

Genesis 2:4-17  
Psalms 65 and 46  
John 7

“The Garden”

March 1, 2009

**Introduction: The Generations of the Heavens and the Earth (2:4)**

*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.*

In Genesis 1, the only name used for God is “Elohim” – “God.”

But in 2:4 (and throughout chapter 2)

he is referred to as “Yahweh Elohim” (LORD God).

The different names for God in the OT have significance.

Elohim reveals his power – he is the almighty.

But Yahweh Elohim (LORD God) reveals his covenant faithfulness.

Of course the full significance of Yahweh was only revealed in the Exodus –  
so when Israel heard about Yahweh’s work in creation in Genesis 2,  
they would immediately see that God’s work in the creation of man  
was a covenantal work.

Ten times in the book of Genesis we hear this phrase:

“These are the generations of...”

When you read the scriptures, you should be on the lookout for things like this.

The biblical authors did not follow modern literary conventions and styles,  
so we need to be observant of *their* way of writing.

Modern authors try to make sure that their chapters are fairly similar in length –  
and whoever divided Genesis into 50 chapters followed that approach.

But the author of Genesis divided his work into 10 “chapters”  
of very uneven length.

Genesis 2:4-4:26 is “chapter 1” of Genesis –  
the “generations” of the heavens and the earth.

In the other 9 usages of this word “toledoth” (the generations of)  
it speaks of the generations of a person.

But here it is the generations of the heavens and the earth.

The story of Abraham will be told in the chapter starting,  
“these are the generations of Terah” (Abraham’s father).

In the same way the story of Adam and Eve will be told as  
“the generations of the heavens and the earth”

because the story of Adam and Eve

proceeds from the creation narrative of Genesis 1.

The “toledoth” structure of Genesis

has a tendency to focus attention on an ever-narrowing circle:

from the heavens and the earth to humanity (here in chapter 2)

And then from Adam (all humanity) to the holy line of Seth (5:1),

And then from the holy line of Seth to the family of Noah (6:9)

The sons of Noah in chapter 10,

and then focused on the family of Terah in 11:27,

the family of Ishmael in 25:12

the family of Isaac in 25:19

the family of Esau in 36:1 and 9

and the family of Jacob in 37.

So the phrase “these are the generations of the heavens and the earth”

focuses our attention on what the LORD God did in the creation of man.

And for this, we go back to an earlier point in the history of creation:

### **1. The Adam and the Garden (2:5-9)**

*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 –*

The “bush of the field” refers to a desert shrub

(like the one where Hagar will place Ishmael in Genesis 21) –

a plant that is utterly dependent on rain.

But the LORD God had not caused it to rain yet, so there were no desert bushes.

The “small plant of the field” refers to grains.

It is the same word used in reference to the third day of creation (1:11-12),

and in 1:29 where they are given to Adam for food,

and now here in 2:5.

And since there was no man to work the ground,

there were no cultivated plants.

So it sounds like we are back on the third day of creation (before the creation of plants),

but it also sounds like we are on the sixth day of creation (the creation of man).

This has caused a fair amount of confusion

because Genesis 1 says that plants were created on the third day,

while Genesis 2 says that bushes and grains

were not created until after man was created.

One thing that this should do is give us a fair dose of humility

regarding our understanding of the creation of the heavens and the earth!

It would appear from Genesis 1 that all plants were created on the third day,

but if you look back,  
Genesis 1 simply says that plants were created on the third day.  
But Genesis 2 makes it clear that some plants  
were not created until after the creation of man.  
Therefore, we must understand that the sequence of creation  
may not have been as rigid as Genesis 1 indicates.

Also, Genesis 2 seems to indicate  
that it has been more than 72 hours since the plants were created.  
If the creation days were each 24 hours long,  
then the desert bushes could have been created without rain  
(they can last longer than 3 days without water!)  
and the cultivated plants could have lasted for 3 days  
without a man to work the earth.

But all these questions presuppose our modern scientific interest in how it all happened.  
Rather than read Genesis 2 in the light of modern scientific questions,  
we should read Genesis 2 in the light of Genesis 1.  
If you do this, what do you see?

There are no bushes of the desert, and no grains of the fields –  
in other words, it is a desolate, barren place.  
Genesis 2 also starts with a “tohu vbohu” – a barren, empty land.

There are two problems: no rain, and no man.  
In verse 6, most translations say that “a mist” or “a spring”  
was going up from the earth and watering the ground.  
But recent linguistic studies have suggested that a better translation might be  
“a raincloud” was going up from the land.

In other words, verse 6 provides God’s solution to the problem of the lack of bushes:  
he sends rain!  
And verse 7 provides God’s solution to the problem of the lack of grain:  
he creates man!

*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.*

The picture here is of a potter crafting a vessel.  
When Isaiah speaks of the potter and the clay, he uses this verb (Is 29-30, 43-45;  
likewise Jeremiah 18).  
The LORD takes dirt and he forms and crafts the man.  
In Hebrew he forms the Adam from the Adamah.  
The word for man has the same root as the word for dirt!  
Genesis 1 exalts man “God created man in his own image...”

Genesis 2 says that God formed the dust man from the ground.

We often times say that God formed *man* from the dust of the ground.

But the ESV is a better translation:

God formed the *man of dust* from the ground.

God has highly exalted man.

He gave us dominion over all his creatures.

But you must remember that you are dust.

God's final words to Adam before casting him out of the garden will be:

"you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

It is virtually impossible to imagine what it would have looked like!

Did God craft a mannequin out of dirt?

Again scripture will not satisfy our modern curiosities!

Remember that the ancients did not think in terms of the periodic table!

God took X% carbon and iron and water...

No, God took the *adamah* (the ground – the stuff of earth),

the same stuff which had brought forth the plants and the animals at his command,  
and he formed the Adam.

And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,

and the Adam became a living creature.

He was formed out of the same stuff as all the animals –

so we would expect that his genetic code would be similar to theirs –

but the formation of Adam's body (as well as his soul)

is a special act of creation.

When God created the animals, they became living creatures (*nephesh hayyah* –  
living soul – 1:24).

And when God breathes the breath of life into Adam, he becomes a living creature  
(a living soul).

Humanity and the animals both have the breath of life (1:30 and 2:7).

Humanity and the animals both are living creatures (*nephesh hayyah*, living souls).

What makes man different?

In chapter 1, it was that God created man in his image and likeness,  
and gave him dominion over the creatures.

In chapter 2, it is found in verses 8-9:

*And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,  
and there he put the man whom he had formed.*

You need to make sure that you get the picture here:  
there is a land called “Eden” – the word means “pleasant, lush, delightful.”  
And in this delightful land of Eden,  
God plants a garden.  
Eden is not the name of the garden.  
It is the land in which God plants the garden.  
And the garden is planted in the east.

There is big difference between the east *in* Eden  
and being east *of* Eden!

If you are in the east *in* Eden, then you are in the Garden of Delight!  
But if you are east *of* Eden, then you are cast out into dust and death  
(as we’ll see in chapter 3!)

Now the potter has become a gardener!  
It does not say that God spoke and a garden came into existence.  
It says that the LORD God planted a garden in Eden.  
In the same way that the image of the Potter will be used by the prophets,  
so also the image of the Gardener, the Vinedresser, will continue.  
Before God gave us these tasks,  
he himself engaged in crafting and tilling.

And he created us in his image, and so we mirror back his likeness.

He is the true craftsman.  
Every time you build something you are reflecting God’s craftsmanship.  
He is the true gardener.  
Every time you plant something you are imitating his gardening.

Every time you design something you are imitating the great Designer.  
Every time you manage a project you are reflecting the great Organizer.  
All of your daily labors are a reflection of your God.

Which also means that every time you use these gifts sinfully,  
you are mocking him.

*And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up  
every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.*

So the LORD God, the master gardener,  
causes trees to spring up out of the ground.  
It is possible that God had created trees in the rest of the world on the third day,  
and only now he forms the trees in the garden,  
but we need to be careful not to assume too much  
with respect to what *exactly* happened on the days of creation.

*The tree of life was in the midst of the garden,  
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

We'll talk more about the trees next time,  
(we won't get to point three of the outline!).

But first we are told precisely where Eden was:

## **2. The River of Eden (2:10-14)**

*A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden,  
and there it divided and became four rivers.*

This is a remarkable description.  
Normal rivers do not divide and become four rivers!

But then again, this is *not* a normal river!

This is a river that flows out of Eden to water the garden,  
and from the garden, it divides into four rivers,  
which then spread out to the ends of the earth:

*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.*

In one sense this is easy.

The Tigris and the Euphrates are obvious.

Havilah is Arabia – so the Pishon flows around Arabia.

And Cush is Sudan/Ethiopia – so the the Gihon might be the Nile.

But this is where we start running into problems.

Because everyone in Moses' day knew the name of the Nile  
(they had once lived there!).

And what is more, the Gihon was the name of the river that runs  
outside the city of Jerusalem (in 2 Chronicles 32:30

Hezekiah built a tunnel to the Gihon to provide water for the city).

So where is Eden?

The references to Assyria, Havilah, and Cush are important.  
What is in the middle of Assyria, Arabia, and Africa?

The Promised Land.

Later in Genesis God will promise to Abraham all the land between the Euphrates and the Brook of Egypt (the Nile).

In other words, God will promise to Abraham a land that appears to be exactly where Eden was.

In Genesis 13 Abram and Lot separate, and Lot sees that the Jordan Valley was “well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD” (13:10)

In Numbers 13 the spies will return  
and they need two men to carry one cluster of grapes!

Talk about a land of bounty and delight!

This land is flowing with milk and honey!

Deuteronomy 6-11 portrays the promised land as a good land,  
where you will lack nothing.

In Egypt you had to work hard to irrigate the land,  
but in Canaan, the land of life and abundance,  
God himself cares for the land and waters it  
(just like the land of Eden!)

So the way that the garden of Eden is described in Genesis 2  
would have reminded the Israelites of the Promised Land.  
And the river flows from the garden to the surrounding nations,  
from the garden to the four corners of the earth.

The water that flows from Eden  
flows to the nations – Assyria, Arabia, and Africa (the known world).  
All the world is blessed by the river that flows from the Promised Land.

Think about how this image continues through the scriptures:

Throughout Genesis, water is a problem.

There are disputes about water and wells.

People nearly die of thirst in the wilderness.

In Exodus 17, Israel is thirsty,  
and there was no water for the people to drink.

They are in the wilderness, near Mt Sinai,  
and God tells Moses to go to the rock of Horeb  
and to strike the rock and water will come out.

Out of a barren wilderness, God brings water from a rock –  
and not just any rock, but the rock of Horeb  
(Horeb is another name for Mt Sinai – the mountain of God).  
Life-giving water flows from the rock where God appears to his people.

Paul will even say that this rock followed Israel through the wilderness,  
and this rock is Christ. (1 Cor 10)

We sang Psalm 65 earlier, which speaks of how God waters the earth.  
Psalm 65 is a song for the feast of booths –  
the harvest feast at the end of the year.  
It begins with singing praise to God in his temple.  
Because the temple is the place where we have fellowship with God.  
Psalm 65 celebrates the harvest, because God has brought rain to the earth.

Verse 9 says “the river of God is full of water.”

What is the river of God?

That’s why we sang Psalm 46.  
“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.”

Is this the Gihon – the underground river that Hezekiah tapped?  
Not likely – Psalm 46 appears to have been written long before Hezekiah’s day!

The river that makes the city of God glad is not the Gihon,  
but the river of life that flows from Eden to Mt. Zion.  
The point is that if Canaan is well watered,  
how much more is Zion – the city of God.

And in Solomon’s day this was given clear liturgical shape.

Because when Solomon built the temple,  
he built a great basin called the “sea”  
and from that basin he built two rows of “water chariots” –  
that take the water from the sea outward to the nations.

Solomon’s temple was a reconstruction of the Garden of Eden.  
So the water “flowing” from the temple to the nations  
reflected the stream of life-giving water that flowed from the Garden  
to the four corners of the earth.

Several of the prophets reflect on this:

Zechariah speaks of living waters that will flow from Jerusalem (14:8).  
Joel 3:18 speaks of the fountain in the house of the LORD  
that brings life to the desert.  
And of course in Ezekiel 47 there is a river that flows from the temple  
which brings life to the Dead Sea,  
and the trees on its bank bring healing leaves and fruit for food,  
an image used in Revelation 22.

If you trace this theme through John’s Gospel you can see how it is fulfilled in Christ.

In John 2 Jesus says that if you destroy this temple,  
I will raise it up in 3 days



(referring to his body).

So Jesus is the temple.

Then in John 3 Jesus says that we must be born of water and the Spirit.

In John 4 Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well.

Not just any well, but Jacob's well.

And at Jacob's well, Jesus promises living water.

"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,  
but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him  
will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him  
a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)

And in John 7 Jesus comes to the temple at the feast of booths –  
the feast when Israel would celebrate

how God provided water in the wilderness.

The priests had a ritual that they would perform every year:

on the last day of the feast the people would drink nothing all day –  
until parched and thirsty they would gather at the temple,

and the priests would have a water ceremony  
re-enacting how Moses brought water from the rock.

And so *On the last day of the fest, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out,  
'If anyone thirsts...'*

Everyone was thirsty!

*Let him come to me and drink, whoever believes in me,  
as the scripture has said,  
'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'*

From the context and the quote, it is clear that Jesus is referring to *himself*  
when he says "out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

There is a river of living water that flows from Jesus to those who believe in him.

And that river of living water *is the Spirit,*  
*whom those who believed in him were to receive.*

There's actually a lot more about water in John's gospel,  
but let me point out one more place:

John 19

On the cross Jesus says, "I thirst." (19:28)

The river has run dry.

Jesus, the source of living water, is parched and thirsty.

On the cross Jesus himself enters the *tohu vbohu* –

the barren, parched wilderness where there is no water.

But in John's gospel the cross is the beginning of the glory of Christ.

“If I am lifted up I will draw all men to myself.”

And after he died, the soldier came thrust his spear into Jesus' side,  
and blood and water flowed.

From the cross flows a river.

“Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”!

Are you thirsty?

Do you long for streams of living water to refresh you?

There is a river of living water

that flows from the heart of Jesus to those who believe in him.

How does this stream come to you?

It comes by the Spirit whom Jesus has sent to those who believe in him.

As Paul will say in 1 Corinthians 12:13,

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body –

Jews or Greeks, slaves or free –

and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

And the Spirit works through the Word of God to refresh us,  
a cooling fountain that moistens our parched tongues  
and softens our dried, crusty hearts.