

Genesis 2:4-25

“What Does Eve Do to Help?”

March 15, 2009

Psalms 128

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Genesis 2 says that Eve was created as a suitable helper for Adam –
a “help meet” for him.

But what does Eve do to help?

Paul says that “the head of every man is Christ,
the head of a wife is her husband,
and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Cor 11:3)

So the relationship between Messiah (Christ) and the Father
is parallel in some way to the relationship between a man and the Messiah,
and between a wife and her husband.

The parallel is found in the concept of headship.

This is why I used the word “Messiah” –
because the relationship between God and the Messiah
is one of headship and submission.

If you were thinking of this as the relationship
of the Father and the Son from all eternity,
we would not say that the head of the Eternal Son is the Father.
But when Paul says “Christ” he is thinking of Messiah – the anointed king.

As Messiah, the anointed King, submits to God,
so also every man submits to the anointed King,
and every wife submits to her husband.

Paul grounds this relationship in creation.

“A man ought not to cover his head [when he prays],
since he is the image and glory of God,
but woman is the glory of man.

For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.

Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” (1 Cor. 11:7-9)

Our egalitarian ears do not like to hear this.

We would have liked it better if Paul had said,
“the head of every man *and woman* is Christ,”
and just left it there.

But this is not what the creation narrative teaches us.

Genesis 2 shows us very clearly that the woman was created for the man.

This may take a variety of forms.

Scripture does not prescribe a certain set of “gender roles.”

In fact, gender roles change dramatically from the days of Ruth (Ruth 4:3),
when a widow could not control her deceased husband's property,
to the days of Lydia in the book of Acts,
who is called a "seller of purple goods" (Acts 16:14).
As the economy changes, so also the various roles of men and women change.

But whatever form this takes,
the woman was created for man
and her function finds expression in connection with him.

But Paul makes it clear that neither is independent of the other –
because "as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman" (11:12).

The woman was created for the man – but the man is incomplete without the woman.

What does this mean?
Let's look at Genesis 2 more closely.

Introduction: the Man of Dust

Before we can understand what Eve does to help, we need to understand who Adam is.

Last time we saw how Adam was created from the ground.
We usually say that God formed man from the dust of the ground.
But that is not what the text says.
Genesis 2:7 says that God formed the "man of dust from the ground."

What does it mean that Adam is the "man of dust"?
Have you ever been to the Middle East?
Dust is everywhere.
And therefore dust is insignificant.
Nobody cares about dust.

And so for God to form a man of dust from the ground is a very interesting choice.
Other ancient texts have their gods forming man from dirt or from clay.
But Genesis 2 says that Adam is a "man of dust."
To say that man is dust is to highlight the fact that we were nothing.
All throughout the Psalms and Job
"returning to dust" is one way that you talk about death.
Ecclesiastes 3:20 says "All are from the dust, and to dust all return."

In Genesis 18:27 Abraham will say to God,
"Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord,
I who am but dust and ashes."

I am nobody, and yet I am speaking to God.

The point of the “man of dust” is *both* the fact that I *was* insignificant,
but God has taken this insignificant pile of dust and bestowed on it honor.

In 1 Samuel 2:8, Hannah sings that God
“raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.”

In 1 Kings 16, God says of King Baasha,
“Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel,
and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam
and have made my people Israel to sin,
provoking me to anger with their sins,
behold I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house...”

The house of Israel is dirty – dusty –
and God will sweep away the dust man whom he had exalted.

Paul also understood that “man of dust” is the right translation.

He says in 1 Cor. 15:47-49

“The first man was from the earth, a man of dust;
the second man is from heaven.

As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust,
and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust,
we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

So the creation of Adam is the exaltation of dust.

Adam is the man of dust – but he also bears the image of God.

1. What is the Adam Called to Do? (2:15-17)

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Adam is supposed to work the garden,
and he is supposed to keep it.

The word here means to “guard” or keep watch.
In the tabernacle, this is what the Levites did.
They “kept” or “guarded” the tabernacle.

The garden is the sanctuary in Eden –
it is the place where God meets with his people,
the Holy of Holies where man may worship God.

But why does someone need to guard the garden?

We have heard that everything God made is “very good.”

But now we have the first clue that there may be trouble in paradise –
because Adam is called to “guard” it.

And very quickly we hear the second clue:

*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.’*

We’ll talk more about the trees next time.

It is enough to say now that there is some foreshadowing here!

Adam is supposed to guard the garden.
And Adam may eat of every tree – except one.
And if he eats of that tree he will die.

2. “It Is Not Good” – What Is Missing? (2:18-20)

*Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make him a helper fit for him.” (v18)*

This is the first time that God has said that something is “not good.”
In chapter one God saw that it was good seven times.
But now there is something “not good.”

“It is not good that the Adam should be alone.”

Why is it not good?

People have proposed all sorts of answers.
Some say that Adam was lonely and needed companionship.
But what does the text say?
Adam has fellowship with God!
There is no sense *in the text of Genesis* that Adam was lonely.

Others say that Adam could not fulfill his task to have dominion over the earth.
This is nearer the mark – but with one problem:
Adam exercises dominion in verses 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.*

Remember that God formed the man of dust from the ground.
The Adam from the adamah.

Now we hear that the Lord God had formed all beasts and birds from the ground as well.
They also come from the adamah,
and they are brought to the Adam for him to name.

Throughout scripture (and in ancient Near Eastern cultures),
naming someone or something is an act of authority.
In particular naming things is a kingly act.

In Genesis 1 God was demonstrating his authority by naming things
(particularly the realms – Day, Night, the Heavens, the Seas and the Earth).
Now in Genesis 2 God gives to his vicegerent
the authority to name the inhabitants of the realms –
and particularly those things which Adam is to rule.

Psalm 8 reflects on this as it portrays the king – the son of man –
as one who (like Adam) is crowned with glory and splendor
and rules over the works of God's hand.

There is a sense in which every king of Israel (and especially of the house of David)
is a new Adam.

Think of Solomon.

How does Solomon demonstrate his greatness?

Solomon spoke of trees, also of beasts and of birds
and of reptiles and of fish.

And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon
(1 Kings 4:33-34).

The Son of David is the new Adam who exercises in how he speaks of creation.

*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. (v19)*

In this light, I want you to think of what it means
when a son of David says to the waves, "peace, be still;"
when a son of Adam says to the fig tree, "may you never bear fruit again."

The Adamic king was to rule over creation.
The Davidic king was to name and to speak of the creatures.

One of the most powerful demonstrations that Jesus is the Messiah
is that when Jesus speaks, creation obeys.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves!

As the first Adam names all the creatures he is exercising dominion.
He doesn't need a helper for that.

What does Eve do to help?

Why is God bringing all these creatures to him?

Yes, to name them, but also, as verse 20 says:

But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. (v20)

Will one of these creatures be found to be a suitable helper?

Will God take from the ground (from the adamah) a helper fit for the Adam?

I said earlier that it is not loneliness.

It is not the "feeling" of being alone.

It is not a psychological problem.

It is the physical fact of being alone.

As long as Adam is alone he is incomplete.

Yes, he exercises dominion alone –

but he cannot fulfill God's blessing alone.

What is missing?

He cannot be fruitful.

He cannot multiply.

And no creature taken from the ground is suitable for him.

It is not just that he needs a wife.

He needs children.

He needs a "seed."

In Genesis,

being tied to the land and belonging to a people are crucial to being human.

This is a different perspective on personhood than you or I are used to.

Some of you may have seen the movie "Braveheart,"

Mel Gibson's Hollywood version of my ancestor, William Wallace.

The one thing that Mel Gibson got right was the ancient definition of freedom.

In the movie, what does William Wallace say is the meaning of freedom?

It is living in the land with your wife and children.

That's what Genesis is all about.

That's what most of human history has been all about.

The Adam is not complete – he is not whole – he cannot fulfill his purpose until he can be fruitful and multiply.

I realize that some of you (women and men) may be getting a little uncomfortable.
Is a woman nothing more than a baby factory?

If that is what you are hearing, then you are not fully hearing what Genesis is saying.
Genesis *certainly* highlights a woman’s childbearing function.
Indeed, as we’ll see in Genesis 3,
salvation depends upon woman’s childbearing function!
And quite frankly *humanity* (man) depends upon woman’s childbearing function!

If it weren’t for woman’s childbearing function, I wouldn’t be here!!!

But the concept of personhood in scripture
(and especially in Genesis)
is bound up with land and seed and blessing.

By pointing out that Adam is already engaged
in everything else that God has called him to do,
Genesis highlights this one thing:

What Eve does to help is “be fruitful and multiply.”
What Eve does to help is bear children.

And as we’ll see later in Genesis:

Genesis 3:15-19—the curse upon the woman is multiplying pain in childbirth,
while the curse upon the man is sweat and toil for bread.

And the blessing upon the woman is that her *seed*
will crush the head of the serpent.

It is through the childbearing of Eve
that God’s blessing will come to Adam’s race.

Genesis 4:1-2—the first thing that Adam and Eve do when they leave the garden
is start having sex and babies.

Genesis 4:25—after the death of Abel, “Adam knew his wife again”
in order to provide another holy seed.

Chapter 5 then provides the history of that seed,
and chapter 6 suggests that the sexual blending of holy and unholy seed
was the reason for the downfall of humanity.

Indeed, I think it is safe to say that whenever Genesis talks about women,
it is focused around issues of sex and childbearing.

What does Eve do to help?
She has babies.

She was created for baby-making,
and because of her role in the fall into sin,
the way of redemption will be through her baby-making abilities as well!

And we shouldn't make excuses for that.
We shouldn't be embarrassed about that!

Women,
God has uniquely gifted and crafted you
with the capacity to bear children.
Nothing else in all of creation can do what you can do.

Oh, sure, with our technological skill we can create artificial wombs and all that.
But that is just art imitating life (technique imitating the master craftsman).
In your wombs the seed is planted, is nourished, and grows.
Your bodies are uniquely able to provide nourishment to the young.

We'll deal with the problem of barrenness later in Genesis –
but barrenness is a problem of the fall.
It is not a curse on you individually.
It is a part of the curse on all of humanity that our bodies malfunction.
Things are not the way they were designed to be.

Indeed, in Christ the procreative focus of sex is brought to fulfillment
as Christ and his bride bear children to the glory of God the Father.

This is why Paul can praise singleness in 1 Corinthians 7.
Singleness and marriage both are now effective ways
to bear children for the kingdom of God.

You do not stay single for yourself –
but you stay single so that you might be more fruitful in Christ's service.
But neither do you marry for yourself –
but because you are convinced that you can be more fruitful together than alone.

But in Genesis 2 we are still a long way from that day!
Genesis 2 says that it is woman's unique gift of childbearing
that is what she does to help.

But men, there is another implication of this:
what Eve does to help is not clean the house and do the dishes.
What Eve does to help is have babies.

What else?
That will depend on the culture, the economy, and how you as a household

can best organize your resources and abilities in the service of Christ.
(In fact, in most cultures, servants took care of “cleaning house”)

Woman is not excluded from participation in having dominion over the creatures.
She shares in that by virtue of the fact that she is taken from the Adam.
NOT the adamah.
She is not formed from the ground (the adamah) but from the Adam.

3. The Woman and the Temple (2:21-25)

*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.*

Too often our translators have not served us well.
The ESV rightly adds a footnote that points out that the Lord God
did not merely “make” the rib into a woman.
The Lord God *built* the rib into a woman.

The word “make” has been used many times in Genesis 1-2.
This is the word “to build.”
It is used 400 times in the scriptures.
Just in Genesis, it is used of building cities.
It is used of building altars.
It is used of building the Tower of Babel

And in 1 Kings it is the word used to speak of building the temple.
Also in 1 Kings the word used for “rib” in Genesis
is used to speak of the “ribs” of the temple.
Even as Genesis uses the language of God “building” Eve from the side of Adam,
so also Kings will echo that language to speak of Solomon
“building” a new “Eve” as he prepares the temple of the LORD God.

The word here does not mean “rib” but “side” –
as Matthew Henry puts it,
“Not made out of his 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.”

Okay,
Let’s put this together.

God took Eve from Adam’s side.

She is not something foreign to him.
Woman is not something fundamentally different from man.
Rather, male and female are the two complementary parts of the Adam.
Eve was taken from his side,
and so when the two come together as one flesh,
we see Adam in his full integrity.

-- the two becoming one, even as the one was built into two.

Listen to the way Adam describes this:

Then the man said,

*“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman (ishah),
because she was taken out of Man.” (ish)*
[Normally in this passage the word “Adam” is used for man –
but here it is “Ish”]

The naming of Woman demonstrates
that Adam has a governmental priority in the relationship.
Paul will say in 1 Timothy 2 that part of the reason
why only men should rule in the church is because man was created first.
But it is not merely a matter of “he was here first” –
but rather it is that God gave Adam authority to rule (and name)
all other creatures.

But Woman is his helper.

Now, having focused on what Eve does to help,
I want to point out here what the word “helper”
would have meant to the Israelites.
The word helper means one who helps or assists.
NOT one who serves.
Woman is not the servant of the Man.

In fact, of the 19 times this word is used in the Hebrew Bible,
16 of those times it is said that “God is my helper”
The idea of a helper is one who enables another to fulfill his purpose.

David will say that God is his helper,
because there is no way that he could accomplish
what God had called him to do, unless God helps him.

In the same way,
there is no way that Adam can do what God has called him to do,
unless Eve helps.

The idea of a suitable helper is one who enables you to accomplish what God has called you to do.

It is not as though he has his call, and she has her call, and never the twain shall meet (except in the bedroom from time to time).

But neither is he focused on her, and she on him in some romantic googly-eyed egalitarianism.

But neither is it that he has his calling and her calling is to be focused on him.

Milton missed something when he said, “he for God, she for God through him.”

What is wrong with these three models?

Listen to Adam:

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

They are no longer two.

All of these models are fundamentally “two flesh” models.

But Adam says that the two shall become one flesh.

You do not have two separate calls.

You, as one flesh before God, have one call.

And you cannot *possibly* fulfill that call without her.

But men, you also cannot possibly understand your call without her.

Adam’s call makes no sense without Eve.

The call, after all, the blessing of Genesis 1:28 was addressed to *them*.

They are to fulfill this call together.

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

In other words, they are fully prepared to be fruitful and multiply.

When husband and wife come together in sexual union, that is to be a glorious picture of humanity in its integrity!

When the two become one flesh this is an expression of what we were created to be.

When Paul says that the husband’s body belongs to his wife—

and that the wife’s body belongs to her husband—

that reminds us that the “act of marriage” is to be a mutual self-surrender.

You are not to be selfish in the marital union.

Wives, your body belongs to your husband.

But husbands, your body belongs to your wife.

Why does Paul say this?
Because Eve was taken from the flesh of Adam.

God did not take “two flesh” and stick them together.
There was Adam.
And God took Eve from the Adam, and then gave her back to him,
so that they might not be two flesh, but one.

And of course in Christ and his bride, the church, we see the full expression of that union.

This is why Ezekiel 16 portrays Jerusalem (the City of God) as God’s bride—
and as the mother of God’s people.
In order for humanity to be restored to fellowship with God,
we must become one flesh with him.

Hilary of Poitiers, in the fourth century, said that as God put Adam to sleep,
and brought forth Eve from his side,
that so also God put the second Adam to sleep in death,
and brought forth the new Eve (the church) from his side,
so that we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

Some people have said that this is just silly allegorism,
but Paul says in Ephesians 5
that the profound mystery of marriage as articulated in Adam’s statement,
“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother
and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”
is about Christ and the church (Eph 5:31-32).

Marriage – and particularly the act of marriage –
is a picture of Christ and his bride.
It is a picture of your union with Christ!

And we, as the bride of Christ,
are to bear fruit.
We, as the church, are to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.
The new Adam and his new Eve,
Christ and the church,
are to make babies together!
We are to be spiritually reproducing!

And yes, some of that will be through the bearing and training of our covenant youth,
but as Christ has been given dominion over all the earth as the Last Adam,
so now we as his Bride share in the exercise of that dominion!
We are to be (as Psalm 128 says)
a fruitful vine, bringing forth children like olive shoots.
As a single person you can participate in this through evangelism and discipleship.

As a married person you can also add “covenant evangelism” as you bear children and disciple them.

I cannot close without making a comment on the challenges that we face in our culture. It is not just that the far left is challenging the “traditional” view of marriage. It is that the whole culture has abandoned the biblical view of sex.

If there was something in you that was bothered by the idea that what Eve does to help is have babies, then that indicates how radically our culture has shifted.

In our day sex has become a right. Fulfillment, happiness, is something “I deserve.” And not surprisingly, people now talk about the “right” to have a baby! A single woman can’t find the right man, so she goes to a sperm bank. A gay couple obviously can’t reproduce, so they find a woman willing to have “their” child.

Genesis tells us that God formed the woman out of the man and for the man – for the specific purpose of completing him and enabling him to fulfilling God’s call to be fruitful and multiply.

Of course, as we will see in the next couple weeks, this all falls apart.

In response to God’s Word, let us sing the Trisagion and Reproaches (#198). Trisagion means “three holies” – “Holy, holy, holy.” The reproaches are cast in the words of Jesus to his people.

After all that I have done for you,
is this how you repay me?

It is a fitting way to bring to a conclusion our study of creation from Genesis 1-2. God created us out of nothing – he brought order and fruitfulness to the tohu vbohu (the barren wilderness). The Exodus language of this hymn connects with creation language, because the Exodus was as a new creation! And the rebellion of Israel – and the rebellion of the house of David, simply shows that all of Adam’s children have walked in his ways and are under his curse.