

Genesis 2

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Preacher: Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] We shall turn again to Genesis chapter 2, and we may read at verse 7, Genesis 2 and verse 7.

The Lord God formed the man who went up to the ground, and between his nostrils he left life, and the man became a living being.

Some weeks ago we looked at Genesis 1 and its account of creation.

Tonight I will look at the second account in Genesis 2. Those two accounts, of course, excuse me.

Well, let's hope it works this time. I've had that angitis all week, but I hope that I can survive.

[1 : 10] The two accounts overlap, but don't contradict. In the second account we notice, first of all, the close link between man and the soil or the ground.

The example in verse 4 we read that this is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. So, man's story is set very much in the story of the wider creation.

And even then we see the emphasis in verse 4 downwards on the field and the land and the ground.

So, man is bound up very closely with his own environment. And that's part of the overall lesson of this chapter, that man and the environment don't exist independently of each other.

The human species is itself linked in its destiny and responsibility with the world of which it is part. So, the Adam and Eve story is set in the context of the story of the wider creation.

[2 : 27] And we mentioned the shrub of the field, for example, and the plants and so on. It's all part of the same story. And we have this constant tension, this paradox in the Bible.

The emphasis on the one level on man's supremacy as God's image bearer. And yet, on the other hand, man's identification with the world of which he is a part.

And above all, with the ground from which he came and of which one day he is destined to return. A second general point is the title given to the Creator in this account.

For example, there again, in verse 4, when the Lord God made the earth and the heaven. Now, you see in Genesis 1 that it is God simply as God creates.

But here in Genesis 2, it is the Lord God. And the word Lord here is in large block capitals.

[3 : 41] A reminder that the underlying Hebrew word here is the word Jehovah. And we're told that it was Jehovah God who made the earth and the heavens.

Now, the point of that, of course, is that Jehovah is the covenant God of Israel. And what we're being told is that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is indeed the God of the whole of creation.

And that Israel's God is the maker of heaven and of earth. Now, of course, from a New Testament point of view, we could go even further and argue that this brings into the whole frame the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal word of God.

So, we might speak, for example, of God as the creator, of Jehovah God as the creator, and of the Lord Jesus as the creator.

And part of what's going on there all the time is that our environment, our universe, is being de-demonized. Because to those ancient peoples, the universe was so terrifying.

[5 : 11] And almost everywhere there were various little deities, little demons. And here we are told that it is God, the Lord God, Jehovah God, the Lord Jesus.

He's the maker of heaven and earth. And there is no single entity, there is no atom, there is no gene, we hear of a selfish gene.

There is no gene in the entire ecosystem, but one created by the Lord God and by our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the Lord God it is, who made the earth and the heaven. Well, let's look at some of the key moments in this particular development.

First of all, the language of verse 7. The Lord God formed the man from the dust from the ground.

[6 : 20] And we have here a specific verb, the Lord God formed. It's an artistic term, like the potter forming an ester from the clay.

And it shows or represents the immediacy of the divine involvement. God's artistry. As God forms this human being.

Who in the version is the man in the Hebrew, is Adam. Adam. And Adam is made, we are told, from the dust of the ground.

And the dust here is the very fine dust of the ground. And in fact, what we're told is that the Lord God, the great artist, He forms Adam from the Adama.

It's not that Adam comes from Adama. But the two words sound very similar. And here again, this emphasis on the bond between man and the ground.

[7 : 29] The Lord God. And what a combination it is. These three marvelous entities. The Lord God and the man and the ground.

What's the Lord God doing? Getting His hands into the ground, into the dust of the earth. And what marvelous creativity.

That from this ground, from this dust, God, the Lord God, is able to make something called Adam.

The disproportion there between the medium in which God is working. And the product that God calls it to be.

So, here is the Lord God, our God, taking a fine dust. And with that fine dust of the Adama, forming this human Adam.

[8 : 31] And then we're told that the Lord God breathed into His nostrils the breath of life. And Adam became a living being.

Now, this doesn't allow the idea that there were pre-Adamite men who evolved into Adamite men or into homines sapientes.

We see here that this creature, Adam, had no life in him until God breathed into him. And He drew His first breath, not as a pre-Adamite, or as some inferior species, but He drew His first breath as Adam, as a human being.

And He has that breath again because of the immediacy of God's action. And so, God, with His manipulative creative fingers, forms the body of this creature.

And then, with such intimacy, God kisses him, and God breathes the life, the kiss of life, into Adam.

[9 : 53] And this form, made from the dust, this form is animated. It's breathing. And it becomes a living being.

Now, it's a shame that the version uses that language. Because, in fact, the word here is a living soul. And I raise that point because we do so often speak of man as having a soul.

But here, the human being is a living soul. So that the whole entity, the animated body that we have here, is a living soul.

The human being is simply a living soul. And then we see, if we cast our eyes down to verse 15, the Lord God took the man, took Adam, and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it.

The Lord God, of course, said, in the story, plant the garden. We don't know where. We shouldn't be speculating even where this garden was.

[11 : 15] But it was of God's soul, planting. And in this garden, as we read, there were all these trees. and we know that those trees were very productive and fruitful and good for food.

But what I like best in the narrative with regard to that detail is the words of verse 7 or verse 9, I should say there, that they were pleasing to the eye.

And that reminds us how important the aesthetic is. They were simply beautiful. and that was important to God. You see, the temptation for us is to say that, well, everything must have a use.

And I'm inclined to think that those trees were quite useless for food or for firewood or making chairs and tables.

And you might say, well, why on earth did God put them there? Because they were beautiful. And we've always got to watch that utilitarian approach that wants to reduce things to their essentials and to limit ourselves to functionality.

[12 : 40] Bonhoeffer lamented in Nazi Germany that the Nazis had taken the quality out of public life. and you know, we may, we tempted to erect public buildings and go for pure utility, schools, hospitals, and so on.

But when God planted the Garden of Eden, he was in those useless trees because they were pleasant to the eyes. and that's legitimization of our own love for music or love for beauty in all its forms.

A pleasant to the eye, a pleasant to the ear, or a pleasant to touch for the same basic principle. And the Lord, the Lord God put Adam in the Garden with two great objectives.

The version again says to work it and take care of it. In actual fact, the language is to the effect that he put the man there to guard it and to keep or preserve it.

And I think that those are very important points of principle in terms of environmentalism.

[14 : 17] Now, I know that this is a great bandwagon and I don't like to jump on bandwagons. But there is nevertheless a clear biblical theology of the environment.

And the two principles here are quite clear. We are here, to guard the environment and we are here to keep and preserve the environment to hand it down to our children.

Now, that environment is in constant peril. And since the fall of the human race, it is in peril particularly from the human race itself.

From, in particular, our quest of food and our quest of energy. And both those quests put the whole cosmos at risk because we're often so responsible in pursuit of those two great goals, food and energy.

and without going into the details of this, it is so important, this perspective given to us by Genesis 2, that we are here specifically to guard the environment.

[15 : 37] Now, we cannot say, oh, that's simply what the Green Party are saying, or that's this modern fad for the environment and all this talk about global warming and so on.

These are extremely serious issues. By overgrazing by the use of fertilizers, by polluting our so-called commons, our air, our earth, our water, our seas, rivers, and our skies, we put the whole of the ecosystem at risk.

In fact, we have gone to the point where only the Lord God himself can save us from ecological disaster. But here is a clear mandate for us as Christians to align ourselves with every voice that is urging care and caution and concern for our environment because we are here by God's own mandate to guard, to guard the soil, to guard the waters of the earth, to guard the air above us, the atmosphere.

These things are so precious and it's incumbent upon all of us to guard those commons and to do all our power to keep our own environment.

So, the Lord God formed the man, the Lord God breathes him to his nostrils, the Lord God placed him to guard it there to guard it and to keep it.

[17 : 24] Now, that in my view is basic biblical theology. And I believe indeed that Scotland at least, the whole Celtic background which we come from has an honorable record in this connection that we have been ourselves relatively benign users of our own environment.

Now, let me of course say at once that I believe that God has mandated the scientific and technological progress.

And the last thing I want is to encourage in a kind of anti-science, very anti-technology, but that we must at the same time plead for a sense of responsibility.

We are here to guard it and we are here to keep it. And then the Lord God said in verse 18, it's not good for the man to be alone, for Adam to be alone.

I will make a helper suitable for him. Now, you see, the person in the problem here is Adam. It's Adam who's not coping.

[18 : 40] It's Adam who's the weak vessel. And it's not good for Adam to be alone. Adam is no use alone, God says. Adam is not coping alone. It's not good for Adam to be alone.

I will make a helper suitable for him. help. And the language is very difficult to translate because it says in fact, I will make a helper opposite to him and like him.

At the same time, opposite to him and yet similar to him. But Adam gets a helper. Now, the fact of us having a helper doesn't make Adam somehow superior to the woman who helps him.

He's the one who needs the help. And sometimes that word helper is applied to God himself.

So, being a helper, there is no discredit whatever to Eve. Because that same name is given to the Lord God himself.

[19 : 46] So, she is in this very positive and this very important role in relation to Adam. She is Adam's helper. So, we can't say that Adam was a poor soul because Adam is in paradise at this point.

And yet, somehow, in any quote, in the most critical sense, it's a veritable paradise. And yet, it's not perfect because he's there all on his own.

And he is lonely, he has no one to talk to, no one to discuss with or share, no one to say, what a lovely three bodies. No one to help him in his various tasks.

He is left alone to guard the garden and to preserve it. And God says, this is not good. And the general principle too here, so searching and so solemn for us, that isolation and solitude are not good for us.

God and those who are temperamental lovers, who love our own company, we have to face to the challenge of that fact, that there is something not good, if we prefer being alone, it's not good for Adam to be alone, I will make a health birth, there need for him.

[21 : 09] And then we see how God went about it. we see that the Lord God caused all the animals to pass by Adam, and there is a kind of just emerging signs here where Adam names all the animals.

And it's an astonishing fact that down until Charles Darwin and George Mendel in the middle of the 19th century, theology had proceeded very much beyond naming animals, identifying them, and giving them names and categorizing them into phyla and genera and species, and so on and so forth, until Mendel comes with his genetic innovations and discoveries and puts it all on a different footing.

But what I'm saying is that what Adam does here may seem very primitive to us. But it wasn't all that different from what they were doing, those zoologists, as I said, down to Darwin and Mendel.

So here is Adam naming those creatures, putting them in their various different classes, but at the same time as retaining that although their company was very pleasant and they're stimulating and reassuring that there was not among them a help meet for them.

And so God himself there takes action. He caught a deep sleep, there to fall on Adam, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

[23 : 01] Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. So, interesting points here in verse 22, the Lord God built a woman.

The Lord God formed the man manipulatively, manually, artistically. The Lord God builds the woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

Now, I didn't go down the road of emphasizing, shall I lead you to too much anyway, this fact that it's ugly. And the quote you've remarked, I don't know now who the source was, because it's been said by so many, from Matthew Hendry, and way back to the church fathers, that the woman comes from the rib, not from the head, lest she dominate him, nor from the feet, lest she be subject to him, but from the rib, to be his partner, to be by his side.

And all the language there is of equality, of equalization. Now, we see that here she is a help meat for him, suitable for him, but that implied, no, in theology whatever, that we might very well argue, although I think it's hard to actually take this out of Genesis, that fundamentally Eve is a clone of Adam, the same genetic material, because she is built from a womb.

And we may well speculate whether God used that material to cultivate an Eve. There was one difference of that XX chromosome that makes her a female, whereas he was a man, but a clone of Adam.

[25 : 25] And this fits perfectly well into the whole emphasis of Genesis 1, where the woman, equally with the man, is made in the image of God, and is given the same creation mandates as Adam is given.

So, we're not told that Adam is the image, but the woman, Eve is not, or that Eve has different mandates, but that somehow Eve is subordinate. Now, I know that sometimes it's argued that as in the Trinity there is order, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so there is order in human society in relation between the man and the woman, comparable to that between the Divine Persons.

Now, it seems to me very difficult indeed to talk of any order in the Trinity. In fact, the main creed of the Trinity, the so-called Athanasian creed from the 6th century, that creed lays down that in the Trinity none is greater and none is lesser.

They are co-equal persons and the Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally self-existent. They are not free beings, two of them are being from another being.

So, in that sense, there is no order in the Trinity. And we cannot argue from that Trinitarian order to a social order or a domestic order according which the woman is inferior to and subordinate to the man.

[27 : 14] Whatever St. Paul may later on say about the roles in the church in his own time and place of men and women, the fundamental projection of Genesis, where Genesis 1, Genesis 2, is such as to emphasize the co-equality of the man and the woman.

She is a rib. She is the same genetic material apart from the sexual differentiation. And she is a rib from the side is equal and he is the one who needs her.

She is created not to meet a need on her own part, but to meet a need on his part. And he brought her to the man and you're never allowed to forget Genesis, the creation narrative.

What superb literature apart of all is these three first chapters of Genesis are and he has this marvelous woman.

This is the greatest introduction in human history. The most romantic woman in human history where what is almost a marriage ceremony God gives the bride away and God brings her to heaven.

[28 : 46] And if you think of the symbolism of a marriage service where the bride's face is veiled, going back to the ancient culture where the man had perhaps never seen the woman before, he had never seen her before.

And God comes, God gives her away, and Adam sees this creature and he's never seen anything like her in his entire life.

He's seen all the other creatures with all their own superb God-given qualities, but when he sees her, Adam literally walks his lyrical.

And this in a way is the first ever love song. This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.

So it's lyrical poetry. It's a love song. He's so absolutely overwhelmed by the glory of this gift that God has given to him.

[30 : 03] And there is no sense whatever that is going to exploit or dominate, these things will come, of course, in the light of the fall. And they become the one flesh.

that tremendous divine gift given to at least some human beings where two lives which are individual, separate, which have independent origins, which begin perhaps miles away from each other, in different cultures perhaps, and for years flow along their own separate channels.

and then eventually come into a confluence where they flow together, they become one flesh. And what a gift that is, that's what happened here of Adam and Eve.

And what a tragedy that they were done to spoil it. Not only the garden, perhaps, perhaps the most precious thing they lost was an old relationship in that country.