



In the Beginning

SERMONS ON GENESIS 1-3

A.W. POWERS

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PREFACE

There are few studies that are more often looked past than the deep theological study of the opening three chapters of Genesis. In our familiarity we have lost sight of the depths found in these opening three chapters. Personally, I have grown much in my love for these precious chapters over the last few years beginning in 2016 when Adam hosted a Saturday seminar at SonRise looking at the gospel found in Genesis 1-3. At the time I was pastoring a church down the road and was shocked by how easily I had taken this text for granted. When Adam and I discussed preaching through the whole book I was immediately on board with how much the church needs to be reminded of these wonderful truths that are so easily forgotten. We needed to be awakened from our slumber.

So why read the following book, well firstly, there is such majestic beauty in studying the work of God. This is especially true when unpacking the richness of His grace revealed in the first three chapters of Genesis. It has been said that if one truly understands these three opening chapters they are fully exposed to the whole of scripture. In these chapters we see the wonder of a God who creates without error, the hope of his image bearers to multiply and carrying His image to the ends of the earth, the failure of those individuals to flee temptation, and the hope of their future redemption.

Secondly, too often when we come to the book of Genesis we get caught in some silly debate about science or age of the earth without properly appreciating the depth and beauty of God's theological design found in the text. Genesis is so much more than a book describing the age of the earth, it is a text describing the majesty and glory of our God and the wonder of how all things are working together to bring about His plan for the restoration of sinners and the hope of eternity, even from the beginning. So, as you journey through the following chapters you won't find a long discussion of the age of the earth, but you will find a lengthy discussion on the glory of a God who is creator and redeemer. You will unpack the immense plan of God being unrolled before your eyes from the very beginning as God establish his covenant with man and their future hope.

Lastly, because God's truth should be continually before us, challenging us, rebuking us, encouraging us, and comforting us. All this and more are found in the following pages as Adam takes us through these opening chapters of Genesis with a precision that opens to us the wide expanse of God's wisdom. Hopefully you will walk away with an immense appreciation for the work of God as you walk through these pages.

Andrew Jaenichen

THE GOD WHO IS

Genesis 1:1

Introduction

“Bereshit bara Elohim et hashamayim et va’haeret.”

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Ten words in English, seven in the original Hebrew form the first verse of the Bible, Genesis 1:1. But these words are more than just the first verse of the Bible, aren’t they? They not only begin the book of Genesis and the five books of Moses, these words introduce us to the whole of the Bible. So, as we now begin our journey through the book of Genesis, it is fitting to linger on this first verse and all that it launches us out into.

Generally speaking, we could say Genesis is a book about origins. The origin of creation, the origin of mankind, the origin of the institutions by which civilization flourishes, and the origin of one special family God chose as his own to bless the world through. But if we stopped there we’d miss the main point. Transcending all these beginnings and origins is God himself, who has no beginning or origin.¹ Indeed if we possessed a Bible without the book of Genesis, we would be in a house with no foundation. We would have no proper doctrine of God if there’s no Genesis. We would have no doctrine of creation if there’s no Genesis. We would have no beginnings of the covenant God makes with man if there’s no Genesis. We would have no doctrine of man if there’s no Genesis. We would have no genealogy in Matthew or Luke if there’s no Genesis. We would have no Paul and his substantial use of Adam and Abraham if there’s no Genesis. And we would have no understanding of a future ‘better than Eden’ in Revelation if we don’t have the reality and images of the first Eden in Genesis.² It would be like sitting down to watch *Finding Nemo* after missing the first 20 minutes of the movie. Nothing would make sense!³ Sadly, many Christians ignore Genesis and the rest of the *Old Testament* (OT), thinking it’s just a collection of old stories meant for Sunday school that has little meaning or practicality for the church today. Yet, I would argue as many others have done, that almost every doctrine in the Bible is present in Genesis in seed form.⁴

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 2.

² Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 22–23.

³ Kevin DeYoung, *In the Beginning God* (sermon, 8.30.2020) accessed 8.3.2022.

⁴ John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, EP Study Commentary (Holywell, UK: Evangelical Press, 2015), 15–16.

Today, here's what I'd like to do as we begin Genesis. First, I'd like to give you information about this book to better understand it as we enter into it. And second, I'd like to introduce you to the main character of this book, the God Who is.

The Book

The Title – It was common in the ancient Near Eastern culture to name books after their first words, so in Hebrew the title for this book is simply *bereshit*, or “in the beginning.” Once the Hebrew Scripture was translated into Greek the title chosen was *Genesis*, taken from v. 2:4, where it says, “These are the origins [or generations] of the heavens and the earth...” Well, that Greek title *Genesis* was also used for the title of the Latin translation as well, which is where we get the title we know today, our English word *Genesis*. So, from the title alone we learn this is a book about beginnings and origins.

The Author – Moses.⁵ There are a few reasons we believe this. First, all throughout Genesis-Deuteronomy we find it's Moses in view: Moses being with God, Moses being told to write down what God told him, and Moses instructing the people of God. So, we believe that to be the case, and that what God told him to write down is what we have here in these first five books. Second, the rest of the OT believes Moses wrote these first five books. Every OT author after Moses points back to the Law of God given through Moses as the rule and guide for all of life. And fourteen other OT authors refer to Moses by name and what he wrote down, and how Israel as a nation should turn back to his writing. Third, almost every *New Testament* (NT) author refers to Moses and what he wrote, with Jesus himself being the primary example of this. Lastly, a case from history: that Moses wrote Genesis-Deuteronomy was a given until the dawn of the Enlightenment when all thought (theology included) took a humanistic turn as people began denying all sorts of things long believed. All and all, we believe Moses is the author of Genesis.

The Structure – How did Moses structure his writing in Genesis? Many of your study Bibles will tell you there are two sections in Genesis. Chapters 1-11, usually being called *primeval history* where God created all humanity, and chapters 12-50 usually being called *patriarchal history*, where God tells us about his one chosen family. I'm happy with this division and these labels, as long as we don't see chapters 1-11 as fable and chapters 12-50 as factual. Many do this today, sadly. I disagree, and I think you should disagree too. There are no fables in Genesis, it is factual through and through.

Among the many other items regarding the structure of this book, I think one more is worth mentioning. Ten times in Genesis we find a repeated refrain: *toledoth* in Hebrew, or *generations* in English. This happens after creation in vv. 2:4 and 5:1 with Adam, v.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28–31.

6:9 with Noah, v. 10:1 with the sons of Noah, v. 11:10 with Shem, v. 11:27 with Terah, v. 25:12 with Ishmael, v. 25:19 with Isaac, v. 36:9 with Esau, and v. 37:2 with Jacob. That God does this in Genesis shows us how he zooms in, slowly but surely as Genesis progresses, from all humanity down to the one chosen people and the main redemptive storyline he wants us to hear and heed.

The Purpose – Think, who did Moses write Genesis to? Israel. What was Israel's condition as Moses is writing? They're a stubborn, sinful, wandering people, saved from Egypt but not yet safe in the promised land. A forgotten question many don't ask as Genesis is studied is this: what did this mean to the Israelites at that time? I don't think Moses wrote Genesis to tell them how long creation took, or to clue them in on how old the earth is, or to give them a kind of science book to help them interpret this world. Rather, Moses wrote to point them to God, the One who keeps his promises despite his people. Genesis shows us this. Tell me: where are God's people (Adam and Eve) as the book begins? Safe in Eden. Where are God's people (Israel) as the book ends? Safe in Egypt. What happened in between? Lots of sin. Lesson? Despite their sin, God keeps, leads, cares for, and provides for his people. As Israel once was safe in Egypt and is longing to be safe in the promised land even though they're in a mess of their own making as they wander in the wilderness, the book of Genesis would've been a hefty encouragement, just as it is for us today.

Worldview – As we come closer to our text today I would say these opening chapters of Genesis are foundational for a Christian worldview. Genesis teaches that God is (vs. atheism), that God is wholly other than this universe (vs. pantheism), that God is the Creator of this universe (vs. secularism and naturalistic evolution), that God is the only true God (vs. polytheism), that God has made a covenant with his creation and upholds it (vs. deism), and that God has made human beings in his image to manage the world on his behalf (vs. hedonism).⁶

All in all, the book of Genesis provides the foundation for our faith, standing in bright and beautiful contrast against all the opposing worldviews out there competing for our hearts' affection.

That's all the information I think is needed to draw near the book of Genesis as a whole. You should know and be aware that I've only given you a tiny amount of all you could wade through and think about Genesis and how we approach it. If you're satisfied, great. If you want more, great, see the footnotes for further examination.

For now, with the time we have remaining, let's turn to Genesis 1:1 to see...

⁶ Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2007) 7.

The God Who Is

I said earlier Genesis is a book all about beginnings and origins, yet transcending all these beginnings and origins is God, who has no beginning and no origin. In v. 1 we're introduced to God, the main subject, and the Person the whole book is about. *Elohim* is repeated 35 times throughout chapter 1, which is so often that it should be obvious that God is the main subject of this book and all that comes after.⁷

So, I just want to ask one question here. From what we have in v. 1, or, since v. 1 is true, what kind of God must God be? I have many answers to this question.⁸ These are in no particular order, and all of them are so important they could be first. So we'll just go one at a time.

First, Verse One Assumes God is Eternal

“In the beginning, God...” This assumes God already exists, that God already is. It's implied here in v. 1, but it's explicit everywhere in Scripture. Psalm 102:25-27 says, “Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end.” Psalm 90:1-2, “Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” In Exodus 3 when God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush he said his name is “I AM.” Meaning while you and I are subject to the process of change, ever becoming something other than what we are now for better or for worse, God simply *is* and is not in process of becoming something other than he is now. He is, and he always will be as he is.

Verse 1 assumes that God always has been, God always is, and God always will be. There will never be a time when God is not, for God created time, God stands outside of time, and therefore God is not subject to the limitations of time. He didn't enter into the story of Genesis in v. 1, he predates the story of Genesis because he planned it all before he laid the foundation of the world.⁹ That God is eternal means he never had a past, he doesn't have a future, he was never created, he simply is, always.

This is some of what it means for God to be eternal.

Second, Verse One Assumes God is Independent

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 47.

⁸ I am indebted to Matthew Barrett's book *None Greater*, and his insights on the attributes of God in this sermon.

⁹ DeYoung, *In the Beginning God*, accessed 8.3.2022.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” To say God is independent is to say God is not in need of something or someone or anything as if he were somehow insufficient or lacking in himself. He is rather, fully sufficient, not lacking anything in himself, and dependent on no one else for anything at any time. That God is independent might be a new idea to modern Christians, but this was a cherished reality about God in the early church. They referred to God using the Latin word *aseity*, which means God’s existence is *a se*, or from himself. So, for God to be independent means he is fully self-existent, and fully self-sufficient. You might remember Paul mentions this when he preaches in Athens saying in Acts 17:24-25, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, *as though he needed anything*, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.”

You might wonder, what does God’s independence have to do with Genesis 1:1? Well, it matters because it effects how we answer the question why did God create the world? If he truly is eternally independent, needing nothing outside himself, and lacking nothing in himself, why then did God create the world at all? The popular answers of today are as follows: God was lonely, God was needy, God was looking in creation for fulfillment which was lacking in himself. Such a god wouldn’t be god at all if he were this needy and lonely. Why then did God create all things? Well, first we should understand that God didn’t have to create at all. He would’ve remained perfectly satisfied and content in himself. But second, wonder of wonders, he did create because he desires to display—and he desires his creatures to enjoy—his glory. All creation then is the theater of God’s glory, all creatures can see his glory, and none can give an excuse. God has chosen one family to reveal his glory to, by his grace. No one forced God to do any of this. He did it all, he desired to do it all, and he delights in it all.

This is some of what it means for God to be independent.

Third, Verse One Assumes God is Triune.

The word used in v. 1 for God is the Hebrew word/name *Elohim*. This word is plural, referring to many, but Moses uses it for God, referring to One. And Moses uses this word 35 times in Genesis 1 to make much of God’s majestic power through his spoken Word as all creation comes into being.¹⁰ What do we make of this? From the first verse of the Bible we learn there is a plurality in the One God we’re introduced to. Of course, the rest of the OT and the NT will develop this plurality and unity. We call it the doctrine of the Trinity; we see it in seed form with the mention of the name Elohim.

This is some of what it means for God to be triune.

¹⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 58.

Fourth, Verse One Assumes God is an Omnipotent Creator

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Only a God immeasurable in might, almighty in omnipotent power, and infinite in wisdom and imagination could be a God who creates.¹¹ Romans 4:17 makes much of this as Paul describes God as One Who “...gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” Hebrews 11:3 also says it, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” The gods of the nations around Israel are only said to create from materials already at hand, or after a great battle with other gods. Not so for the God of the Bible, he creates all things *ex nihilo*, or from nothing.

I remember once teaching our boys about this at home. I gave them each a piece of paper and some crayons and asked them to draw a beautiful work of art. They did and each of them shared what they drew. Then I took the paper and the crayons away from them and asked them to do it again, to make something beautiful. They just looked at me like *Dad, we can't. We don't have anything to draw with or on.*

This is what it means for God to create from nothing. Only a God who is truly God could do this, and that God did this in creating all things teaches us, first, that there is a great difference between God the Creator and us his creatures. And second, that God is known by us not only in his nature but in his works as well.¹² This is some of what it means for God to be an omnipotent Creator.

So, Church, here at the beginning of Genesis, behold the God of Genesis 1:1, the God who is: eternal, independent, triune, and omnipotent. He is the Creator of all that is, for he was before all things. He reigns over all things, is distinct from all things, and yet is intimately involved with all things. That God did this, that God is these things and will forever remain to be these things, and more, should leave our souls astounded and our mouths confessing that nothing is too hard for the Lord.

The summary statement of Genesis 1:1 is so monumental that Matthew and John both begin their gospel with Genesis 1 language to reveal the glory of the gospel. This God, as great and immeasurable as he is, should not only be known to us as Creator, but as Redeemer as well. For God shows his love to us in this, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Ibid., 59.

¹² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 15.

AFTER DARKNESS LIGHT

Genesis 1:2

Introduction

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void....” The earth was *tobu vabobu*.

During seminary, one requirement placed on us as students was that we had to work in a church. God opened doors and I was able to be one of many interns at a church in downtown Atlanta. During our time there, one particular Monday morning stands out to me still to this day. We had staff meetings on Monday mornings to talk over the previous day’s service as well as the service coming up. On this particular Monday the senior pastor was a few minutes late, so all the staff and interns were in the room as the pastor arrived. He walked in, sat down, looked at all of us interns with a scowl on his face and said, *tobu vabobu*. We had no idea what he had just said; it sounded just like a bunch of voodoo juju to us. He could tell we were confused so he went on to explain that *tobu vabobu* are the main words in Genesis 1:2 which describe the state of creation before v. 3, meaning “without form and void.” Come to find out, we had done something totally wrong as interns and this was his way of calling us out and correcting us.

Well we’re now in our second week of our new sermon series in Genesis. Last week we covered v. 1, and this week we’ll cover v. 2. There are 1,533 verses in the book of Genesis. If we keep up this one verse per sermon pace we’ll finish the whole of Genesis in 29 years. I’m well aware of my snail-like pace here in these first few verses of Genesis. Be encouraged, I will pick up the speed soon, but for now, the snail’s pace is needed simply because such monumental realities are before us in these opening verses.

Last week in covering Genesis v. 1, I mentioned that v. 1 functions as an opening summary statement of God’s work in creating all things. Now, as we begin v. 2, we actually come to the moment God begins the work of creation. And how does it all begin? In darkness.

“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

I’d like to do two things here for our time in v. 2. *First*, I’d like to see v. 2 for what it is and what it means, simply, clearly, and plainly. *Second*, I’d like to pull out some

consequences of v. 2, aiming at how v. 2 sets up almost all of God's redemptive work in the rest of the Bible.

The Verse

Verse 2 has three clear phrases to it.¹³ First phrase, "The earth was without form and void..." Second phrase, "...and darkness was over the face of the deep." Third phrase, "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Let's take these one at a time to see the whole of v. 2.

First, "The earth was without form and void..."

The beginning of v. 2 may be surprising but here we find the condition of creation as it was before the famous words of v. 3, "...Let there be light..." Once those words begin flowing in v. 3 and onward, creation will be filled with all manner of good things. But here in v. 2, it all begins *tobu vabohu*, without form and void. What do these two words mean? *Tobu*, or without form, generally refers to a wilderness or desolation-like state. The *va* sound is the Hebrew word *and*. *Bobu*, or void, generally refers to the lack of anything living.

Genesis 1 is not the only time these two words are found in Scripture. They're found together in two other places. In Jeremiah 4:23 we find both these words used. Because of the sin of God's people, Jeremiah uses the phrase *tobu vabohu* to describe how God is going to punish them for their sin and bring them as a people back to formlessness and emptiness. Or in other words, for their sin God will undo or uncreate them.¹⁴ So just as God had established his people in the land he chose for them and made them flourish, now for their sin he will reduce his people to a barren and empty condition.¹⁵ Isaiah also uses these two words found in Genesis 1:2 in Isaiah 34:11 to communicate much of the same reality as Jeremiah, but this time it's the nations being judged for their sin, not God's people.

Now...question. Since these two words are used by Isaiah and Jeremiah to display God's judgment against sin, does that mean judgment is being displayed here in v. 2? That somehow the formless empty creation exists, or is there at all, is it because God had previously judged sin leaving this barren-like result? Some do say this. Some teach there was a whole creation in vv. 1-2 and that it went bad and God judged it and started over with a new creation in v. 3. This view is wrong. Why? Because sin doesn't come into the world until Genesis chapter 3. So, the formless void state of creation in v. 2 is not there because of God's judgment. When v. 2 states creation is without form and void we should view it as just that, not a metaphorical or poetic statement vaguely

¹³ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 130.

¹⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 108.

¹⁵ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 132-133.

referring to the emptiness of creation before God spoke, but the actual formless and empty state of creation before v. 3.¹⁶

A new question then comes: if God's judgment against sin is not in view in v. 2, why is creation like this? That's a good question, and we'll answer after looking at the whole verse.

Second, "...and darkness was over the face of the deep."

Creation begins not only formless and void, it begins in darkness, and the darkness is said to be over the deep. This is not merely a restatement of what we just covered, creation being formless and void, this new phrase adds more detail to the scene unfolding before us. Darkness and the deep now come into view.

Darkness can just mean the absence of light. After all God hasn't created light yet, true, but I think there's more in view here. Darkness in Scripture has both a negative and positive sense.¹⁷ We understand the negative sense easily. All over Scripture everything that is anti-God is said to be darkness. This includes Satan along with his demons. It includes all sin or deeds of darkness, as well as all those who commit sin. They're not only said to be in the darkness but that they are darkness themselves. That's the negative sense. But there's a positive sense to darkness in the Bible too. Rather than being threatening, sinister, or sinful, this kind of darkness carries the sense of the divine as well as a protective sense as it guards sinful man from the purity and holiness of God. After the giving of the Law in Exodus 20 Moses told the people in Exodus 20:20, "...Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." Then in the very next verse, Exodus 20:21 we read this, "The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was." This darkness on Mt. Sinai is where God dwelt. It wasn't sinful or evil, it was what happened when God in his glory came down to meet his people on the mountain, and it was terrifying to Israel. Not just because it was dark and scary but because they knew how holy this God was and unholy they were. Psalm 18 also shows us this, speaking of darkness as something that surrounds God. In Psalm 18:9 darkness is said to be under his feet. Then in Psalm 18:11 we read, "He made darkness his covering, his canopy around him, thick clouds dark with water." So rather than darkness being an image or metaphor for sin or evil, the darkness present in the beginning of creation in Genesis 1:2 is the canopy of the Lord, or the shadow or covering of the Lord that points to his awesome, holy, and fearful presence.

¹⁶ John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, EP Study Commentary (Holywell, UK: Evangelical Press, 2015), 58.

¹⁷ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 110–111.

What about the deep? I think the mention of the deep is another way of referring to the empty void we've already seen in the first phrase of v. 2, or it could refer to the waters we're about to see in the last phrase of v. 2, or maybe better it could refer to both of the terms we've seen: empty void and the waters. I think this is the case. And no surprise, this is also spoken of in the rest of the Bible. In Psalm 42:7 we read that "Deep calls to deep...." In Habakkuk 3:10 the deep gives forth a strong voice. And Psalm 148:7 mentions the great deeps which praise the Lord. This word deep in v. 2 gives us the picture that even here in the very beginning of creation, this dark void knows who its Maker is and delights to sound forth with praise to him. Many other ancient Near Eastern religions around Israel mention a deep watery abyss in their own creation stories, some of them even use this very same word for deep. But while the word might be the same or similar, all of the deeps in the pagan creation stories are represented as being an active force against a god or gods who are trying to create the world. Here in Genesis 1 we see no such thing.¹⁸ These are the deeps that covered the earth in the flood at God's command. These are the deeps that separated the Red Sea at God's command to let Israel walk through safely after the Exodus. And these are the deeps that, at God's command, separated the waters of the Jordan before Joshua to allow Israel to enter the promised land. So, these deeps in v. 2 are made by God, they do not rival God, they are subject to God, and they give forth praise to God.¹⁹

Third, "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

Last week I said Genesis 1:1 assumes that God is triune. Now in v. 2 we see some of the first explicit evidence of it. Here we see the Spirit of God "...hovering over the face of the waters." This word Spirit in Hebrew is *ruah* and based on context it can be translated as spirit, wind, or breath. Many debate over which word is best suited in English, but I'm a fan of all three. I think the Israelites reading this would not have struggled at all with which word to use, but would have, by their own experience, understood exactly what was going on here. Why?²⁰ This same word *ruah* used here, is used in Genesis 8:1 to describe how God blew back the waters of the flood. *Ruah* is also used in Exodus 14:21 to explain how God drove apart and split the Red Sea by a strong wind so Israel could walk through. And in Deuteronomy 32:11 the image of hovering is used to illustrate how an eagle hovers over its young to protect and care for them. So, what do we learn from all these other references? When the word *ruah* shows up we know God is present in power to work wonders for his people and protect his people. Question: how is the Lord present with his people in great power and great protection? Answer: by his Spirit. So, this last phrase in v. 2 shows us how God is sovereignly and powerfully present in his work of creation, to lead it, to see to and tend it, and to prepare it for what's to come. That v. 2 ends like this shows us all creation,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁹ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

though dark and empty, is ripe and pregnant with God's almighty power, right on the brink of bursting forth with all manner of life and light.

All in all, everything we just went over is what's going on in v. 2. This is the state of creation in the very beginning.

The Implications

That v. 2 begins the way it does raises a question.²¹ Where did this empty, dark, watery, void come from? We already stated it is not the result of God's judgment, as some say. Others would have us believe creation is the way it is in v. 2 because this formless watery void was the primordial stuff God used to make the world. Well if this is true it would mean someone or something other than God made this dark watery abyss, and if God didn't make it, God is no longer God, but something else that made this darkness is. Which of course, cannot be right because God made the world *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Still others would say the language of v. 2 is metaphorical, merely referring to the emptiness of the uncreated world, which I also think is wrong. This is empty darkness and watery void that actually tells us what creation was like before v. 3.

So back to the question: who made this empty, dark, watery void? And why is creation the way it is in v. 2? Answer: God made it. This is how God begins his work of creation.

I know we're not accustomed to saying things like *God makes darkness* and the like, because we think to say something like this makes God out to be a sinister figure or a kind of villain. But we've already seen much evidence that darkness doesn't always refer to sin and evil, but very often refers to that majestic canopy surrounding the Lord. Listen to Isaiah 45:5-7, "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things."

Did you hear it? God creates both light and darkness, and that he does this singles him out as absolutely unique, matchless, and unrivaled. So why is all this darkness there in v. 2? Because God made it. And in making this formless, dark, watery void we see his first act of creating in his work of creation.

Now, let's ask a new question. Why did God begin his work of creation by making this dark empty void? Couldn't God just have begun by skipping this step and begin with what we see in v. 3? Of course, he could have done that but v. 2 says he didn't, and that

²¹ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 115.

this darkness came first. So why create all this dark void first? Because God's displaying his normal method of operation.²² God wants us to know that he is a God who brings light out of darkness.

Tell me Church, where else do we see this pattern in Scripture? Almost everywhere. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of Adam and Eve's sin by covering their shame and promising a Redeemer. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of Noah's day by the ark and the flood. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of Abraham and Sarah's barren condition by the birth of Isaac. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of Joseph's slavery by his sovereign hand. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of Israel's slavery by the Exodus. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of David's kingship by promising him a Kingly descendant and an eternal throne. Light is what God brought about in Isaiah's suffering servant turned conquering King. Light is what God brought about in the darkness of Israel in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. And fast forward on that first Christmas night, light is what God brought about in the darkness of the world's condition by the birth of the Lord Jesus. And still today, light is what God brings about in the darkness of every sinner who turns to Jesus in faith. And one day still to come, light is what God will bring in full as he returns and ushers in the new heavens and the new earth.

Church, these first few verses in Genesis 1 show us that God is a God who brings light out of darkness! This marvelous pattern begins right here in v. 2. That's why he made all this darkness before creating light. So that into such a dark void he could say the beautiful words of v. 3, "Let there be light!"

Church, in whatever darkness you're facing right now today in your own life, take hope, and be of good cheer. God is still today the God of Genesis 1, and he delights in bringing light to our darkness.

²² Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 50.

THE DAYS OF CREATION, PART 1

Genesis 1:3-13

Introduction

There are many ways we define what a Christian is. One way we could do it is to say a Christian is a person who believes certain things about God, about himself, and about the world around him.

One example of these beliefs is the doctrine of eschatology, or beliefs about how the world will come to an end: what God will do in that moment, what will happen to man, and what will happen to the world. Throughout the centuries Christians have differed over the doctrine of eschatology. And I'm not referring to various offshoots and cultic-like groups, though those certainly exist. I'm referring to Christians who all have held a high view of Scripture, that it is inspired by God, inerrant, infallible, and the basis of all our faith and practice. These Christians have differed on eschatology. Among the many options put forward throughout the ages there are three main views: premillennial, amillennial, and postmillennial. While there are many godly people who line up in each of these three positions, these convictions do indeed run very deep. None of these positions believes the other positions are heretical or unorthodox because eschatology, though important, is not a central doctrine in our faith like our belief in the Trinity, or the deity of Christ, or salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, to the glory of God alone. So, because godly people line up in all three of these positions, you often find all three present within the same congregation.

And that's ok.

Why go into all this? Well, as we continue on in Genesis 1 this morning, my plea is that we would view and treat the doctrine of creation in the same way. Just as many godly people have held many different positions on eschatology, or how the world will end, so too many godly people down through the centuries have held many different positions on creation, or how the world began. And these various positions on creation can and do exist within the same congregation. Among the many views held by Christians, the majority of them fall into young earth views, old earth views, and views like my own, where the age of the earth is not a primary factor.²³ Don't hear me saying what I'm not. I do think what we believe about the age of the earth matters, I do. What I am saying is that in creation debates, I think we too often get bogged down in

²³ Following Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Ridderbos, and Kline I hold to the Literary Framework view of Genesis 1.

squeezing Genesis 1 into the latest scientific theory, or seek to twist scientific truth to fit with a specific interpretation of Genesis 1 which just so happens to align with our own view.²⁴

Yet, if we simply read Genesis 1, and see what it says and see how it says it, I'm convinced we'll see that the age of the earth is not the primary purpose of Genesis 1. Well what is the primary purpose of the creation week then? The primary purpose of Genesis 1 is to display how God forms the creation, how God fills the creation, and how God reigns over the creation as King.

Why do I believe this? Because the text itself shows us this in three ways.²⁵

First, Genesis 1 has a great *arrangement*. Taking a look at the whole of Genesis 1 reveals an arranged pattern. In days 1-3 God forms creation, and in days 4-6 God fills creation. These first six days then are the remedy of the state of creation in v. 2. Remember, in v. 2 all creation is without form and void. In the first three days God brings form to what was formless, and in the next three days God fills what was void.

Second, Genesis 1 has a great *correspondence*. The light formed on day 1 corresponds to the lights of day and night formed on day 4. The sky and sea formed on day 2 corresponds to the birds and fish formed on day 5. And the land formed on day 3 corresponds to the animals and man formed on day 6.

Third, Genesis 1 reveals great *perfection*. In v. 1 there are three nouns: God, heavens, and earth. In the Hebrew these three words are then repeated throughout chapter 1 in multiples of 7. God occurs 35 times (5 x 7), heavens occurs 21 times (3 x 7), and earth occurs 21 times (3 x 7). Genesis 1:1 also has 7 words, while v. 2 has 14 words. Day 7 is described to us in three sentences, each having 7 words themselves, and each centering around the phrase "seventh day." And throughout Genesis 1 we read "it was good" 7 times with the emphasis coming on the final usage "it was very good."²⁶ We might miss these things today, but the numerical symmetry would've stood out brightly to Moses' original audience.

All this literary numerical perfection shows us why Genesis 1 is intentionally stylized and poetic. But again, don't hear what I'm not saying. Genesis 1 is not the realm of fantasy. There are no dragons, wizards, elves, dwarves, or hobbits. Genesis 1 is true history. But while it's true and factual history, it is more than just mere history. There's

²⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 40.

²⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2004), 24–26.

²⁶ John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, EP Study Commentary (Holywell, UK: Evangelical Press, 2015), 60.

an intentional pattern revealed to us of God forming creation, God filling creation, and God reigning over all creation.

So, our next three weeks together, Lord willing, will follow that pattern. Today we'll cover days 1-3 where God forms the kingdoms of the earth. Next week we'll cover days 4-6 where God fills the earth with kings. And then two weeks from today, we'll cover day 7 where the true King stands forth in bright power and beautiful rest. So, let's turn our attention to days 1-3.

Day 1 (vv. 3-5)

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

In the command of v. 3, we see the first instance of what we'll see throughout God's creating work in chapter 1. There is an announcement “God said.” There is a command “let there be...” There is obedience “and it was so” or “and there was.” There is approval “and God saw that it was good.” And there is a numbered summary “there was evening and there was morning, the *first* day.”²⁷

What do we see in v. 3? By the power of his Word alone, God brings creation into existence. This small phrase of v. 3 has rightly become famous. When God said, “Let there be light” his Word alone breaks the silence and darkness of v. 2, and changes everything.²⁸ There's a clear emphasis on the power of God's Word to create. He speaks, and it is. God stated, and it was. He doesn't have to outmuscle a competing power to make all things, or struggle with any pre-existing matter to form all things. There was nothing but emptiness and void, and by his Word alone, creation is.

And as he breaks the silence of v. 2, he creates light. But wait, the sun isn't made until day 4. So, what is this light? Where did it come from if there was no sun? Did Moses get the numbering of the days wrong? Or misplace the creation of light? No. What then is happening here? The light came from God himself. Why though would God reveal his light before creating a sun? To teach us two things.²⁹ One, that God has light in himself and can produce anything without the help of anything else. And two, that we his creatures would seek light, life, and everything in him rather than seeking it in

²⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 17-18.

²⁸ Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, 59.

²⁹ John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis 1-11* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 2009) 26.

creation. And notice Church, this is a bookend reality in the Bible. The Bible begins and ends with no sun and yet light shines forth from the Lord.³⁰

Well, God saw this light, approved of this light by calling or defining it as good, and *separated* the light from the darkness, calling the light *day* and calling the darkness *night*. God's work of separation here on day 1 and in all the other days to come isn't a work of disorder but of order.³¹ Think about this. On one hand sin always separates toward disorder: man against God, man against the ground, man against the garden, even male against female, and female against male. On the other hand, God's separation always produces order: light from darkness, day from night, waters above from waters below, and woman from man. Even further on: Noah's family separated out from the rest, Abraham's family separated out from the rest, Israel as a nation separated out from the rest, David as king separated out from the rest, Jesus in his Person and work separated out from everyone, and now the Church is called by God to come out and be separate from the rest.

That God brought separation into his creation to bring order and to distinguish between one thing and another thing shows us that he is preparing us to see how he will deal with and call his redeemed people to live in this world.³²

It is very appropriate to again mention the Trinitarian nature of what we're seeing here. In v. 1 we're introduced to God, in v. 2 we're introduced to God's Spirit, and in v. 3 we're introduced to God's Word. This is the language John will later use to begin his gospel, John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." A few verses later in John 1:14, John will say "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." So, the Word who made all things is the very Word who was in the beginning with God, the very Word who was God, and the very Word who descended to dwell among us and reveal his glory to us as the only Son from the Father. This is the Lord Jesus. See that? Jesus therefore, created all things.

Paul also makes much of this in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 when he says, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For

³⁰ Hughes, *Genesis*, 29.

³¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 120.

³² Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 69.

God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Church, you see what this means? The same might and power present in Genesis 1 that spoke all of creation into existence from Tampa to Taiwan, from Atlanta to Australia, from Mt. Everest to the Everglades, that same power that burst forth in Genesis 1 to make all things, bursts forth in the dead sinner’s heart and creates life and light when that sinner turns to Jesus in faith. We call this salvation and rightly so, because this is how a sinner is saved. But this is why we also call salvation a new creation, because as God made the world by his Word, he remakes all who come to him.

This is a miracle, and it happens to every Christian. Some of you don’t remember this happening to you because you’ve never known a day apart from Christ. Others of you who came to Christ later in life might remember the moment when God burst forth in gospel light and remade you. But all of us still feel the present continuing effects of this miracle as God’s light still presses in, exposing darkness, and growing us in grace. All of this imagery and reality begins here in v. 3, praise God!

This is day 1, “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.”

Day 2 (vv. 6-8)

“And God said, ‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.”

Now we see God do another act of creating, and just as before on day 1, all the normal elements are present here: announcement, command, obedience, approval, and a numbered summary. Day 2 is about the creation of the expanse, canopy, or the firmament, by the separation of waters above and below. Some believe this means a kind of watery insulated creation is made on day 2 with waters above and waters below being made, and that it was these above waters that were let loose at the flood. I can understand why some say that, but I tend toward a simpler explanation: that God created the horizontal space between the sky and the sea. The sky is the expanse in v. 6 or heaven in v. 8. The waters below would then be the seas, and the waters above are found in the clouds throughout the heavens.

See also that the work on day 2 involves no new creation, but rather an ordering by separation of what was already made.³³ Other than the question of what the expanse is,

³³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 20.

there's really no more debate to v. 2. So, Church, this is day 2, "And there was evening and there was morning, the second day."

Day 3 (vv. 9-13)

"And God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.' And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day."

Unlike days 1 and 2, there are two works of creation on day 3. The first work is the creation of dry lands, which God accomplishes by the separation of the seas.

The second work on day 3 is the creation of the plants. Notice how God creates the plants. There is both the supernatural and the natural in view. The supernatural is that God created them from the earth, so their existence/origin is in him. The natural element here is that these plants "yield seed...each according to its kind..." So, there is a natural self-perpetuating continuation through reproduction after God's initial creation.³⁴ Or to put it much more simply, these plants exist in limitations. They can only reproduce according to their kind. A rose bush cannot produce potatoes, two fish cannot make a giraffe, and a man and a woman cannot produce a goat.³⁵

All in all, day 3 is the last time God will name anything. He will continue to create, yes, but calling/naming from here on out he will leave to Adam.³⁶ This is day 3, "And there was evening and there was morning, the third day."

The earth is now formed, and all that awaits is its filling.

Aslan, kids hear the song, uncle Andrew only hears roaring....

³⁴ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 52–53.

³⁵ Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, 71.

³⁶ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 125.

THE DAYS OF CREATION, PART 2

Genesis 1:14-31

Introduction

We find ourselves, once again, in the creation week of Genesis 1. I mentioned two things last week that are worth repeating again today.

First, just as there will be varying views on eschatology within the same congregation so too there will be varying views on the creation week within the same congregation. These things matter, certainly, and each view is not created equal bringing good/bad implications with it. But our view on the creation week is not and ought not be the litmus test of our orthodoxy.

Second, when we come to this portion of the Bible many Christians too often get bogged down in trying to squeeze Genesis 1 into the latest scientific theory, or seek to twist scientific truth to fit with a specific interpretation of Genesis 1.³⁷ And yet, if we simply read this passage, see what it says and see how it says it, I'm convinced we'll see that scientific explanations or the age of the earth is not the primary purpose, and shouldn't hold a primary place in our view of Genesis 1. Well, what is the primary purpose of the creation week then? The primary purpose of Genesis 1 is to display how God forms creation, how God fills creation, and how God reigns over creation as King.

In our time together last week we covered the first three days in the creation week where God brought form to the earth by making the skies, the seas, and the dry land. Today as we continue on and cover the next three days in the creation week we'll see God fill the earth. So, see in God's creating work the remedy to the state of creation in v. 2. It was then without form and void, and in these six days he forms it and fills it.

One more note. There are a mountain of issues to work through on day 6 regarding the creation of mankind. So, to adequately handle them we'll zoom through days 4 and 5 so we can spend sufficient time on day 6.

Day 4 (vv. 14-19)

“And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.’ And it was so. And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser

³⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 40.

light to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.”

As God formed day and night on day 1, now God fills day and night with the lights of the sun, moon, and stars.

The plural command “Let there be lights” stands out in contrast to the singular command on day 1 “Let there be light.” It is these luminaries, these lights, that make up the main subject of day 4. Verses 14 and 18 say these lights are for the purpose of separating day from night, or light from darkness. Verses 15 and 17 say these lights are for the purpose of giving light on the earth. And in between these purposes we find another. The end of v. 14 says that these lights are for the purpose of distinguishing signs, seasons, days, and years. That’s the basic thrust of day 4, but did you notice how long the description of day 4 is?³⁸ Other than day 6, day 4 is given the most words of any other day. Why is that so?

I think Moses is being polemical here. Or in other words, I think Moses is making an argument against the gods of the nations on day 4, and that’s why he gives so many words to it. What do I mean? In the Ancient Near Eastern culture it was common to view the sun, moon, and stars as divine, as gods who direct all things, who must be worshipped and pleased. Yet, here on day 4 what do we see? We see the sun, moon, and stars not as gods, but as creations of God, who are not only brought into being by God, but operate and function according to the desires of God. It was so common to view these luminaries as divine in this culture that some say what Moses has written here would have been nothing short of revolutionary.³⁹ Of course it should be mentioned that this kind of astrology isn’t unique to the ancient world. One only has to scroll through social media to find your horoscope from the stars above, leading you to your destiny.

Church, astrology is alive and well today, just as it was in Moses’ day. Lesson? Day 4 matters. The sun, moon, and stars are not divine gods or horoscope helps, they are created by God, exist because of God, and have their being in God. Psalm 19 would have us understand that these great lights pour forth in praise to the God who made them.

“And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.”

³⁸ Ibid., 21.

³⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 127, footnote 3.

Day 5 (vv. 20-23)

“And God said, ‘Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens.’ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.”

As God formed the seas and skies on day 2, now God fills the seas and skies with all manner of living creatures.

Here we have the origin of all swimming and flying creatures. From whale sharks to sea horses, and eagles to mosquitoes (maybe?). Like the plants on day 3 God made these creatures according to their kinds. And did you notice this is the first instance of God blessing something he made and speaking to it directly? See that in v22? “And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.’” How surprising that the recipient of God’s first blessing in the Bible isn’t man, but these swimming and flying creatures.⁴⁰ It does seem the blessing of God centers on and involves the ability to multiply and reproduce. We’ll discuss this more when we get to v28.

“And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.”

Day 6 (vv. 24-31)

As God formed the dry land on day 3, now God fills the land with animals and mankind. With day 6 being the longest day in the creation week, we’ll take it in two parts.

First see vv. 24-25, “And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.’ And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”

The animals of day 6 are not created out of nothing by God, rather, God commands the earth to bring them forth according to their kinds. Specifically, three categories are mentioned: livestock, creeping things, and beasts of the earth. These three categories represent all the animal life on earth from domesticated animals to wild animals. And

⁴⁰ Ibid., 131.

as wonderful as Yogi Bear, Bambi, and Bugs Bunny are, they are not the focus of day 6.

So, let's move on to see the focus in vv. 26-31, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And 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.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

Now we come to it, the creation of mankind. The matters to attend to are many, and wonderful.

First, the *us* in v. 26. On day 4 God speaks to the expanse saying, "Let there be light..." On day 5 God speaks to the seas and skies saying, "Let the waters swarm" and "Let birds fly..." But here on day 6 notice the change, "Then God said, 'Let *us* make man..." I thought God was the One creating. Who is this *us* in view here?⁴¹ Well, some say the *us* is a heavenly court or the angelic host looking on as God creates the world. Now it is true that angels are sometimes likened to be men in Scripture mistakenly (think Genesis 18-19), and it is true that the heavenly court is mentioned in Scripture (think Job 1), but to say man is made in the image of this court is to say something Scripture never says.

Others say this *us* is a plural of majesty, like a royal *we* being used here. This idea of a plural of majesty exists within the Hebrew language but it is rare in Scripture, if it is used at all. So, it seems this wouldn't be what's going on here either.

Still others say this *us* is describing a plurality within God, or in other words, this is evidence of the Trinity. This is what I think is going on here; let me tell you why. We've already seen in Genesis 1:1-3 evidence that a plurality within God exists. We see the Father in v. 1, the Spirit in v. 2, the Word in v. 3. Now here in the *us* of v. 26 we see

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 132-134.

more evidence of communication occurring within the three Persons of the Trinity. And if this is indeed God in Trinity here in v. 26, that would fit well with what follows, as v. 26 says not only “Let *us* make man” but also “Let us make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness.” This Trinitarian view of v. 26 was the common interpretation in the early church, but it’s widely dismissed today because many scholars believe Moses was too theologically primitive to understand such things.⁴² Such a negative posture toward Moses, I think, reveals a lack more in modern interpreters than in Moses.

That brings us to the *second matter* to attend to—what is this image and likeness man is made in? Throughout the history of the church there have been, by and large, two ways to talk about the image/likeness of God in man. On one hand many are eager to define it structurally, while on the other hand many are eager to define it functionally.⁴³ Those who desire to see image/likeness as structural speak of the special and unique makeup or structure of man over against the other creatures. For example, only man has a soul, only man has personhood, only man has the ability to reason or think logically, only man has the ability to be moral, and only man has the ability to be spiritual, that is, in relationship to God. It is these things which make up the image of God in man.⁴⁴ Now I believe we were created with all of this special structure, and I believe this marks us out from all else because no other creature was made with these things. But I don’t think we find any structure being discussed in Genesis 1, and I don’t think God tells us what the image/likeness of God in man is here. What he does tell us is what it looks like for man to live as one made in the image/likeness of God.

This leads us to speak of the image/likeness in a functional manner. Or to put it simply, God made man in his image/likeness to be his representative on earth.⁴⁵ It was commonly believed in the Ancient Near Eastern culture that the king or ruler was the representative of the gods. Most well-known in this is the pharaohs of Egypt, who were believed to be incarnations of their gods. This in effect made them the representative of their god on earth. Now, the ancient world discussed this idea using the Hebrew word *selem*, or image. How fascinating that Moses uses that same word here to describe us in v. 26. But see the difference being highlighted? The nations around Israel believed only the king was the image of god on earth, while Moses writes that all mankind is the very image of God on earth. Lesson? When v. 26 says God made us in his image/likeness he wants us to know he made us to be his representatives on earth. This is our function as mankind. What does this look like from day to day? It looks like the rest of v. 26, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And

⁴² Implied in Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 27-28.

⁴³ Kevin DeYoung, *Let Us Make Man In Our Image – part 2*, sermon, Christ Covenant Church, 9.13.2020, accessed 8.25.2022.

⁴⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982), 90–91.

⁴⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 66.

let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” We’ll discuss this more as we get to v. 28...

The *third matter* to attend to is that we were made two-gendered. See this in v. 27. That God created us is mentioned three times, that we were created in God’s image is mentioned twice, and at the end of v. 27 we see it, “male and female he created them.” Much to the dismay of our modern culture this is clear, God made two genders. Not a hominid or Neanderthal who would evolve into a gendered person, and not one being who has two genders in one body, no. God made man male and female. Which means both male and female are image bearers, both serving in this world as representatives of God. Which also means we can learn as much about God from masculinity as we can from femininity. This sexual distinction was not created by men who desired to oppress women, no. If that were the case only men would be in the image of God. This sexual distinction was created by God and God calls it good, as we’ll soon see. Only after the fall of man into sin do we find gender confusion, gender dysphoria, or a denial of gender altogether. Church, learn here who we are. If God made you male, maleness is the goal to pursue. If God made you female, femaleness is the goal to pursue. He doesn’t make accidents. This is not up for redefinition or adjustment. Though one might struggle with it, and need help thinking through it, God’s design is good, and should be embraced as good.

When this man and this woman receive names in chapter 2, we’ll further explore the goodness of their one flesh union.

The *fourth matter* to attend to is what is called the dominion mandate. See this in v. 28. “And 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.’” Here we see the blessing of God once again, this time on the call of man to have dominion over the earth. As popular as it is today to view mankind as a parasite ruining all of earth’s resources, we see here that man, male and female, are to steward and rule over earth as kings. Notice though what is being ruled. Creatures of the sea, sky, and land are to be subdued. Never is it told to man to rule over other men or women.⁴⁶ Why? Because we bear God’s image. Only God is to rule over us.

See here something of gospel glory. Verse 28 has four commands to Adam in it. *One*, fill the earth with the image of God through procreation. *Two*, subdue the earth. *Three*, exercise authority and dominion over the creation. *Four*, accomplish these tasks with

⁴⁶ DeYoung, *Let Us Make Man In Our Image – part 2*.

the assistance of his helpmate, Eve. Sadly, Adam failed in these things. Noah receives the same commands in Genesis 9:1-2, and sadly he fails as well. These commands would remain unfulfilled until One came who was the image of God himself, the Lord Jesus. Only he, as the true image of God fills the earth with the image of God by remaking sinners into his own image through the spreading of his gospel. Only he subdues all things by his great authority over heaven and earth. And only he accomplishes these tasks through his helpmate, the church.

The *fifth matter* to attend to is God's kind provision. See this briefly in vv. 29-30. God, after making man, kindly provided for all of his needs, food being especially in view here. Every plant yielding seed is given for food in v. 29, and every green plant as well in v. 30. At no point is man allowed to kill another creature to eat it. I understand this is strange from a scientific viewpoint, but it does seem to me that man and all creatures were vegetarians pre-fall.⁴⁷ This explicitly changes post-fall in Genesis 9 as it says every moving thing (except man of course) that lives shall be food for you, just as I gave you the green plants, now I give you everything.

Lastly, the *sixth matter* to attend to is God's response to his work on day 6. See this in v. 31. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

Church, look at yourself in the mirror. Do you know who you are? Do you know who God made you to be? You were made for him, not for yourself. To worship him, to know him, to be like him, to bear his image and represent him. Yes, all of this was marred in the fall but in Christ we regain all we lost in Adam and more.

⁴⁷ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 140.

THE DAYS OF CREATION, PART 3

Genesis 2:1-3

Introduction

Today marks one month since the beginning of our new sermon series in the book of Genesis and it speaks to the glory of this book, that we still find ourselves working our way through the creation week. What a God we've seen in this wondrous work of creation! So many realities and foundational truths to build our lives on. And we're only one chapter in! There's 49 more to go. What a wealth of abundance lies before us.

Let's pray together...

Genesis 2:1-3 is before us this morning. And with it, day 7 of the creation week is now in view, and Church, what a day it is! Remember the pattern we've seen so far in the creation week. In Genesis 1:2 we see the state of creation is without form and void. Then in days 1-3 we see God form the earth, and in days 4-6 we see God fill the earth. The first six days show us how God has remedied the state of creation in v. 2. What was once without form is now formed, and what was once empty and void is now filled. Who did all this work? God! God who is himself the theme and main subject of day 7 as we see him reign as King over all creation.

Many believe day 6 is the pinnacle of the creation week as man is made. I disagree.⁴⁸ While it is true that man is the pinnacle of all created beings, and only man—male and female—are made in the image of God, man is by no means the pinnacle of the creation week, no. I think day 7 is the pinnacle because now we see the King satisfied and content with his labor, and we see that creation is no longer an empty theater, but full, overflowing, and bursting on all sides with the wonderful works of God.⁴⁹

God Rests (2:1-3)

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, 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, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

Notice right away, the awkward numbering of the chapter and verse division here.⁵⁰ It is helpful to occasionally remind ourselves that the numbers and headings in our Bibles

⁴⁸ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 143.

⁴⁹ John Calvin, *Sermons on Genesis 1-11* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 2009), 126–127.

⁵⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 34.

were not there in the original. They were added later on to help with locating passages quickly and to aid memorization. Most of the time the choices about where to place these numbers are good and we can see why those decisions were made. But that's not true here. See that day 6 ends in chapter 1, while day 7 begins chapter 2 in our Bibles. Why? You might have no issue at all with this, but to me, I can't understand why the decision was made to make chapter 2 begin here with day 7. I think chapter 2 should've begun in 2:4 rather than 2:1, that way the whole creation week would be held together in a unity rather than divided.

Rant over...let's actually talk about this passage.

Simply put, in v. 1 we see the concluding statement that the heavens and the earth are finished. In v. 2 we see the result of God finishing this work in God resting. And in v. 3 we see God bless the seventh day by making it holy. That's the general gist of what's going on here, but we can press further. To what extent did God finish his work? Is he finished with everything? What does it mean for God to rest? Why does he rest? What does him resting mean for his people? Why did God bless the seventh day by making it holy and what does that mean? And to sum it all up, are all of these questions somehow intertwined into a grand point for us to see that will extend all the way forward to the new heavens and new earth? Much to get after here.

As we draw near these three verses it's almost immediately recognizable that day 7 is different from the rest.⁵¹ There are no opening words "Then God said" as we see on the other days. There are no concluding words about it being "evening and morning." This is the only day to be blessed and made holy. The word "seventh" is repeated three times here while the other days usually only mention the number of the day once. And day 7 has no corresponding day to it like the others do. Remember, day 1 and 4 go together, as do day 2 and 5, and day 3 and 6. So here is day 7, standing forth in a category by itself.

The language of v. 1 reminds us of Genesis 1:1, see that? Genesis began with "In the beginning, God created *the heavens and the earth*." Now as chapter 2 begins we read, "Thus *the heavens and the earth* were finished, and all the host of them." The point to see here is that God has now finished the work he began. Not work as in everything he was planning to do, is doing, or will ever do, no. Rather it is the specific work of creation in view. Which means creation is no longer in the process of being created.⁵² It is finished. Entirely. This is told to us directly in v. 2, that on this seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and that's when it adds that God rested on the seventh day

⁵¹ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 176.

⁵² Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 142.

from the work he had done. It seems to be the case that God's resting comes as a result of the work of creating being finished.

But what about this rest? Don't be silly here. Here at SonRise we are a pro-nap people. Few things can be as refreshing as a power nap. But, God resting here on day 7 doesn't mean God took a nap, or closed his eyes and went to sleep, no. That God is omnipotent and almighty means he needs no rest, ever. It means nothing depletes him, as if he needed to be refilled or needed a break or a breather.⁵³ That God rests on the seventh day also does not mean God all of a sudden became aloof, distant, or indifferent about what was going on in creation, no.⁵⁴ All of this rest language in vv. 1-3 is about God finishing and completing his work of creating everything that is. After finishing this great work he still rules and reigns in his providence, wisdom, and governance over all things.

That God finished this grand work is most likely the reason God blessed it. And by blessing this day God made this day holy. He consecrated it, sanctified it, set it apart, and separated it from the other days. What does this mean? It could just mean what we've already said; that in setting this day aside from the rest by making it holy, God is showing us how different this day is than the others. That would be true. But that doesn't seem to say enough, does it? That God called all the other days good, even very good on day 6, and that he calls this seventh day holy, seems to mean this seventh day has a higher purpose. See it in v. 3. "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." The reason God marked out this seventh day as holy is because he rested on it from all the work he had done. So, built into the creation week on the seventh day, there is an intimate connection between holiness and rest. God worked six days in creating all creation, then God rested. And by marking the seventh day out as holy, God was creating a distinction between not just work days and rest days, but between ordinary days and holy days.⁵⁵

This leads us to our next heading...

Israel Rests

This day 7 rest God enters into shown to us in Genesis 2:1-3, in time, would then become a pattern for the people of Israel in the fourth commandment. Exodus 20:8-11 says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the

⁵³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2004), 42.

⁵⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982), 100.

⁵⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 143.

LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

In this fourth commandment we see the Sabbath is a call to rest. And this rest is as old as creation itself, and in marking out the seventh day as holy, Israel would be imitating God’s own example from creation in working six days and resting on the seventh.⁵⁶ This repeating pattern was to be cemented in the lives of God’s people. So much so, that *if* the Sabbath was regularly honored by them and set aside by them as a holy day of worship, celebration, and rest it would serve to make them holy as well.⁵⁷

And this was not only built into their weekly rhythms by the fourth commandment, it was literally where they were heading as a people. God had promised them that he would go with them into this land and give them rest (Exodus 33:14), but due to the unbelief of that generation, they were cursed to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, until eventually, God would bring them into this land himself and give them rest. So not only was the weekly pattern of rest to continue for them as a people, but this reality of rest ultimately came to be tied up with entering the promised land.

And enter it they did. But rest remained out of their reach. God commanded Israel to clean house throughout the land of Canaan in order to have rest, and they did not. So rest, again, remained aloof. Continuing down through the Old Testament we see Israel ebb and flow in their life with God, truly enjoying a taste of rest under a good king, while sadly experiencing restlessness under a bad king, while prophet after prophet called the people back to the Law of Moses and the Sabbath pattern. Yet, sin would reign in them, exile would come to them, and off they went into Babylon. Even years later after they came back into the land under Ezra’s leadership, a restlessness seemed to cling close to them as they awaited the arrival of the Messiah.

The Church Rests

The Messiah would come, but he was not what Israel expected. Jesus continually challenged the religious people and religious leaders of his day that true obedience to God was not just external conformity or doing the right thing. He pointed deeper, he pointed inward, down to the very level of the heart, especially concerning their superficial obedience on the Sabbath. Perhaps the most famous remark from Jesus on this is Mark 2:27, “And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”” So, much to the chagrin of the Pharisees Jesus’ disciples broke all kinds of external rules, especially on the Sabbath.

⁵⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 36.

⁵⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 71.

On he would live, on he would teach, saying he would give any and all who came to him rest from their heavy burdens. But, eventually they would get so enraged with him they would kill him. And when he died, he said “It is finished” echoing God’s own statement in Genesis 2:1-3, and teaching us that he can now rest from the great labors he came to do.

Of course he would rise, send the Spirit to fill his church and send them out to spread his message. Would the pattern of weekly rest continue in God’s new people? Many people would tell you yes, that Christians are now to keep the Sabbath, but that we do it on Sunday, or the Lord’s Day, because of the resurrection. But I would disagree. Of course we meet for worship on Sundays. And of course it’s because of the resurrection. But now the Sabbath principle no longer remains because of Christ!

Listen to Paul in Colossians 2:16-17, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” See that? Rather than clinging to the shadows, various festivals or sabbaths, we should cling to Christ! Meaning, he himself is the substance of the rest our souls require.

Hebrews 4 also makes a longer but very similar argument saying there truly is still a sabbath rest to enter into for the people of God, but the way we enter into it is in Christ. Hebrews 4:8-11 says, “For if Joshua had given them rest [think, in the promised land], God would not have spoken of another day later on [when rest would truly come]. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest...” How Church, do we enter into this rest? By trusting in Christ, banking on Christ, and looking to Christ for all our souls’ needs.

What do we learn from these passages about how Christians should treat this sabbath principle? I would say we treat it the way it’s treated in the New Covenant—we treat it as a spiritual reality now. I would say the rules and regulations of the Old Covenant were the shadows, and we should no longer live in those shadows, but live in the substance they were always pointing to. So, I would say for the Christian now, there is no mandated day of rest. When do we rest if we don’t mark out a specific day as holy? Christians are now free to treat every day as holy.⁵⁸ Meaning, we’re to rest every day as Christians! We’re to rest every day from our own works. And we’re to rest every day in Christ’s work on our behalf. Or as Charles Spurgeon so wonderfully put it, “Holiness is the best sabbath dress, but it is equally suitable for every day wear.”

⁵⁸ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 181.

But see lastly, where all of this leads to...

Eternal Rest

Earlier I asked the question, are all of these sabbath principles somehow intertwined into a grand point for us to see that will extend all the way forward to the new heavens and new earth? Gloriously, the answer is yes. Listen to Revelation 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Blessed indeed,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!’” Church, rest is nearing, when all our toil will be over, when all our work will be done. What a day that will be! The great hymn *On Jordan’s Stormy Banks I Stand* says it well, “When shall I reach that happy place, and be forever blessed? When shall I see my Father’s face, and in His bosom rest?” There is a reason there’s no *evening and morning verbiage* on day 7. It’s because day 7 never ends, but will one day envelop the whole world in the end.

Church, here’s the call today. It’s not a kind of rule keeping, or ritualistic ceremony observance. The call is to come to Christ, and to rest in him. We first see this rest as God finishes the work of creation; we see it in the mandates given to Israel; we see it in the land promised to Israel; we see it in the finished work of Christ on the cross for us; we see its reality each and every day we turn our restless hearts to find rest in Christ; and we’ll see it forever as we fully enter into his rest in the end.

St. Augustine said, “You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Everyone rests in something. What are you resting in?

THE GARDEN TEMPLE

Genesis 2:4-17

The passage before us is Genesis 2:4-17; there are three headings to work our way through in our time together.

A Transition (v. 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.”

When we come to v. 4, we come to a transition in the flow of Genesis. The cue we’re given that we’ve entered something new is the word *generations*. Remember I mentioned a few weeks ago about the Hebrew word *toledoth* repeated ten times to mark off different sections of Genesis? Well, *generations* in v. 4 is that Hebrew word. This is the first use of it in Genesis, and its presence is the signal that we’re entering into a new section of Genesis.⁵⁹ But the rest of the verse shows us this as well. Notice how it begins speaking of the *heavens and the earth* and it ends speaking of the *earth and the heavens*. See the order is reversed there? This shows us that while God gave us the grand 100,000 foot view of creation in chapter 1, we’re now zooming in to see further detail about one aspect of creation, that is, the creation of man in chapter 2. Which means chapter 2 is not a new creation story that contradicts chapter 1, as some say. Rather chapter 2 is an extended commentary on one part of the creation story in chapter 1.

This verse also contains the word *day*, which is the same word as is used all throughout chapter 1, but this time it refers to the entire creation account. So while day is mainly used to refer to a 24-hour period, it is also used to refer to a longer period of time as well.

Before we leave v. 4, see also the change in how God is spoken of. Thirty-five times in chapter 1 we read that God is *Elohim*. Now as chapter 2 launches out, the name used for God changes, to LORD God, or *Yahweh Elohim*. The change is intentional, and we’re meant to notice it. While the name *Elohim* displays God in his majesty as the Creator of all things, the name *Yahweh* displays God in his intimate covenant relationship with his people. This is entirely appropriate because in chapter 2 God is intimately involved with Adam: with his making, with his work, and with the creation of his bride. So, that the two names of God used so far, *Yahweh* and *Elohim*, are put

⁵⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 150.

together here shows us that God is both Creator and Covenant Lord.⁶⁰ Curious though, this dual name *LORD God* is used throughout chapters 2-4, except when the serpent and Eve are talking with one another in the beginning of chapter 3. There it's just *God* in view. Why so? Well many think, and I tend to agree, that the serpent avoids using the intimate name of God with Eve because he's tempting her to think of God not as he truly is but as something he is not.

More on this when we get to chapter 3.

A Man (vv. 5-7)

“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.”

Verses 5-6 here show us what creation was like before man was made. There was no bush, no plant, no rain, and no man. And then in v. 6 we see that a mist, or spring, is described that waters the whole face of the ground. What's going on here? There's a parallel to see here. In chapter 1:2 we saw the state of creation as empty and void, then we saw God remedy that throughout chapter 1 in his work of forming and filling. Now in chapter 2, we similarly begin with the state of creation as barren: no bush, no plant, no rain. Why? No man. But, as before, we then see man remedy this state in his own work of forming and filling the earth. As it was with God in chapter 1, so too it is with man in chapter 2.

Then v. 7 comes. And though it might seem simple, it is stunning in scope and powerful for the rootedness of our identity. What do I mean? Adam's creation highlights that we are as natural as we are supernatural.⁶¹ That our nature is both low and lofty.⁶²

See it in v. 7. God formed Adam of the dust. There is a word play in the Hebrew here to see. We don't see it in English but in Hebrew it's clear. The man (*adam*) was formed of dust from the ground (*adamah*). His very name is what he was formed from. This shows our low nature. Our origin is dust. Here today, gone tomorrow, we are a vapor. After the fall of man God tells Adam he will die one day by saying he is dust and to dust he shall return (Genesis 3:19). Abraham emphasizes this as he pleads with God in prayer before Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18:27 saying, "...I who am but dust

⁶⁰ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 193.

⁶¹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 65.

⁶² James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982), 116-118.

and ashes.” Hannah will later praise God for hearing her plea and giving her a child saying God has raised up the poor from the dust (1 Samuel 2:8). Psalm 103:14 teaches us that God remembers our frame, that we are dust. On dust John Calvin commented, “The body of Adam is formed of clay and destitute of sense; to the end that no one should exult beyond measure in his flesh. He must be excessively stupid who does not here learn humility.”⁶³

We must know who we are Church, we are low, we are dust. But not only so. Yes, but see also how God breathed into Adam the breath of life. As dust shows our low nature, the breath of life shows our lofty nature. Adam was a creature formed of dust, and he was entirely void of life until the moment God breathed into him. This is intimate, God coming close to give life. This is also very much like what will happen far later on in Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones, as God breathes into the vast dead host and creates an innumerable people for himself. And even more, this is very much a preview of salvation—how dead sinners are reborn in Christ. God gives life and the once dead sinner awakens.

See then how v. 7 ends. Because of the breath of life entering him, Adam became what he was not before, a living creature. God did this. Adam was only the recipient here.⁶⁴ And by God’s gracious work Adam is not only alive, he knows he’s alive, and he knows it was God who gave him life.⁶⁵

A Garden (vv. 8-17)

“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; bdellium 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.’”

⁶³ Calvin, quoted in Hughes, *Genesis*, 52.

⁶⁴ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 159.

⁶⁵ Boice, *Genesis 1-11*, 120.

After God formed Adam, we see God plant a garden and put Adam within it. Before hearing why God put him there we get many details about this garden.

We learn the garden is within a larger place called Eden. We learn the garden is in the east. We learn there are many trees there, trees that are pleasing to the sight and trees that are good for food. We learn there are two trees especially prominent, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. More on those in a second. We learn there are rivers. Seems to be one river that becomes four rivers later on: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. We learn that around these rivers there are precious stones: gold, bdellium, and onyx. Then we learn why God put the man there in v. 15, to work it and keep it. We learn of God's kind permission in v. 16, that Adam was free to enjoy and eat of any tree he desired, whenever he desired. Lastly, in v. 17 we learn of God's one prohibition. There's only one tree he cannot eat from, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why? The warning given is that when Adam eats of it he shall "surely die" (Hebrew = die die).

Many speculate why God forbids this, but I think the reason God makes this one tree off limits is given in the name of the tree. It's called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, not because God didn't want man to be knowledgeable, but because what is forbidden from man is the power to decide for himself what is good or evil.⁶⁶ If they took fruit of this tree and ate they would in effect be acting as God, determining for themselves what is good for them. This is something they must learn only from God and not take into their own hands. Which is exactly what we'll see play out in the next chapter. Seen in this light, I think the trees are sacramental. They were the means by which Adam and Eve would come to know, and be confronted with God's will.⁶⁷ Would they submit, or would they rebel? So, the trees were to Adam and Eve what the Law of Moses was to Israel.

You might think we're now done with our passage, and many have stopped here at this point throughout the history of the church. And from stopping here they simply view Eden as a kind of Mesopotamian farm, view Adam as a farmer, and conclude with a simple work-ethic only—that man working is a pre-fall activity, therefore work is good. This is right, I'm not saying it's wrong. Work is a pre-fall invention and reality.⁶⁸ Work for Adam would've required effort and skill; there was zero frustration about Adam's work pre-fall. How glorious! No anxiety to his work, no frustrating co-workers, no bad bosses, no deadlines, no headaches, and no nervous wondering about whether or not he'd be fired. Adam's work was a joy, through and through. This is true—we were made to work and not be idle.

⁶⁶ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 166.

⁶⁷ Kidner, *Genesis*, 66.

⁶⁸ Kevin DeYoung, *A Glorious World and A Good Design* (sermon, 9.20.2020) accessed 9.9.2022.

But to stop here and not go further is simply not saying enough about this passage. So, for the rest of our time I want to make one statement, and then prove its truth to you.

Statement: Adam wasn't merely a farmer on the first farm, no. He was the first priest working in the first temple, and in his work we see a glimpse of Christ.⁶⁹

Let me try to prove this.

Note the eastward location of the garden. Verse 8 mentions that God planted a garden in Eden in the east. So what? In Ezekiel 11, Ezekiel has a vision where he's brought to the east side of the temple, and there Ezekiel watched the glory of the Lord depart to the east. Years later in Ezekiel 43, Ezekiel sees the glory of the Lord return to the temple through the eastern gate. If Eden was indeed the first temple, it would make sense to see the eastward garden within Eden as the holy of holies and the garden as the rest of the first temple.

Note the elevation. There's no explicit statement here that the garden in the east of Eden was higher in elevation than the surrounding land, but there are clues. Verses 10-14 state that rivers flowed out of Eden, and that rivers flow from high elevation to lower elevation—this is evidence that Eden sat atop a mountain. So what? Throughout Scripture there are many references to God's temple and God dwelling on top of mountains. God made His presence known on top of Mt. Horeb (Exodus 3:1), Mt. Sinai (Exodus 18:5), Mt. Zion (Psalm 48:1-2, Hebrews 12:22), and the mount of transfiguration in the gospels. And in Revelation 21 we see the holy city Jerusalem, a great and high mountain, coming down out of heaven from God. Taking all this together, Scripture makes an important connection between God's presence in his temple, and the temple's location being on top of mountains. That a river flowed out of Eden means it was on top of a mountain, and is further evidence that Eden itself was the first temple.

Note the rivers. Psalm 46:4 mentions the connection between the presence of rivers or water and temples, "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High." Also, a river flows out of the temple Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 40-47, healing everything it touched. God's presence is likened to moving waters that bring healing in Jeremiah, where God is also called "the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 2:11-13). Joel 3 and Zechariah 14 mention that "a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord." Jesus himself spoke of his followers, that out of their hearts "will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). And John's vision at the end

⁶⁹ All of what follows comes from J.V. Fesko's *Last Things First*.

of Revelation (22:1) also shows a river, with crystal clear water, “flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” All this is evidence that Eden was the first mountaintop throne or temple with a river flowing out of it.

Note the precious stones. Verses 11-12 mention gold, bdellium, and onyx. Other temples throughout Scripture also have precious gems in them. Particularly on the chest of the high priest’s garments, twelve of them symbolizing the twelve nations of Israel, that he would wear while going into the Holy of Holies to visibly display him taking all the people in with him. Stones also show up in the temple visions of Ezekiel 8 and Revelation 21.

Note the trees. Verse 9 says there were trees in the garden. Trees were present in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:31-39), they were present in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:18, 29, 32, 7:18), they were present in all of Ezekiel’s visions of the temple (Ezekiel 1:8-9, 41:18-26, 47:12), and they are going to be present in the new heavens and new earth. And Revelation 22 says the tree of life will line the banks of the river of life. This is Psalm 1 language teaching us that the trees in glory won’t be actual trees but will be the saints themselves which are likened as trees that drink deeply from the river of life, making them evergreen for all eternity.

Lastly, note Adam’s tasks says he was to do two things in the garden, “work it and keep it.” This is why people have said Adam was merely a farmer. Yet, the only other place these two Hebrew words (work and keep) are used together again in Scripture is when Moses describes the priestly duties within the tabernacle in Numbers 3-4. As Adam was called to work and keep the garden, Moses calls the priests to work and keep the tabernacle. Conclusion? Adam was the first priest, in the first temple, and his role in it was far more priestly than agricultural.

When you take all the features of the garden and place them next to the duties Adam received from God, it becomes evident that Eden was not a farm, but was the first temple. This man God created and called to dwell within his own temple forever, to minister to him as priests. This garden temple sets the stage and prepares us, as Bible readers, for the Second Coming of Christ when he brings not a giant city-farm descending from heaven, but a city-temple. God planted a temple in Eden to prepare us for the greater temple; and within it placed the first priest to prepare us for the faithful and greater High Priest, Jesus Christ. Even here, we see all of Scripture pointing to him.

THE FIRST WEDDING

Genesis 2:18-25

Introduction

Three years ago, right in the middle of Covid-19 craziness, joy upon joy, Holly and I welcomed a new baby girl into the world. The moment still seems so vivid to me. We did not find out the gender of this baby like we did the other two, and so as the moment neared for her arrival I was eager to know if we would have a third son or our first daughter. When she was born and I saw I had a daughter, I was overwhelmed. All kinds of life events flashed before my eyes. Daddy-daughter dates soon to be enjoyed, ballet recitals soon to be watched, and of course, gloriously intimidating any undeserving young boy who would ever think of taking my little girl on a date. And then I thought of her wedding, of the possibility of me walking her down the aisle to give her away. All of this happened in the first second I got a glimpse of her, and it was simply too much. It was so much that I couldn't even answer when Holly asked me the gender of our new baby, the nurses had to tell her.

What a day. That day makes me think of this day in our passage this morning, where we see the first wedding in history. Where God gives away the first bride, to the first groom, uniting them as one, and forever setting up a pattern that would extend forward throughout Scripture ending in the new heavens and the new earth at another wedding, where Christ and his bride the Church, would be forever united.

Remember where we've been, Church. We've seen the account of the creation week given to us in chapter 1, and now we find ourselves in chapter 2 which is not a separate contradictory creation account, but an expansion or commentary on the creation account, specifically focusing on the creation of mankind. Last week we saw God the Potter form Adam, and God the Planter create the garden. Which brings us to Genesis 2:18-25 where we see the first wedding.

There are four headings to work through today, each begin with the word 'Not' which you'll see is a unifying theme throughout this whole passage.

Not Good (v. 18)

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”

During the creation week we continually heard God's conclusion be “good” and “very good.” Six times we heard this repeated refrain, which got us used to hearing God take

great delight in his creative work. Then he raises the bar by declaring the unending day seven to be holy. But when we arrive at v. 18, we ought to be surprised and startled as we hear God pronounce something to be “not good.” It’s the first time God has given a negative or deficient status about anything in all creation. And to highlight this, Moses makes it emphatic in the Hebrew word order.⁷⁰ While the phrase not good is near the beginning of our English word order in v. 18, the Hebrew word order of v. 18 literally flows like this, “Then the LORD God said, ‘Not good, for man to be alone....’” It jumps out at us in the text and alerts us to something that is wrong and must be righted.

Notice this is not Adam’s opinion in v. 18, but God’s.⁷¹ You see that? At no point in this passage do we ever hear Adam’s judgment about his initial solitude. At no point does Adam file a complaint with God for being alone, as if he could do such a thing. To be honest, we don’t really know what Adam believed about this situation, but we do know what God says about it. A world full of just men isn’t good. Adam on his own isn’t good. In this, behold what God is for his people. He’s not only Omnipotent Creator, he’s Generous Provider. See this in v. 18, “...It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” God will right the wrong of Adam’s alone-ness, by making not just a helper, but a helper fit for him. Fit for him means custom made for him, entirely suitable to him, and a perfect match for him.

But first God will lead Adam through a process of discovering this need for himself.⁷² So see next...

Not Narnia (vv. 19-20)

“Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”

Here, as I mentioned, we see God lead Adam through the process of discovering his need for a helper. So, God brought the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens to him for the purpose of naming them. Most likely this is not Adam just thinking of a name and giving it to a creature, as if he walked up to a creature and casually said, *Ah, this shall be the wallaby*, no. This is also not Adam as Dr. Doolittle here.⁷³ Nor, sadly, is this the land of Narnia, full of lively and vibrant talking beasts and birds, no. It was probably Adam taking time to study and know each creature as it was and finding a

⁷⁰ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 213.

⁷¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 175.

⁷² John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, EP Study Commentary (Holywell, UK: Evangelical Press, 2015), 109.

⁷³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2004), 59.

suitable name to match its unique shape and features. I say this because only when we've arrived at a true knowledge of what a thing is, are we able to state what it is and what it is not.⁷⁴ This is Adam naming the creatures and whatever Adam called them, that was the creature's name. God brought the animals to Adam to be named so Adam could realize his solitary state. He sees how none of the beasts act like him, speak like him, or relate to him in a manner resembling his own nature. And he would've clearly seen how each animal has its mate, while he did not.⁷⁵ This is why God said it was not good for man to be alone in v. 18. God already knew that, and this naming process was God's way of revealing this to Adam. And it succeeded, the end of v. 20 cries out in lack, "...there was not found a helper fit for him." In this way, Adam knows the unsuitable nature of being alone, and will greatly appreciate, rejoice, and praise God for the great gift of Eve.⁷⁶

Not Alone (verses 21-24)

"So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Now we come to the first wedding. Man is no longer alone, but has been given a helper suitable to him in every way possible. How did God do this? God caused Adam to go into a deep sleep, and God went to work. Adam didn't witness this creation; he was asleep for it. Adam didn't work or do anything but sleep while God provided what he was lacking. Adam was passive here, while yet again, God is presented to us as the chief Actor in view. But while Adam was sleeping it says God took one of his ribs (literally *side*) and made Woman. So, just as Adam was not formed *ex nihilo* (from nothing) but was formed from the ground God had already made, so too Woman was not made *ex nihilo* but was made from the man God had already made. Matthew Henry has a stunning remark in his commentary on this event. Woman was "not made out of man's head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."⁷⁷

The text then says God brought her to Adam, much like a father walking his daughter down the aisle toward her husband, and when Adam saw her he cried out with the first human words recorded in Scripture, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh

⁷⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982), 113.

⁷⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 68.

⁷⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 89.

⁷⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 69.

of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” There is another wordplay to see here. Earlier we saw the man (*adam*) was formed out of the ground (*adamah*); here we see woman (*ishah*) is formed out of man (*ish*). This wordplay celebrates their unique relationship, for Adam’s own name and nature is restated in hers.⁷⁸ And Adam recognized this. He saw her, he rejoiced in her, that at last he had his companion, his full counterpart, his helper, made of the very same stuff he was himself. Notice Adam’s joyful response in v. 23 is spoken of just Eve, with no children in view. Meaning Eve was valued by Adam for who she was in herself alone, not for what she could bring to Adam.⁷⁹ Children would surely come, but here in Genesis 2 it was just the two of them who constituted the first family, full and complete without kids.

We then see what this leads to in v. 24. Because the woman is the helpmate of man, man will then leave and cleave, forsaking his father and mother and holding fast to his wife, and “become one flesh.” This leaving and cleaving means a great deal for both the man and the woman. Simply put, Adam’s union with Eve is so great he will leave his own family to be with her.⁸⁰ To say more, because of this union Adam’s first priority, first loyalty, first duty, and first delight is now to Eve, which implies that Adam is responsible for her as the head of his home. He is to protect her and provide for her over and above all else he is called to protect and provide for. God made Adam to tend and keep the garden, yes, but Adam would fail if he succeeded in tending the garden while neglecting Eve. She comes first, always, and without exception.

And this responsibility of Adam to protect and provide is both physical and spiritual. Physically, Adam is to protect Eve from anything that would do her harm, which would soon be a whole host of things after Genesis 3. This might be silly but it gets the point across. Even if Eve had a black belt in jujitsu, Adam should go out to defend his family first, and only over his unconscious body should anyone be able to get to Eve. This is his protection of her. Also physically, Adam is to provide for Eve—provide a home for Eve, put food on the table for Eve, and a place for Eve to rest and nest. Which also means Adam must protect this home from anyone and anything seeking to harm his home or his family. That’s the physical.

Spiritually speaking, all the same stuff is in view. Adam must protect and provide for Eve spiritually as well as physically. To spiritually provide for her means Adam is to be the pastor/priest of his own family, leading his family spiritually by nourishing and nurturing his family in the things of God, as a pastor is to do for a church. And to protect his family spiritually he must guard his family against all that would spiritually

⁷⁸ Hughes, *Genesis*, 61.

⁷⁹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 70.

⁸⁰ Hughes, *Genesis*, 62.

do them harm. This implies Adam knows the spiritual state of his own home. How is Eve doing spiritually? Is she growing? Or is she not? And once kids come along, how are they doing? What are they being taught, who is teaching them, who else is influencing them? This is Adam's responsibility, in v. 23, as he leaves father and mother to cling to his wife. Adam is called to physically and spiritually protect and provide, while Eve is called to enjoy being protected and provided for in these ways. This is the context in which both Adam and Eve are designed to flourish in.

And lest you think this is all well and good and off at a distance from us, this is the pattern for us. All of you husbands are to be to your family what Adam is here while all of you wives are to be to your family what Eve is here. Husbands, you are the heads of your homes, and must protect and provide for your families physically and spiritually. Whatever else you might be called to in this life, however great or small, your family is ministry number one. To succeed in other things while failing at home is to fail in the most important calling. And so too, wives, you must seek to be glad and willing to be protected by and be provided for physically and spiritually by your husband, to live underneath the home he provides, to find rest there in the shadow of his wings, to help and support in all he does, as his lifelong companion and best friend.⁸¹

Isn't it the case that all kinds of problems rush in when these things don't happen? When a man desires to forsake his wife to protect and provide for another woman? Or when a woman desires to be protected by and provided for by another man? We must ever return to, remind, and retell this Genesis 2 pattern to ourselves and to one another in the church. This is the pattern, Church. It remains, it stands, even though the whole world cries out against it.

Not Ashamed (v. 25)

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

Verse 25 is the fruit of this kind of one flesh union.⁸² No greed, no shame, no distrust, and no dishonor—fully known and yet fully free and at peace with one another. Verse 25 doesn't only end chapter 2, it anticipates the events to come in chapter 3. How? There is one more wordplay to see in the Hebrew here. The word naked is the Hebrew word *arummim*, which is very like the word crafty (*arum*) which of course describes the serpent in 3:1. This wordplay connects the serpent's deceitfulness with the result of his deceitfulness, the loss of Adam and Eve's innocence in v. 25.⁸³

⁸¹ Sam Storms, *Women's Study Bible* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2020) 12.

⁸² Kidner, *Genesis*, 71.

⁸³ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 225.

What are we to say as we end Genesis 1-2, especially after a text as we've explored today? Three things.

First, marriage is good. It wasn't good for Adam to be alone. God knows and God has told us of the goodness of Eve and their one flesh union. In vv. 18-25 we see that God ordained complementary roles of men and women in marriage, and whatever the cultures of this world do to redefine or remake this in a new way, it must be the Church who ever embraces and enjoys this model.

Second, singleness is not bad. A wrong conclusion to arrive at after such a text is that singleness is sinful. It's not, not at all. How do we know this? Jesus himself was single, as was Paul. Paul even explains this in 1 Corinthians 7 saying those who are married are divided in heart, anxious about pleasing husband or wife as well as pleasing the Lord; while the single man or single woman is not divided, worried only about pleasing the Lord.

Third, Christ is better than all. Church, marriage is good. Singleness is also good. But you know what's better? Being married to Christ.⁸⁴ Paul also states this saying marriage points far beyond itself to something greater. After quoting from Genesis 2 and talking about marriage he says in Ephesians 5:32, "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." So, see and rejoice Church, the glories of the gospel. Jesus is the greater Adam who ever protects and provides for his bride, the church. He is head over the church and will always tend and keep us. And the church is to enjoy being protected by and being provided for physically and spiritually by Christ, living and finding rest in and under the shadow of his wings. Church, we belong to him, and one day he will take us home to be with him forever.

⁸⁴ Waltke, *Genesis*, 88, footnote 31.

THE FALL, PART 1

Genesis 3:1-7

Introduction

Many years ago, Holly and I had the privilege of visiting northern India and trekking around to various villages in the foothills of the Himalayas. One village stands out to me. It was about a 45-minute hike away from town and once we got there we visited a small Christian school a few folks had set up to encourage them in the work. We went in, the visit went fine, and on the way out we met a sight loaded with contrast. Off in the distance were alpine peaks soaring into the heavens about 25,000 ft. tall. To date, these are the biggest mountains I've ever seen in person and it was stunning. Then I looked down a bit to a run down hut on the edge of the village, and just out back of it we saw a very ornate hut. I mistook it, thinking it was a really nice dog house. But our friend said, *No, that's no dog house. It's a small temple to one of the snake gods.* Two contrasts stood out to me in this scene. One was the poverty of the hut compared to the luxury of the idolatrous snake temple in the backyard. Another contrast was the beauty of God's creation all around us in the Himalayas compared to the vile temple of a false god. It was a blemish on what would've been a serene scene. And of all the creatures being worshipped, it was a snake.

I remember just standing there disturbed for a moment in my own soul, thinking, this is not the way it's supposed to be.

Church, today we come to a far more disturbing moment than what I just described. We come to a moment that has and will forever live in infamy. We come to a moment that changed the very fabric of our existence. We come to Genesis 3, and the fall of man into sin and death. Against the backdrop of beauty and peace present in Genesis 1-2, chapter 3 stands out with ruinous clarity.

So, look to our first heading...

The Tempter (v. 1)

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made...."

Many questions rise to the surface as Genesis 3 begins with the mention of this serpent. Who is this serpent? Where did he come from? How did he get into the garden? Why is he so crafty and evil? Where did evil come from? Among all that we're not told about the serpent, see the two things we are told in v. 1: the serpent's character and the

serpent's origin.⁸⁵ The serpent's character comes first; it says he was crafty, more crafty than any other beast. The word crafty brings up images of one who is cunning and clever, which can describe good things, certainly. But these words tend to bring up images of one who is sneaky, sly, and shrewdly deceptive; which will be confirmed as we soon see that this serpent is wicked. So, from v. 1 we're positioned as readers to pay close attention to this serpent and what he intends to do with his craftiness.

The serpent's origin comes next as v. 1 says, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made...." This tells us where the serpent came from. The LORD God made him, just as he made every other beast of the field. This makes the creaturely status of the serpent abundantly clear. Which shows us how the serpent was not in existence before creation as if he were a kind of supernatural divine evil being that has always been. No, before the beginning there was only God, no one else, no rivals, and no competition. The serpent, along with all the other animals, was created by God on day 6. So how is it that we'll soon see it talking? Well, there are a lot of opinions here, but I interpret all of this to mean an angel, which some have referred to as Lucifer (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28), fell and became the Devil before this moment in Genesis 3:1. In his fallen state he was clearly allowed to enter into beasts, using them as instruments to accomplish his own purposes.⁸⁶ Which is what happens here. A real snake speaks with our first parents. Which might be why the snake is declared unclean by Moses in Leviticus 11, and this is certainly why the snake is used many times later on in Scripture to refer to the Devil, most famously in Genesis 3:15 and Revelation 12.⁸⁷ All in all, most agree it doesn't matter too much about the nature of this serpent, what matters is what he says. Look then, at the next heading...

The Temptation (v. 1-5)

"...He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

Do not miss that the first words in the Bible we have about God, coming from someone other than God, are the serpent casting doubt on God. In a sense then, the words of the serpent form the first sermon in the Bible. It's as if Satan presents himself as an astute theologian, eager to explain the proper view of things.

⁸⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 187–188.

⁸⁶ Martin Luther, quoted in Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 233.

⁸⁷ Perhaps a similarity is in view between the serpent being called Satan here and Peter being called Satan later on by Jesus. They were not Satan, but in these moments are certainly aligned with his purposes.

What did he say? See it in v. 1, "...Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" That it's posed as a question is sneaky. The serpent could have been crystal clear about what he was attempting to do, saying something like, 'Come here Eve, I know God has been gracious to create you and provide you with everything you could ever need, and even given you the tree of life. I am here to trick you into believing that God is not good, that I am right, in order that sin and death will enter into you, all your descendants, and the world God has made.' No, he didn't do that. He's too crafty for that. Rather he poses it as a question, the first question recorded in the Bible to be exact, which threw just enough shade on God and his commands to encourage Eve to doubt God.⁸⁸

Eve seems to catch on that the question is wrong so she says in v. 2, "...We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden..." and she's right. God said they could eat of any tree as often as they so desired to, that is, all trees but one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve was right to catch this slight adjustment. But though she began well, she didn't finish well. See the rest of what she said in v. 3, "...but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Notice, on one hand, Eve makes her own addition to God's command. God never said they couldn't touch the tree, Eve added that in herself. And notice, on the other hand, how Eve minimizes God's generosity in his kind provision.⁸⁹ From what Eve says here in vv. 2-3 the emphasis is on what they cannot do, what God has prohibited, rather than what God has provided. Which presents God as far more harsh and repressive than he actually is.⁹⁰ That Eve speaks like this is evidence, not that she has fallen prey yet to the serpent, but that she is starting to be swayed by the serpent. Notice how she also didn't repeat the judgment as it was given by God? He said when they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they would surely die, or die die. Here in v. 3 she just mentions that they'll die. Is this a further minimizing Eve does? I think so, because of what we'll see the serpent say next.

See then how the serpent responds in vv. 4-5, "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die [die die]. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" Once again the astute theologian comes to explain all things divine to Eve. What was once subtle and sneaky is now blatantly contradictory. Notice the very first doctrine denied by the serpent is God's judgment.⁹¹ How modern of the serpent? 'Death? No, that won't happen. Not at all.' Then in language filled with promises about what she would become, the serpent mentions nothing about what she would lose. Isn't this so like the Devil? He never

⁸⁸ Boice, *Genesis 1-11*, 165.

⁸⁹ John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, EP Study Commentary (Holywell, UK: Evangelical Press, 2015), 117.

⁹⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 73.

⁹¹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 72-73.

comes out and tells it like it is. He always lies to us, for he has been a liar from the beginning. Holding out a promise of something pleasant and appealing, always hiding the consequences of our indulgence. ‘You won’t die...just look at all you could have! You could be like God yourself!’ Seems she has forgotten that she already was like God, being made in his very image and likeness. The craftiness of the serpent is on full display here. He blatantly contradicts God, holds out empty promises, makes no mention of any consequences, and mentions that she will be like God. It’s as if he wants to convince Eve that God is holding her back from what she could truly become, that God is holding her back from her full potential as a woman, claiming that she can rise above the limits of her own humanity.⁹² This again is so modern isn’t it? Is this not exactly what feminism says? That women are repressed by men and must rise above them in order to fully flourish as female. It is similar to this for sure. But see how this is aimed, not at men, but at God as the ultimate oppressor Eve must free herself from. This began subtle and sneaky, it is now unashamedly defiant.

The Sin (v. 6)

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

The pace of v. 6 is rapid and quick.⁹³ The serpent departs from view, and all we read are Eve’s internal thoughts. See the pattern. Eve saw, Eve desired, Eve took, Eve ate, Eve shared. So simple the act, so hard the undoing of it.⁹⁴ Let’s examine these quick events. First, Eve saw the tree was good for food. Interesting how the word good is used here isn’t it? So far in Genesis God has been the sole determiner of all that is good. And he has clearly stated this tree is not good for food. But now, Eve decides what is good by herself without reference to God. How did she decide this? Next, Eve saw the tree was a delight to the eyes. This, I think, means the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a beautiful tree. And rightly so—isn’t everything God makes beautiful, especially in a world without sin? It’s as if she forgot who made this tree of beauty, and rather than enjoying these gifts in light of God the Giver, she enjoys the beauty of the tree as a thing on its own by delighting in it. Next Eve saw the tree could make her wise. So not only is Eve beginning to feel repressed, as if God were holding out on her the things she most needed and longed for, but now with the fruit near her grasp she convinces herself that wisdom, not God, is what she most needs—that wisdom will make her happy.⁹⁵ So after seeing the tree was good, seeing the tree was delightful, and seeing the tree could make her wise, she took, ate, and shared it with Adam.

⁹² Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 190.

⁹³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 75.

⁹⁴ Kidner, *Genesis*, 73.

⁹⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 190.

How tragic this scene is. Be warned of this same pattern: the lust of the flesh (good for food), the desire of the eyes (pleasing to the sight), and the pride of life (it could make you wise, like God). Church, if we don't fight to keep our eyes from lingering on what is evil we'll soon be convincing ourselves that sin is good, delighting in what is sinful, exploring the possibilities of indulging in our mind, committing these sins in actual practice, and then inviting others to do the same.

But lest we put the weight of this on Eve, notice Adam's failure. Where was he? Verse 6 mentions he was with her, so he was there the whole time. And he did nothing. He should've killed the serpent and protected Eve from his lies, but he did nothing. He took the fruit without protest and he ate.

The Shame (v. 7)

"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."

The results of their eating in v. 7 are just as rapid as the sin itself in v. 6.⁹⁶ Their eyes were opened, but now they knew their nakedness, so they made fig leaf coverings. The contrast is glaring. Nakedness was once a sign of how healthy their relationship was, but now it has become a thing of shame. And rather than turning to God, their guilt leads to a desperate attempt at self-atonement as they try to cover themselves.⁹⁷

Some point out here how they didn't die from eating the fruit like God said they would, and that maybe the serpent was right. No, they did die. How? Remember, the garden was the holy place within the larger temple of Eden, where God's very presence was with our first parents. By being banished from this temple they lost his presence, which is the essence of death they've just entered into.

The deed has been done, there is now no way back. This is not the way it's supposed to be.

Church, there are two ways to hear this passage.⁹⁸ First, we need to hear this as *the story of original sin*, which is true and good and needed for us to hear. Especially as we read the New Testament, in Romans 5:12-21 where we hear of sin in Adam and its passing through Adam to all of us. That's the first way we can hear this passage.

⁹⁶ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 239.

⁹⁷ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 191.

⁹⁸ Kevin DeYoung, *An Ugly Fall* (sermon, 9.27.2020) accessed 9.24.2022.

Second, we need to hear this passage as *the story of every sin*. These verses explain how I sin, how you sin, how the process of sin works, why sin is so enticing, and why we fall for it so easily. Every sin follows this pattern. Our first parents saw, desired, took, ate, and shared. That's the pattern. It's the same for me and it's the same for you. 2 Corinthians 2:11 encourages us to know this pattern so that we're not ignorant of Satan's designs, lest we be outwitted by him.

So Church, I wonder, can I ask some hard questions? Are any of you right now in the midst of this pattern, thinking about, chewing on, privately wondering what it would be like to indulge in sin yourself? Perhaps I could put it like this. Have any of you already made plans to sin? Made plans to get blackout drunk on this night, or made plans to run off with another woman or man on this date, or made plans to share a bit too much and gossip at the next prayer meeting about someone else's struggle, or made plans to go full rage monster on someone else because they've mistreated you far too long? Or something else? Or perhaps I could put it like this. Did any of you sin last night? In some way, whether you think it's small or big, and as you sit here this morning you find yourself seeing firsthand in this passage how you fell prey to sin and now you're plagued with guilt and don't know what to do.

If any of these categories describe you, I pray this passage would land on you in power today. That you'd not only know the deceitfulness of sin, but that you'd see the anatomy of temptation, and see the vileness of sin. But I also pray you'd know there is hope for sinners.

It is true as I said before the deed has been done, there is no way back but, praise God, there is a way forward. Satan said take and eat, and Adam and Eve *took and ate*. One day, God himself will taste sin and death for his people and transform the words *take and eat* into words of salvation.⁹⁹ In his life Jesus was tempted with the same three things Adam and Eve were in the wilderness: the lust of the flesh (turn stones into bread), the desire of the eyes (all the kingdoms of the world could be yours), the pride of life (jump off the temple, show everyone who you are). But while our first parents failed, while we fail in this, Jesus triumphed. In him and in his victory over sin, there is hope for sinners like us.

⁹⁹ Kidner, *Genesis*, 73.

THE FALL, PART 2

Genesis 3:8-15

Introduction

If Genesis 1-3 were a play, there would be four scenes to the plot.¹⁰⁰ First, there is *creation* where God the great Artist creates everything from nothing. Second, there is *jubilation* where God meets Adam's need of a helper by making Eve for him and the first family exists happy and content in the garden. Third, there is *temptation* where we see the crafty serpent come to deceive our first parents in the taking of the forbidden fruit. And fourth, there is *confrontation* where God comes in judgment against the serpent, the woman, and the man. Through these four scenes a great momentum is built, but notice it is not a momentum of progression where the story gets better, it is a momentum of digression where the story evolves into further and further chaos. Such is the sad story of Genesis 3 after the bliss of Genesis 1-2. But remember and be of good cheer Church, God is the infallible Author of this play, and only he can craft a story where the beginning is perfect and the end is better. Even here in the darkness of chapter 3 we see hints of great light shining through.

Our passage this morning is Genesis 3:8-15; see our first heading in v. 8...

Hiding (v. 8)

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

After the deed was done in vv. 6-7, the very next thing we read of is them hearing the sound of God walking in the garden. The way v. 8 is phrased seems to suggest a pattern. God walking in the garden was not an unusual event, but rather a frequent occurrence. If this is the case, that means walking with the Lord was something Adam and Eve did often with God in their life together in the garden.¹⁰¹ Which is likely why from this point on we hear the verbiage of *walking with God* throughout Scripture. This is how Enoch is described in Genesis 5, Noah is described in Genesis 6, Abraham is called to walk with God in Genesis 17, and on and on. We even hear of God walking with his people if they obey him in Leviticus 26:3,12 where God says, “If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them...I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.” All of this suggests a pattern between God and his

¹⁰⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982), 193.

¹⁰¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 76.

people, that from the very beginning he delights to be with his people, and walk with them in life.¹⁰²

Now I'm saying this pattern of God walking with his people began in the garden with Adam and Eve, yet sadly here before us in v. 8 we see the pattern broken. They had walked with God in the garden and enjoyed his presence before, but now, as soon as they hear the sound (literally the *voice*) of God drawing near, they hide. What was once a sacred sound to their souls, this time the sound of the Lord fills them with dread and they hide.¹⁰³ Which is beginning to be something of a new pattern for them isn't it?¹⁰⁴ They had just hidden themselves from one another with fig leaves after eating the fruit in v. 7, and now they hide from God in v. 8. What makes this all the more weighty is that the Hebrew word for presence in v. 8 ("...the man and his wife hid themselves from the *presence* of the LORD God..."), this word is the word *face* in Hebrew. They heard his voice calling and they hid themselves from the very face of God.

Lesson? For fallen man in the guilt and shame and weight of sin, concealment is the new normal. Does this surprise anyone? It shouldn't because this is what we do. It is said that someone who can easily hide their true feelings, thoughts, or emotions has a good poker face. On one hand I think that's true, as many are very good at hiding a storm within and you'd never know it on their face. But on the other hand, I want to call their bluff because I think sin can so plague the soul that eventually the poker face becomes impossible to keep up. Does this describe you? Have you developed a poker face when it comes to our own sin? Have you grown so accustomed to hiding who you really are and what you're really into that words like phony, fake, and fraud describe you accurately? Does your mouth preach a good sermon while your life preaches a contradictory message? Learn here from our first parents. You can hide from other people, for years, and you can hide in plain sight. Eventually it'll give way and break you, hurting yourself and others in the process. But more pointed is this: you can hide from others for a time, but you can never hide from God. He's God! He sees all, he knows all, and he isn't deceived by our deception.

Many hide today; are you? It's all too convenient to sleep in on Sunday if you know you might be called out by God in the sermon as his Word goes forth.

But, my oh my, hide as we may, there is great hope in being found by God. Look at the next heading in vv. 9-13...

¹⁰² Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 239.

¹⁰³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2004), 77.

¹⁰⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 192.

Questioning (vv. 9-13)

“But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ And he said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.’ He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’ The man said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”

Here in v. 9 we find the first words of God to fallen man, and do not miss, it’s full of grace. God comes asking a question. Be sure though, God’s not asking this question in order to gain a knowledge of something he does not have. God is omniscient, all-knowing, and nothing could ever enter into his mind that did not originate from his mind in the first place. God is asking this question not for his own benefit but for Adam’s benefit. God could’ve come in angry and wrathful, and man would’ve deserved it, but God doesn’t do that. By asking the question “Where are you?” God is drawing them out of their sin instead of driving them out.¹⁰⁵ How gracious of God to do so.

Adam responds in v. 10 with a half-truth. He admits he was afraid when he heard the sound (or voice) of God in the garden, but the reason he gives is his nakedness. Which isn’t true, totally. He is naked, and he is ashamed of his nakedness, but the reason Adam’s afraid of God is because he’s disobeyed God. That is why he’s hiding from God. God responds to this, seeing through Adam’s half-truth by asking in v. 11, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” God asks two more questions here, they’re linked together and they don’t require careful thought to answer. The obvious answer to the first question is themselves—they knew they were naked the moment they ate the fruit and they didn’t need anyone to tell them this. Which leads to the obvious answer to the second question: yes, they did eat from the tree. Their eating has led to their awareness of their own condition.

After these questions in v. 11, Adam clearly has nothing else to do but confess. But he doesn’t. His response in v. 12 is as exposing of his own selfish heart as it is astonishing to see where he places the blame. He admits that he ate the fruit, but it’s not really his fault in v. 12—see that? He not only points to the woman who gave him the fruit to eat, but he points to God who gave him the woman in the first place. To call this blame shifting is accurate; I’d go further and call this blasphemy for putting the blame on God for giving this woman to him in the first place. The consequences of sin are heavy. By his own doing Adam is now set against the woman he once praised, and is now alienated

¹⁰⁵ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 74.

from the God whose company he once enjoyed.¹⁰⁶ By saying it like this Adam is blaspheming, basically saying if God were better he would have given him a better woman who wouldn't have led him into sin. This is an awful lot like the serpent who basically said a better God wouldn't hold them back from any tree in the garden.¹⁰⁷ So rather than turning away from his sins and humbly confessing to God, Adam adds sin onto sin by denying any responsibility and playing the victim, as if he were the chief party wronged in this whole mess.

Notice God doesn't respond to Adam at all. Instead he turns to Eve and says in v. 13, "What is this that you have done?" She says, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Many believe Eve is also blame shifting here like Adam did. But notice, while she does mention the serpent first before anything else, she does not blame God saying *the serpent you made* or blame Adam saying *my husband didn't lead me or defend me*. She says none of this, while Adam did both of those things. In this, while still at fault clearly, Eve does much better than Adam in her response, honestly admitting she bought the lie presented to her.¹⁰⁸

Church, this passage would not only call you out of hiding in sin as we've seen, but here this passage confronts us. Adam and Eve are confronted by God here, and I want to ask this: are any of you challenged by God in this confrontation? Do you feel the searching eye of God on you? Do you hear the voice of God questioning you as you hear his words here? He could have severely disciplined our first parents in wrathful anger for their disobedience, but he came with questions, gently drawing them out of their folly and sin. If you're hiding in sin and afraid of God today, this is good news. You need to see God in grace slowly alluring his people back to him. And you need to know he can do the same with you. Yes, Adam and Eve royally messed up here, and you might've done the same. Do you know God desires to draw you out of your mess and make you whole in him? The sinfulness of sin is vile, but the grace of God in the gospel is stronger.

Where do we see this strength brightly in Genesis 3? See our final heading in vv. 14-15...

Cursing (vv. 14-15)

"The LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and

¹⁰⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 77.

¹⁰⁷ Hughes, *Genesis*, 79.

¹⁰⁸ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 194.

between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

First, note the authority of God as he speaks to the serpent. How boastful had the serpent been? With such unbridled confidence he had promised they could be like God if they ate the fruit. In doing so did he not make himself to be God? Didn't he give Eve the impression that his words were true while God's words were false? But how strange is it to see this tempter able to do nothing but listen to God cursing him? Where are his bold words now? Where is his confidence, power, and wisdom hiding? Not a word flows from his mouth as the Judge of all the earth pronounces him to be cursed! God is the only God, he will not give his glory to another, and no one is his equal. Sure, Satan may be wise, wiser than us, and his wisdom may overwhelm us, but his wisdom is a drop of water compared to the ocean of God's wisdom. Here we see that Satan the creature is no match for God the Creator. For Satan this is the most humiliating moment of his entire existence, “for he hears his doom uttered with infallible authority.”¹⁰⁹

Second, note that this one verse embraces all that is noble and glorious that is to be found in the Scriptures. Adam and Eve plunged themselves into death and darkness by believing the serpent and eating the fruit. They, as our first parents, therefore plunged the whole of mankind into death and darkness from such evil. It is now natural and normal for us to call good evil and evil good. All of mankind now finds himself in need of life, light, and rescue, and in this verse God promises that very thing! There is no enmity or hatred between the serpent and mankind, but God will place it there. Between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman, enmity will exist. Adam and Eve had seen the serpent as their friend and God as their enemy. They were willing to listen to his words and ignore God's. They must learn the opposite—that God is their friend and his Word alone is to be trusted. Because God said, “I will put enmity” between these two parties for all time, meaning Adam and Eve can now never be at peace with the serpent or the sin he seeks to ensnare us in.

Third, note the Person in view in Genesis 3:15b, “...he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” Just as the man and woman were to be at enmity with the serpent, so also will her seed (their descendants) and the serpent's seed be at enmity. What does *the woman's seed* mean? Is it referring to one individual or is it referring to all those who descend from Eve? In the early Christian Church most believed there is here a specific reference to the ‘Seed’ of the woman, Jesus Christ.

¹⁰⁹ Said to be from E.J. Young.

It's ironic that the snake who was more crafty than any other beast is now more cursed than any other beast as well.¹¹⁰ Ironic that he who tempted Eve to eat, will now eat dust himself.¹¹¹ And, ironic that though the serpent was the undoing of the woman, it is through the woman that God will bring about the undoing of the serpent.¹¹²

It is interesting to note that as the centuries progressed and especially after the Enlightenment, many began to move away from that view saying there cannot possibly be such a reference of Jesus Christ in so early an Old Testament (OT) book. But in the OT there is a remarkable progression of God's revelation of the truth concerning the Messiah to come. And the starting point for all of the prophecies about him is Genesis 3:15, where we see for the first time the promise that one of the descendants of the woman will come and end the work of the serpent. People have rightly called this verse the *protoevangelium* or the *first-gospel* because Genesis 3:15 is the first place in the Bible where we get an explicit promise of what Christ will be like and will do. We know from this verse the 'Seed' of the woman will do work that will crush the serpent's work, and the result of this work is that the serpent shall receive a fatal blow, while the 'Seed' of the woman receives a non-fatal blow to his heel. Of course this is mentioning the entire life of Jesus: his birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension. The man and the woman are now in need of redemption, and in this Descendant, God will provide everything we need.

Fourth, the consequences flowing out of Genesis 3:15 are massive. Even in the midst of such blatant defiance, death, and darkness, God is there to give grace to his people. It is astonishing, almost unbelievable, that God will not allow man to perish but is determined to bring rescue. Much is still dark, true. We do not see with clarity as we do now. This gracious promise becomes an organizing theme for the rest of Scripture and the rest of human history. Every character and every event find their place in relation to the great battle that now unfolds between the conquering 'Seed' of the woman and the devilish seed of the serpent.

In the midst of one the darkest chapters in the whole Bible, we see the light of the gospel breaking forth.

¹¹⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 78.

¹¹¹ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 196.

¹¹² Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 245.

THE FALL, PART 3

Genesis 3:16-24

Introduction

Once again Church, it is a joy to be opening the Word of God with you and once again we find ourselves in Genesis 3. Recall the path we've traveled so far. We began Genesis 3 looking at vv. 1-7 where we saw the why—why Adam and Eve sinned and why we sin. We then looked at vv. 8-15 where we saw the what—what happened when Adam and Eve sinned and what happens when we sin. Today we're looking at the rest of chapter 3, vv. 16-24 specifically, where we'll continue to see all the ruin and misery that entered into the world through sin.

Last week we already saw the first curse in Genesis 3 and as we saw it we rejoiced because it was against the serpent. He couldn't do anything as he heard his doom pronounced by God with infallible authority in vv. 14-15. Yet, two more cursings remain in the chapter, and in them there's not much to celebrate as they continue to unfold the devastating consequences of sin. Yet, what hope we have in examining the curse, for it leads us straight to the One who, in love, came to be cursed for us.

Cursing (vv. 16-19)

To the Woman (v. 16)

“To the woman he said, ‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.’”

In v. 15 we saw the great hope in the promise of the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent once and for all. Yet how tragic is the turn in v. 16 as we see that the coming of this seed will be full of pain.¹¹³ The way this is phrased makes it unclear whether pain was a normal part of childbirth pre-fall or if pain is only a reality of childbirth post-fall. God didn't say there would *now* be pain, but that he would *multiply the pain* in childbearing, which could indicate that pain in the birthing process was present pre-fall and increased post-fall. But whether or not that's the case, one thing is clear, great pain is now normal for childbearing.

But while physical pain in giving birth is intense and I never want to diminish that reality, I think more than mere physical pain is in view here. In a sense the whole

¹¹³ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1990), 200.

endeavor of mothering is filled with pain.¹¹⁴ Mothering begins in pain as the birthing process takes place. Mothering continues on in pain because the child born is a child born, not neutral with God, but in rebellion against God, and this child's rebellion will grieve and bring pain to the mother in due time. And mothering will end in pain, because when the mother has lived long enough she'll see the consequences of sin plague all her children to varying degrees ("...in pain you shall bring forth children"). What was once an event of gladness will now be filled with grief.

But that's not all that's present in v. 16. After the initial multiplication of pain in childbirth, we see this, "...Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." What's going on here? Simply put, the marriage realities of love and cherish have now turned into control and domination.¹¹⁵ Or as Pat Benatar sang, love is a battlefield. This is evidence that the designs of marriage are now forever changed. Far from marriage being the wonderful union it was meant to be, marriage is now a fight for control, where the wife will desire to rule over her husband.¹¹⁶ This is no small desire. The same word is used in chapter 4, v. 7 to describe how eagerly sin seeks after us "...sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you...." This means Eve will have the same kind of desire for Adam that sin has for Cain.¹¹⁷ Also see the phrase "contrary to" in v. 16. "Your desire shall be *contrary to* your husband...." In Hebrew that phrase *contrary to* is just one word, *against*. "Your desire shall be against your husband." So what's taken place? Pre-fall marriage was once a perfect harmony of complementary equals, now post-fall marriage is a war for control as Eve's desire shall be contrary to and against Adam. Yet, Adam will continue to rule, meaning he will lead and be the head of the family, bringing about more frustration for Eve as her desire for control is continually challenged.

How sad that now, the very things that would've given Eve some of life's greatest joy—childbearing and marriage—will now bring Eve some of her deepest misery.¹¹⁸ Things are not the way they were supposed to be. Before we apply this, see the curse to Adam.

To the Man (vv. 17-19)

"And to Adam he said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground 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

¹¹⁴ John D. Currid, *Genesis 1:1-25:18*, EP Study Commentary (Holywell, UK: Evangelical Press, 2015), 132–133.

¹¹⁵ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 76.

¹¹⁶ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 202.

¹¹⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis 1-11* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1982), 223.

¹¹⁸ Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H, 1996), 251.

of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Notice right away how much longer the description of Adam’s curse is compared to Eve’s? This is likely due to their earlier words to God when he came calling in the garden in v. 8 and following. When addressed, Adam had a list of excuses as long as his arm in vv. 9-12, even going back and forth with God, and now he receives many words of curse. Eve spoke briefly in v. 13, and so it isn’t surprising to see her receive far less words of curse than Adam.

But look at God’s words to Adam. Immediately God goes straight to the fundamental mistake Adam made, listening to his wife rather than listening to God’s command.¹¹⁹ Five times God brings up *eating* to Adam here. He was not to eat of the one tree, but because of his eating, he will now eat only after painful labor with the ground and by the sweat of his face. Work for Adam, once an endeavor of joy and satisfaction, will now be filled with pain. Just as we saw with Eve, what was once a thing of gladness will now be filled with grief. The reason for his painful labor is that the very ground (literally *land* in Hebrew¹²⁰) is cursed because of Adam’s disobedience. What is this? The ground pre-fall was easy to work with: no thorns, no thistles, nothing fighting back against Adam. The ground yielded to Adam’s effort easily, was most likely soft, easily tillable, and it most likely produced for Adam with speed. Now the ground won’t yield as easily; it actually fights back against Adam with thorns and thistles; it’s much harder so he’ll have to work at digging it up; and now most likely it won’t produce for him as quickly. All in all, only by sweat and painful labor will Adam’s work produce sustenance for his family to eat.

But that’s not all in vv. 17-19. The final word looms over Adam in tragic irony, “... you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” When God created Adam, God made him from the ground. From the *adamah* came *Adam*. Now the tragic reversal occurs in death as *Adam* will one day return to the *adamah*. So not only will the ground fight against and resist Adam’s work with it, the ground will one day literally swallow Adam up in death.¹²¹

As we said before with Eve we now say again. How sad that now, the very things that would’ve given Adam some of life’s greatest joy—working and providing—will now bring Adam some of his deepest misery. Things are truly not the way they were supposed to be.

¹¹⁹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 82.

¹²⁰ This subtly prepares the reader for the coming promise of a greater land, made to Abraham.

¹²¹ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 95.

What are we to make of these texts? After seeing these curses to Adam and Eve, there are thousands of points of application. Here's just a few. Ladies, you now experience great pain in childbearing, such that now it's possible for women to die giving birth from complications. Mothering now is an endeavor of pain throughout the whole of it as you watch your children sin and watch them be sinned against. And ladies, in marriage you now fight for dominance over your husband, and you're called to submit to your husband. This is now the common state of all women post-fall. And husbands, lest you think you're not in view here see the curse to Adam. You now have the battle of listening to God first and foremost over listening to the wife you love. Of course your wife is great and I'm sure has much wisdom and direction to aid and help you in leading your family, but as great as your wives are, wives make bad gods. And husbands, you're called to work and to work hard to meet the needs of your family. Painful toil by the sweat of your brow doesn't just apply to farmers, it applies to any job you have now. Even if you've got the best job in the world, at times, you'll grow weary in it and will want a different job thinking the grass is greener in other pastures. Do not be deceived. Work will be painful for you. And lastly for all of us here, both men and women, from the moment we're born we're now slowly but surely headed back to the ground from which we came.

I think we can now understand more of what Paul meant in Romans 8 when he says that we ourselves, along with all of creation, are now longing for redemption and for the curse to be removed (Romans 8:18-24). Having been so blessed, and now having been so cursed, we long to be redeemed and free of all corruption once again. And Church, this promise will come to pass one day, gloriously so!¹²² The curse brought great pain—but no pain was equal to Christ's pain on the cross. The curse brought great conflict—but no conflict was equal to what Jesus faced before his accusers. The curse brought sweat—Jesus sweat great drops of blood. The curse brought thorns—Jesus was crowned with thorns. The curse brought sorrow—Jesus was the Man of Sorrows. The curse brought death and Jesus died. Simply put, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us....” (Galatians 3:13). Christ, cursed for us, now fills our hearts, our minds, and our souls. We sing “He comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.” Praise God that though the curse is great, because of Jesus, curse is not the final word for any believer.

Calling/Covering (vv. 20-21)

Just v. 20 first, “The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.”

¹²² Boice, *Genesis 1-11*, 226.

Curious that this comes next, right? I mean, we hear nothing of response from the man or the woman after being cursed. The very next thing is Adam naming the woman Eve. Why is this here? I think it's here because of Adam's faith. Recall that Adam heard the serpent being cursed, and a part of that curse is v. 15; that the seed of the woman will one day come forth, do battle, and crush the serpent once and for all. Adam heard this. And now, after the woman is cursed and after he is cursed, especially after the sobering words of death in v. 19, how does Adam respond? In the midst of death, he responds with life! It seems Adam has believed the promise of v. 15 and by naming the woman Eve, meaning life-giver, he looks in the face of his own sin and shame and death, defiantly believing that he and his wife won't be the end of humanity, but proclaims that God will somehow bring life out of this!¹²³ What hope to see here, and what hope Adam would've given to his wife here in naming her this.

That's the calling in v. 20, see now the covering in v. 21. "And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." Remember back in v. 7 they had tried to cloth themselves with fig leaves to cover their shame and hide their nakedness from one another. Lesson? What they foolishly attempted to do for themselves, God in his grace does for them, in clothing them with garments of skin. What are these garments of skin? Some believe they're just garments God created for them, like he created the world, clothing made out of nothing. I disagree. I think these garments came from an animal sacrifice, the first animal sacrifice to be exact. I say this because this word skins here, for the original Israelite audience reading this would've instantly thought of animals being sacrificed in the temple. Leviticus 7:8 even mentions how the priests would keep some of the skins of the animals for themselves after the sacrifices. If this is the case, that the clothing God made for them did come from animals, which I think it did, that would mean this is the first instance in the Bible we have of shame and sin being covered by a bloody sacrifice.

See here Church: the work of substitution in Genesis 3, long before the bloody cross of our Savior. Adam and Eve sinned and were sentenced to death. What does God do? He kills an animal in their place, as their substitute, to cover their sin and shame. Who would've known that one day the very Snake Crusher promised a few verses before this would, in a far greater and eternal manner, cover the sin and shame of all who come to him in faith with his very righteousness! That's the reality, this is the preview preparing us for it. And of course, this extends to the very end of the Bible. In Revelation 19 it mentions how the church will be clothed in the bright and pure linen of Christ's righteousness forever. Church, may you ever look to Christ to cover your sin and shame, and turn away from so many fig leaves offered to us today.

¹²³ Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 207.

Casting (vv. 22-24)

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—’ therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

Here chapter 3 comes to a close. And it comes to a close with God, in grace, casting Adam and Eve out of Eden, lest they eat of the tree of life in their new fallen condition and live forever. God sent him out, drove him out, and blocked his way back in. This is not Adam leaving of his own will, or being escorted to the door. This is exile. This is banishment. This is Adam and Eve being thrown out.¹²⁴ And using temple-like language, once again it says God drove them out in the east of Eden, placing cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way back in. Lesson? Man’s way back into the presence of God is now not just hard, not just difficult, it’s impossible.¹²⁵ God himself must make the way open if man is to come back in.

Be of good cheer Church, whatever sins you’ve done, whatever sins have been done against you, God himself did what we could never do, and made a way home through Jesus Christ.

Praise his name forevermore!

¹²⁴ Ibid., 210.

¹²⁵ Kidner, *Genesis*, 77.