

Genesis 2:4-17

A Taste of Paradise

The famed scientist, Louis Pasteur, once said, “Posterity will one day laugh at the sublime foolishness of modern materialistic philosophers. The more I study nature, the more I am amazed at the work of the Creator. I pray while I am engaged at my work in the laboratory.” Indeed, all we must do is look around at the wonders of God’s creation, for then we will realize that truly king David was right when he declared, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

As we continue to study Genesis, we find in this passage God’s most amazing creation! Genesis 1 is an overview of creation which gives a general description of creation, culminating on day 6 with the creation of man. In Genesis 2, however, we have a specific account of the creation of a man - one named Adam who was placed in a literal place called Eden. Notice several things about this account.

Notice first, Man formed from the dust of the ground in vv. 4-7. We see first, ***God’s redemptive purpose*** in v. 4. This is the first occurrence of the word LORD, which translates the Hebrew YHWH, i.e. Jehovah. In Genesis 1 we see the Hebrew term Elohim being used - a term always linked with God as creator. YHWH is the covenant name of God, the Name He revealed Himself to Moses as in Exodus 3 when He said I am that I am. This name signified God’s redemptive purpose. The New Testament says in Ephesians 1:4-7: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”

Note also the phrase, “earth & heavens,” which presents a different order than what we see all though out chapter 1, where we see the phrase “heavens and earth.” The earth is listed first here for as Redeemer, God’s interest in centered on our planet!

Why did God create? Was it so we could worship? I don’t think so. According to Hebrews 1:6, He had the angels to do that! Was it then for service? Again, as Hebrews 1:7 says, the angels ever serve Him! No, God created in order to redeem! From the very beginning here, we see God’s purpose; a purpose that was redemptive in nature.

We also see ***God’s descriptive paradise*** in vv. 5-6. I can imagine Adam looking out on the beauty of the emerald green fields; strolling through the meadows ablaze with blossoms; smelling the atmosphere laden with aromatic fragrances; stopping at the forest edge to watch a fox play with a deer or to nuzzle a lamb; ruffling the mane of a lion walking by; and then stopping and gazing in awe at the tree of life! I don’t know if that’s literally how it was; but I do know it was paradise!

And what about this mist thing? Many reputable scholars propose that prior to the flood of Noah, the earth was enveloped by an ice canopy. This theory points out that such a canopy would provide a uniform greenhouse temperature; that light would be diffused screening the harmful rays of the sun; that energy consumption would be less; and that the earth would be watered by a dew-like mist. The theory proposes that at the time of the flood, the canopy broke, thus unleashing devastation and destruction of epic

proportions upon the earth. Again, there's no way to know if that's how it literally was; but we do know it was paradise!

We can also see *God's creative power* in v. 7. Scripture says God "formed" man. The Hebrew word used is a word used of a potter shaping the clay. What's needed to make a human body? Dr. Mayo, who founded the now famous Mayo clinic, points out that the human body can essentially be reduced to the following elements: 58 pounds of oxygen, 50 quarts of water, 2 ounces of salt, 3 pounds of calcium, 24 pounds of carbon, some chlorine, phosphorus, fat, iron, sulfur, and glycerin. He humorously concludes that one could go to a store to purchase these items and the total purchase could be carried home in two grocery bags!

But boy those instructions would be tough! The human body is so complex, scientists don't pretend to understand it all. Yet evolutionists want us to believe it happened by chance. The Bible gives a better explanation: "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."

In his commentary, John Phillips says, "with omniscient genius God took that dust, that water, those odds and ends of things, and formed and fashioned them into a man. The human body, marvelous and intricate as it is, eloquently testifies to the wisdom and power of God. The evolutionist preys upon our gullibility. The Bible leads us to worship." Man was indeed formed from the dust of the ground!

But we see next, Man functioning with dominion in the garden in vv. 8-17. Notice first that Adam was given *somewhere to dwell* (vv. 8-14). I've already tried to describe a picture of this ideal place, but really mere words can't begin to picture the beauty of this garden. It's been said that home is where the heart is. I've experienced that several times in my life. After graduating from college I spent four years in Florida serving as a youth minister. Eventually the time came to go to seminary so we moved to North Carolina. When we first got there I thought, "oh, what a place." It was cold in the winter. They had some snow. Why you even had to wear coats! And to top it all off, it cost more money to live there! Yet we soon grew to love it as home. Eventually we went back to Florida to visit. Guess what we discovered? It was awfully hot and humid there. There were far too many bugs. They didn't have any mountains in Florida. And those roads! Boy they stunk. But now let me ask, what was really different? Nothing except our heart!

We also experienced that here in Pennsylvania. I remember my impressions when we came to visit. Talk about bad roads! They had them around here. There was traffic all over the place! It not only snowed, it was piled up almost ten feet high in places! Why, it was so cold my car door lock froze. And things looked old all around! But we moved because we knew this was where God was leading us. After about eight or nine months we went back for our first visit to North Carolina. Boy did it look bad. Everybody said it was because of Hurricane Fran that had come through that fall, but I wasn't so sure! There were bugs all over the place there just like in Florida! And boy did those people drive slow. I couldn't wait to get back home to Pennsylvania. Now again I ask, what was really different? And again the answer is, nothing except our heart!

But even though this is home and I wouldn't trade it for anywhere else in world, let me be honest and say it is still a far cry from paradise! Many today tell us our

problems are environmental. Put a child in a safe, secure, loving environment and their inherent goodness will flourish, we're told. Well, Adam proved that nonsense wrong 6000 years ago! What better environment could somebody ask for than this here? Rich lush trees full of fruit for food; peace on all sides; a beautiful river dividing into four. Many ask where are those rivers today? I think we need to remember that this was before the Flood! Things got pretty messed up in the Flood as we'll see when we get to that passage. They got so messed up that river courses were changed, new rivers were created, and some rivers were even probably done away with. We shouldn't worry that we can't locate some of these rivers. Just read the scripture and realize what happened later and we find a perfect explanation for why we no longer know where they are. Adam indeed had an ideal environment - yet he still messed up as we'll see next week!

But Adam not only had somewhere to dwell, he also had *something to do*, as we see in vv. 15-17. Notice he was given a **specific task** - vv. 15-16. He was to be both a *gardener* (dress it) and a *guardian* (keep it). There's nothing I loathe more than laziness. I've met plenty of people (you have too, probably) that when there's work to be done, they'd rather sit around idle than get the task done! The old proverb rightly says that "idle hands are the devil's workshop." God sought to protect Adam from this by giving him this specific task!

May I remind you tonight that God has a task for you! Perhaps it is raising your children; maybe singing to His glory; it could be witnessing to a neighbor; or it could be a host of other things. Be sure that you're fulfilling your God-given tasks!

Notice also that Adam was given a **sacred trust** - v. 17. This sacred trust carried a *superabundant provision* on the positive side, but it also carried a *single prohibition* on the negative side. DON'T eat from the tree of the knowledge of good & evil! What was it about that tree? Was it something physical? Was the fruit physically different? I don't think so! I think the issue was essentially spiritual in nature. A choice was placed before Adam - a necessary choice. Adam couldn't have been a free moral person without that choice! Next week we'll examine the choice in more detail. For now, just notice that God didn't make a mechanical man but a moral man. He set the alternatives before His creature.

Tonight, He sets the alternatives before you! Deuteronomy 30:19-20 says, "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." He IS your life - what choice will you make?

I remember my freshman year in college. I had gone to a "church" school in South Carolina. Still I was not prepared for, of all things, my Bible class. All students were required to take a semester of Old Testament and a semester of New Testament, so my first semester there I began with Old Testament. I well remember my professor's statement the first day of class as she held up the Bible; "some of you have come in here with presuppositions about this book - I hope to correct those by the end of the semester."

Well, I certainly didn't want to have erroneous presuppositions. I wanted to know the truth. We hit the ground running. Right away we began to learn things I'd never heard: Genesis 1-11 fit the category of myth; Adam and Eve were not literal people; The

Flood was more a parable than an actual event; The Old Testament didn't say anything about Jesus - we don't learn about Him until the New Testament; miracle stories are a literary type not intended to be taken as real!

Let me tell you, I was shaken to the foundation of my faith! Why had all my pastors presented this stuff to me as real all my life? Had my Sunday School teachers lied to me or did they just not know any better?

I remember going home to Florida on fall break about six weeks into the semester. The first thing I did was call my pastor and set up an appointment to see him. He was a godly man who left that church eventually to go to the mission field, but now he's back in Florida serving as a Director of Missions in a local Association. I shared my concerns with him about what I was learning and began to ask questions. I remember both what he said and what he did. He said, "Mark, maybe it's that professor's who's wrong and not all your teachers and pastors!" And then one by one he answered (from Scripture) every doubt that professor had raised!

I realized I had to go back and make a choice. I could believe someone who had title Ph.D. and was going to grade me for one semester, or I could believe the One with the title Creator of Universe who would grade me for eternity. If you don't already know, I choose to believe God and what He says!

What choice do you make? If He can't be trusted in what He says about creation, neither can He be trusted about salvation! You can't have your cake and eat it too. It's all or nothing! What will it be?