



Genesis - Chapter Two

I. Genesis 1:1-11:26 - Primeval History (continues)

I.a. Genesis 1:1-2:4a - Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Two

The chapter concludes the first creation account with God taking his Sabbath rest following his work. This is followed by a fuller account focusing on the creation of the first man, his placement in the Garden of Eden, and a search for a helper that results in the creation of the first woman. It is then announced that the union between man and woman is intended to be the most important of all human relationships.

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Genesis 2:1-3

These verses bring to a conclusion the opening section of Genesis by emphasising that God has completed the process of ordering creation. The repeated comment that **God rested** does not imply that he was weary from labour. The effortless ease with which everything is done in Chapter One suggests otherwise. Rather, the motif of God's resting hints at the purpose of creation. As reflected in various ancient Near Eastern accounts, divine rest is associated with temple building. God's purpose for the earth is that it should become his dwelling place; it is not simply made to house his creatures.

God's activities on this day, he finished the work, rested, blessed and hallowed it or made it holy, all fit this delightful pattern. The concept of the earth as a divine sanctuary, which is developed further in vv.4b-25, runs throughout the whole Bible, coming to a climax in the future reality that the apostle John sees in his vision of a 'new heaven and a new earth' in Revelation 21:1-22:5.

God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. These words provide the basis for the obligation that God placed on the Israelites to rest from their normal labour on the Sabbath day; refer to Exodus 20:8-11. There is no evening followed by morning refrain for this day, prompting many to conclude that the seventh day still continues, which seems to underlie both John 5:17 and Hebrews 4:3-11.

The seventh day of the week is Saturday and that was the day that is still kept holy in the teachings of Judaism. The early Christian church, made up mostly of Jewish Christians still observed the Saturday Sabbath and met as a church on the Sunday so as not to break the Sabbath laws and also to celebrate it as the day on which Jesus had risen from death. The tradition grew out of this to make Sunday the new Sabbath for Christians and many countries observed this, with only essential work being carried out and little in the way of shopping, entertainment or sport being permissible. Towards the end of the 20th Century many of these laws were relaxed although there remains divided opinion as to whether Christians should keep Sunday special. The apostle Paul indicates that it is down to individual choice: <<*Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths*>> (Colossians 2:16), since the death and resurrection of Christ fulfilled the law.

^{4a} These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Genesis 2:4a

In the NRSVA translation v.4a concludes the first section but the accepted tradition among many Jewish and Christian scholars is that it commences the second of twelve sections in the Book of Genesis. These section divisions can be accessed from the Genesis link page on the web site.

These are the generations of. This is the second of twelve such section headings that give structure to the Book of Genesis. The first heading was: <<*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*>> (1:1). The remaining ten each tell the story of a particular family group. Each heading concentrates on what comes forth from the object or person named. The earliest translators of Genesis into Greek in the Septuagint used the word *genesis* to render the Hebrew word for generations, Hebrew *toledot*; from this is derived the title Genesis. The rest of the verse is artfully arranged in a mirror or chiasmic form, the parts of the two poetic lines corresponding to each other in reverse order: heavens (A), earth (B), when

they were created (C), in the day that the LORD God made [v.4b] (C'), earth (B'), heavens (A'). This form unifies the two parts of the chiasmus, hereby inviting the reader to harmonise 2:5-25 with 1:1-2:3.

I.b Genesis 2:4b-4:26 - Earth's First People

Centred initially on the Garden of Eden, the episodes that make up this part of Genesis recount how God's ordered creation is thrown into chaos by the human couple's disobedience. The subsequent story of Cain and Abel and then Lamech in Chapter Four shows the world spiralling downward into violence, which precipitated the flood (6:11-13). These events are very significant for understanding not only the whole of Genesis but the entire Bible.

I.b.i Genesis 2:4b-25 - Another Account of the Creation

The panoramic view of creation in Chapter One is immediately followed by a complementary account of the sixth day that zooms in on the creation of the human couple, who were placed in the Garden of Eden. In style and content this section differs significantly from the previous one; it does not contradict anything in Chapter One, but as a literary flashback it supplies more detail about what was recorded in 1:27. The picture of a sovereign, transcendent deity is complemented by that of a God who is both immanent and personal. The two portrayals of God balance each other, together providing a truer and richer description of his nature than either does on its own. In a similar way, whereas Chapter One emphasises the regal character of human beings, Chapter Two highlights their priestly status.

^{4b} In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,
⁵ when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up – for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; ⁶ but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground –
⁷ then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Genesis 2:4b-7

These verses concentrate on God's creation of a human male, amplifying 1:26-31 in particular. The main action here is God's forming of the man (2:7); vv.5-6 describe the conditions as the action took place.

The LORD God. Throughout 1:1-2:3 the generic word God was used to denote the deity as the transcendent Creator. The reader is now introduced to God's personal name, *Yahweh*, translated as LORD because of the ancient Jewish tradition of substituting in Hebrew the term that means 'Lord,' i.e. 'Adonay for Yahweh when

reading the biblical text. The use of Yahweh throughout this passage underlines the personal and relational nature of God. The precedent for translating this as Lord and not Yahweh in English is found in the Septuagint's customary translation, Greek *Kyrios* or Lord. That translation was then quoted many times by the NT authors, who also used the Greek term *Kyrios*, Lord, rather than Yahweh for God's name.

The term land, Hebrew *'erets*, can refer to the whole earth, to dry land (1:10), or to a specific region (vv.11-13). To show the continuity with Chapter One, and in view of the mention of rain, the rendering land seems best here. The location of this land is some unnamed place, just as the rainy season was about to begin, and thus when the ground was still dry, no plant of the field was yet in the earth. These conditions prevailed before the creation of man, suggesting that the lack of growth was related to the absence of a man to irrigate the land, which would be the normal way in dry conditions to bring about growth.

Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground. The verb formed, Hebrew *yatsar*, conveys the picture of a potter's fashioning clay into a particular shape. The close relationship between the man and the ground is reflected in the Hebrew words used to denote them, *'adam* and *'adamah*, respectively.

Breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Here God breathes life: physical, mental, and spiritual life into the one created to bear his image.

The same term in Hebrew is used in 1:20 and 1:24 to denote sea and land creatures. While human beings have much in common with other living beings, God gives humans alone a royal and priestly status and makes them alone 'in his own image' (1:27). Paul quotes concerning this passage: <<*Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit*>> (1 Corinthians 15:45).

⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:8-9

God provides a suitable environment for the man by planting a garden in Eden, in the east. The name Eden, which would have conveyed the sense of luxury and pleasure, probably denotes a region much greater than the garden itself. God formed the man in the land (vv.4b-7), and then put him in the garden, as confirmed in v.15. The earliest translation into Greek in the Septuagint used the word *paradeisos* from which comes the English term paradise, to translate the

Hebrew term for garden, on the understanding that it resembled a royal park; refer also to the comments made on Luke 23:39-43.

The abundance of the garden is conveyed by the observation that it contained every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, which is an ironic foreshadowing of 3:6; refer also to the comments made there. Two trees, however, are picked out for special mention: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Since relatively little is said about these trees, any understanding of them must be derived from the role that they play within the account of Genesis Chapters 2-3, especially Chapter Three.

The tree of life in the midst of this earthly paradise becomes symbolic of another tree that will be found in the paradise yet to be revealed from which God's people will never be driven away from in the way that Adam and Eve once were: <<*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations*>> (Revelation 22:1-2)

¹⁰ A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; ¹² and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Genesis 2:10-14

The general description of the river that flowed out of Eden dividing into four rivers implies that Eden had a central location. In spite of the very specific details provided, however, Eden's location remains a mystery. While the names Tigris and Euphrates are associated with the two rivers that surround Mesopotamia, the rivers Pishon and Gihon, as well as the regions of Havilah and Cush, have not been satisfactorily identified.

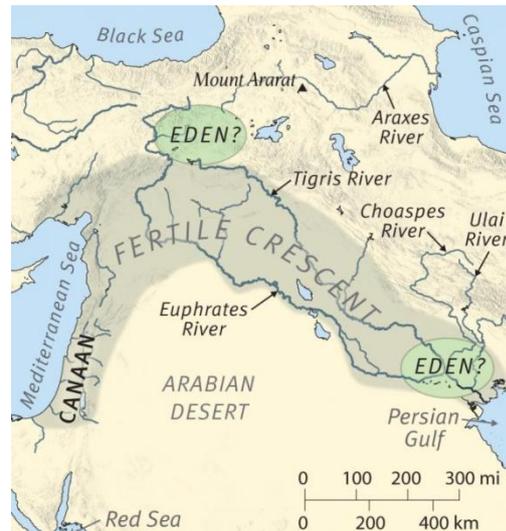
This river is also reminiscent of the one just described as flowing from the throne of God and Christ in the New Jerusalem. Eden was perhaps on the mind of the writer of this great love story who refers to: <<*a garden fountain, a well of living water, and flowing streams from Lebanon*>> (Song 4:15), and reminiscent of the words of Jesus: <<*On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty*

come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water”>> (John 7:37-38).

The Garden of Eden

Genesis describes the location of Eden in relation to the convergence of four rivers.

While two of the rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon are unknown, the nearly universal identification of the other two rivers as the Tigris and the Euphrates suggests a possible location for Eden at either their northern or southern extremes.



The reference to gold and onyx suggests that the land is rich in resources; these materials are later associated with the making of the tabernacle and temple. Bdellium is the fragrant gum resin obtained from the burseraceæ family of plants, as of the genus Commiphora and was referred to as the resin in the manna God gave to his people in the wilderness: <<Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium>> (Numbers 11:7 ESV). It is from the same family of plants that produce frankincense and myrrh. The link between this verse and the worship offered by the Magi to the infant Jesus is an interesting one: <<And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh>> (Matthew 2:11).

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷ 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 die.’

Genesis 2:15-17

The overall picture of Eden presented in the preceding verses suggests that the park-like garden is part of a divine sanctuary. The man is put in the garden to till it and keep it.

The term ‘work,’ Hebrew ‘abad; as confirmed in v.5, 3:23 and 4:2, and also found in: <<Those who till their land will have plenty of food, but those who follow worthless pursuits have no sense>> (Proverbs 12:11), and: <<Anyone who tills the land will have plenty of bread, but one who follows worthless

pursuits will have plenty of poverty>> (Proverbs 28:19), denotes preparing and tending, and ‘keep,’ Hebrew *shamar*, adds to that idea. Since this command comes before Adam sinned, work did not come as a result of sin, nor is it something to be avoided. Productive work is part of God’s good purpose for man in creation. Later, the same two verbs are used together of the work undertaken by the priests and Levites in the tabernacle meaning ‘minister’ or ‘serve,’ Hebrew ‘*abad*, and ‘guard,’ Hebrew *shamar*; found, for example in: <<*They shall perform duties for him and for the whole congregation in front of the tent of meeting, doing service at the tabernacle; they shall be in charge of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties for the Israelites as they do service at the tabernacle*>> (Numbers 3:7-8), <<*But you and your sons with you shall diligently perform your priestly duties in all that concerns the altar and the area behind the curtain. I give your priesthood as a gift; any outsider who approaches shall be put to death*>> (Numbers 18:7). The man’s role is to be not only a gardener but also a guardian. As a priest, he is to maintain the sanctity of the garden as part of a temple complex.

And the LORD God commanded the man. The fact that the command was given to Adam implies that God gave the man a leadership role, including the responsibility to guard and care for or keep all of creation, a role that is also related to the leadership responsibility of Adam for Eve as his wife as confirmed in v.18, where she is described as ‘a helper as his partner. On the NT understanding of the relationship between husband and wife, refer to Ephesians 5:22-33 and the associated comments.

While God generously permitted the man to eat from every tree of the garden, God prohibited him from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of this tree has been variously understood as giving:

1. Sexual awareness.
2. Moral discrimination.
3. Moral responsibility.
4. Moral experience.

Of these possibilities, the last is the most likely: by their obedience or disobedience the human couple will come to know good and evil by experience. Experience gained by ‘fearing the LORD’ is wisdom (Proverbs 1:7), while that gained by disobeying God is slavery to sin, as Jesus confirms: <<*Jesus answered them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin’*>> (John 8:34).

This appears to be the only rule that God imposed on Adam, and therefore humankind, and it does not seem to be an onerous one. Yet it became too much of a temptation for them to resist. Their disobedience would prove

disastrous for them and their descendants, although God always had a plan of redemption in mind; therefore, Paul writes: <<*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God*>> (Romans 8:19-21).

In the day implies fixed certainty rather than absolute immediacy, e.g. <<*the king sent and summoned Shimei, and said to him, 'Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and solemnly adjure you, saying, "Know for certain that on the day you go out and go to any place whatever, you shall die"?' And you said to me, "The sentence is fair; I accept"*>> (1 Kings 2:42). Refer also to the comments made on Genesis 3:4-5.

For in the day that you eat of it you shall die. What kind of death does this threaten: physical, spiritual, or some combination? The Hebrew word can be used for any of these ideas, and the only way to find out is by reading to see what happens as the story unfolds.

Theologians have discussed whether the instructions in vv.16-17, together with the instructions in 1:28-30, should be called God's covenant with Adam. Some have denied it, observing that the Hebrew word for covenant (*berit*) is not used until 6:18; others have added to this the insistence that covenants have to do with redemption. In reply, it can be pointed out that the thing itself can be present, even if the ordinary word identifying it is not: 2 Samuel 7:4-17 says nothing about a covenant, but Psalm 89:3, 89:28, 89:34 and 89:39 all use the term to describe God's promise to David. The same happens with Hosea 6:7, which refers to a covenant with Adam. Also, Genesis 9:1-17 describes Noah in terms that clearly echo 1:28-30, explicitly using the word covenant: Noah is a kind of new Adam, i.e. a covenant representative. Finally, there is no evidence that biblical covenants are limited to the sphere of redemption: the term simply describes the formal binding together of two parties in a relationship, on the basis of mutual personal commitment, with consequences for keeping or breaking the commitment. The man Adam receives this covenant on behalf of the rest of mankind: 'you' is singular in vv.16-17, which provides the basis for Paul's use of Adam as a representative head of the human race, parallel to Christ, in 1 Corinthians 15:22; which is confirmed in Romans 5:12-19. The word 'you' is plural in Genesis 3:1-5, where the woman's statement shows that she has appropriated the command for herself. Also, by virtue of Adam's disobedience, his offspring receive the penalty: they cannot return to the garden any more than he can, and they descend into sin and misery as seen all too clearly in Chapter Four.

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.’

Genesis 2:18

It is not good is a jarring contrast to 1:31; clearly, the situation here has not yet arrived to the level of ‘very good.’

I will make him can also be translated ‘I will make for him,’ which explains Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 11:9 <<*Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man*>>. In order to find the man a helper as his partner, God brings to him all the livestock, birds, and beasts of the field. None of these, however, proves to be suitable for the man.

Helper, Hebrew ‘ezer, is one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in ‘the helped.’ The term does not imply that the helper is either stronger or weaker than the one helped, nor are they seen as superior or inferior, they are simply designed for a different role.

As his partner is more literally ‘fit for him’ or ‘matching him’ and is not the same as ‘like him’: a wife is not her husband’s clone but complements him. It must always be remembered that God created them equal!

¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

Genesis 2:19

Although the verse states that the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, the account in Chapter One indicates that original creation formed every type of animal rather than every variant that might be taken from this verse.

Another great honour that has been bestowed upon mankind was to name each living creature. God had given names to the objects in the physical universe, e.g. <<*He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names*>> (Psalm 147:4), but here he allows his vice-regent to name the animal types.

²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner.

Genesis 2:20

The man gave names. By naming the animals, the man demonstrates his authority over all the other creatures.

²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Genesis 2:21-22

The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man would seem to have had the same effect as a modern anaesthetic, something completely unknown in the time of Moses when this account was written down, which can only enhance the authenticity of the account.

God took the rib he had taken from the man, created the first woman from it and brought her to the man. This has significance on two counts. Firstly, it becomes clear that: <<*For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God*>> (1 Corinthians 11:12), and secondly, it portrays the image of a loving father giving his daughter away in marriage, a common scene in many marriages throughout the centuries and across a variety of cultures.

²³ Then the man said,

‘This at last is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman,

for out of Man this one was taken.’

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Genesis 2:23-24

When no suitable companion was found among all the living beings, God fashions a woman from the man’s own flesh. The text highlights the sense of oneness that exists between the man and the woman. Adam joyfully proclaims, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This terminology is used elsewhere of blood relatives (29:14). This sentence and the story of Eve’s creation both make the point that marriage creates the closest of all human relationships. It is also

important to observe that God creates only one Eve for Adam, not several Eves or another Adam, which points to heterosexual monogamy as the divine pattern for marriage that God established at creation. Moreover, the kinship between husband and wife creates obligations that override even duty to one's parents: **Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife.** In ancient Israel, sons did not move away when they married, but lived near their parents and inherited their father's land. They 'left' their parents in the sense of putting their wife's welfare before that of their parents.

The term **clings to** or **holds fast** is used elsewhere for practicing covenant faithfulness, e.g. <<*You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear*>> (Deuteronomy 10:20); note how Paul brings these texts together in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 <<*Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, 'The two shall be one flesh.'* But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him>>; thus, other Bible texts can call marriage a covenant, for example: <<*You will be saved from the loose woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the partner of her youth and forgets her sacred covenant*>> (Proverbs 2:17), and: <<*You ask, 'Why does he not?' Because the LORD was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant*>> (Malachi 2:14). Paul's teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5:25-32 is founded on this text.

The sense of being made for each other is further reflected in a wordplay involving the terms 'man' and 'woman'; in Hebrew these are, respectively, 'ish and 'ishshah. As a result of this special affiliation, the text observes that when a man leaves his parents and takes a wife, they shall **become one flesh**, i.e. one unit - a union of man and woman, consummated in sexual intercourse. Jesus appeals to this verse and 1:27 in setting out his view of marriage: <<*He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female", and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"?'>> (Matthew 19:4-5).*

²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:25

The man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. This final description in vv.18-25 offers a picture of innocent delight and anticipates further developments in the story. The subject of the couple's nakedness is picked up in 3:7-11, and a play on the similar sounds of the words naked, Hebrew 'arummim, and crafty, Hebrew 'arum, in 3:1 links the end of this episode with the start of the next.