of it--those were God's instructions for the first man.*

What does that tell us? Work is good. Work existed before sin and before the Fall.

A lot of people have an unbiblical attitude towards work these days. I've read there are three kinds of workers. For example, when a piano is to be moved, the first kind gets behind the piano and pushes, the second pulls and guides, and the third grabs the piano stool. That's not too far off, is it?

The sign in the store window read: NO HELP WANTED. As two men passed by, one said to the other, "You should apply--you'd be great."

A fictitious company posted the following notice: "The management regrets that it has come to their attention that workers dying on the job are failing to fall down. This practice must stop, as it becomes impossible to distinguish between death and the natural movement of the staff. Any employee found dead in an upright position will be dropped from the payroll.

One statistic estimates that deliberate waste and abuse of company time costs the U.S. economy over \$120 billion a year. This loss is three times more than it is for recognized business crime.

The fact is, we were created to work. Our usual idea of "paradise" often isn't very biblical. We think that paradise is having *no* work. But in the paradise of the Garden, Adam had God-given work to do. And I believe the same will be true in the paradise of the new heaven and earth in eternity. It will be a perfect place, but there will be work to do.

In fact, if you want an idea of what eternity for the believer will be like, look at Genesis 2. What do you see? We see paradise. We see man in perfect relationship with God, worshiping God and reflecting His image *by working*.

Work is good. It's not more important than worship which is why we need to *stop work* on day seven (as we saw last time in 2:1-3). We're supposed to stop work and observe a day of worship and rest each week. Why? Because work isn't good? No. Because work isn't our god. We were created to *serve God*. There's a second purpose...

B. We were created to **obey** God (16-17). At this point God gave the first man a test. The test involved two options, and in essence, the same two options face us.

1. *One option is to choose God's way.* I want you to notice three important characteristics of God featured in verses 16-17. First...

- God is God. Notice how verse 16 begins, "And the LORD God commanded the man." He *commanded*. That doesn't set too well in our man-centered culture. We want a God who exists *for man*. We don't want a God that tells us what to do.

We've been sold a bill of goods that says that man is autonomous. He can rule himself. We want a buddy-buddy "god." Listen. That's not the God of the Bible. God is *God*.

- God is generous. Listen to His generous offer, "You are free to eat from *any* tree in the garden." Is man

free? Yes, but he's a creature. He is free to do only what the Creator says is appropriate.

Some people feel God is harsh and restrictive, and view the Christian life that way. "I don't want to be a Christian. It's no fun. You can't do anything."

That's not true. The fact is, a gracious God gives us the freedom to do *everything* that's truly good for us. How do we know if something is good for us? He tells us. Where? In His Word.

· God is good. Verse 17, "But you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

You say, "How does that warning demonstrate God's goodness?" In this manner. God is so good that He gives us a fair warning. He told the first man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden. Except one. If you eat from that tree you will surely die [the Hebrew is *moot tamoot*, the penalty of dying is stressed by double emphasis]."

When a doctor says, "If you keep smoking, you're going to destroy your lungs," is that doctor being mean or good? When a mechanic says, "If you don't change your oil, you're going to burn up your engine," is he trying to rob you of some fun, or does he have your good in mind? When a teacher says, "If you don't study for this test, you won't pass this class," is she being unkind or good?

My friend, I'm glad that in His goodness, God tells us ahead of time the consequences of sinful actions, aren't you? God says, "Don't let the sun go down on your anger; if you do you'll give Satan a foothold (Eph 4:26-27)." God says, "Don't slander your brother with hurtful words; if you do you are in danger of hell fire (Matt 5:22)." God says, "Don't rob Me by withholding your tithes from Me; if you do you will experience a severe penalty (Mal 3:9)." God says, "Don't sow to the flesh; if you do you will reap destruction (Gal 6:8)."

Is that being mean? No. That's love. God knows far better than we do what's best for us. The question is whether we're going to choose to live God's way or our way. Those are the two--and only two--options. They're the same options that first man faced. One option is to choose God's way...

2. *The other option is to choose your own way.* Those are the only two options on the test. If you choose God's way, you'll be free. If you choose your own way, you'll remain a slave.

You say, "*Remain* a slave? Aren't we free like Adam?" Answer this. What did God say would happen to Adam if he ate from the forbidden tree? He would *die*. Did he eat? Yes. And what happened? He *died*. He became a slave to sin, and enslaved the entire human race to sin (Rom 5:12).

The fact is, we are not free like Adam. When God placed Adam in the garden, he was morally neutral. Is that true of us? No. The Bible says we were conceived in sin, born in sin, and enter this world as slaves to sin.

Is there hope? Yes, indeed! Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man." What man? Verse 22, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

Who dies? All who are *in Adam*. Who is made alive? All who are *in Christ*.

Implications: It boils down to two Adams...

1. *To understand what we lost, look at the first Adam.* If you want to know why life is what it is, look to the first Adam. But don't stop there...

2. *To regain what we lost, look to the second Adam.* The second Adam came to undo what the first Adam

did. He lived a perfect life, died to pay the penalty of our sin, and then conquered death.

Listen to Romans 5:17, "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

Do you want to regain what the first Adam forfeited? Then look to Christ.