

The Making of Man (Gen 2:4-15)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on 9-23-2007

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Genesis 1:27 tells us in one verse that God created man and woman in His own image, and now Moses devotes a whole chapter basically to tell us *how* God created man and woman in His own image. The first chapter of the Bible gives us the overview of the six days of creation and most of the 2nd chapter focuses on one part of Day 6, how Adam and Eve were created by God in a special way

Genesis 1 begins with a focus on the entire universe and all of creation, and now in chapter 2 the attention shifts to the centerpiece of God's creation, which is mankind. The attention will continue to be on humanity rather than the heavens or the animals because it is through this race of humans that God's plan of history will unfold.

Genesis 1 gives the overview of the opening week of the universe and our planet and all its creatures in a brief chronological day-by-day progression to the climax, it's like a panorama camera or high-level filming or like a trailer or preview of coming attractions.

Now Genesis 2 will slow down the picture and use a zoom lens on the final act in this drama of creation, setting the scene, and putting the spotlight on the central actor and supporting actress, but ultimately we know that God is the director and God is the chief character and God is the ultimate hero in every scene of the saga of God's gracious dealings with humanity. His name is in the credits.

In college I was interested in going into broadcasting and media or journalism – and in that field there is a series of questions that most if not all of us learned in school, questions that help us understand what happened at a given scene or story. In your note sheet, our outline will follow *who, what, where, when, why, how*

Q: Who Was Man Created By? A: The LORD God (v. 4-7)

A shift is signaled in Genesis 2:4 with a change in the name of God used – until now *Elohim* has been the exclusive name of God and has been used 35x. *Elohim* is a general name for God the Creator and omnipotent deity, the mighty One of majesty.

At the end of 2:4, however we see “the LORD God” – also v. 5, 7, 8, 9, etc. This is YHWH-Elohim. YHWH may be pronounced Yahweh, it emphasizes God's covenant-making, covenant-keeping role, His personal involvement with His people and it is a name only His people used.

This is similar to Psalm 19 which begins with how the heavens declare the glory of God (root *El* – creator God) and it's only in verse 7 that David uses the name YHWH because of the shift towards the relationship with this God through His Word (“The law of the LORD ... the testimony of the LORD ...” etc.)

YHWH is used nearly 7,000x and is related to “I AM” – emphasis on self-existence and eternity, and it may be that this name is used in this section as it will contrast with man’s fall and death

The combination YHWH-Elohim is used about 20x in Genesis 2-3, but is only used 1 other time by Moses in the rest of the Torah or Pentateuch (Exodus 9:30 during plagues). This is very important. It’s also significant that the only time in chapters 2-3 where the name is absent is during the temptation by the serpent.

Genesis 2:4 speaks of a God who is both sovereign and majestic Lord of creation, but who is also the covenant Lord, the eternal “I AM” who deals personally and intimately with man and who created and cares for details and man’s welfare.

Q: What Was Man Created From? A: Dust from the Ground

In verse 7, we read that the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground.

There’s a wordplay in the Hebrew – man is *adam* and ground is *adamah* – there is intentional association with the earth or the ground and man.

Man is made of the same basic materials and minerals as the earth, which can be shown in creation as well as in cremation.

Animals are also made up of similar elements biologically, but it is only humans that have the “image of God” or as this verse says “the breath of life” (both are not used of animals)

We are from the earth, so we are earthy, but we are more than just a natural body, with mankind there is a spiritual component, a soul, and we earthly people will also be transformed to eternal people

1 Corinthians 15:40-53 (NASB95)

40 There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another.

41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

45 So also it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living soul.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.

47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

We will all spend eternity in one of two places: heaven or hell. The key question: are you ready to meet your Maker if you died today?

Q: Where Was Man Created? A: Eden (v. 8-15)

The commentators spend a lot of time saying ultimately that no one knows for sure where Eden was, but one thing that is clear is that the text goes out of its way to take several verses to describe Eden as a real historical place, this is no myth like other ancient cultures had.

The exact location of Eden is unknown; if “eastward” was used in relationship to where Moses was when he wrote, then it could have been in the area of Babylon, the Mesopotamian Valley.¹

Two of the rivers names we recognize today (Tigris and Euphrates), and some would suggest that Eden was somewhere in the vicinity of modern day Iraq or near the head of the Persian Gulf – it’s suggested that its location was somewhere in the general area of the promised land, which to the original audience in the wilderness was to be a partial picture of God’s original Eden.

We can’t be precise on the location, though, because a global flood had a radical impact on geography, rivers, and topography, so there’s no sense in trying to find the garden of Eden because it was destroyed by God along with the whole earth in Genesis 6.

‘Genesis was originally written, not to those who live in lush climates, but to people who lived in extremely arid or desert countries and for whom a garden was therefore an exquisite delight – virtually a symbol of heaven. To say that God prepared Adam a special garden complete with trees (not merely shrubs) and rivers (not merely brooks) was to say to the near-eastern reader, clearer than anything else could possibly say, that Adam was beloved of God and was the receiver of his bounty’ (Boice, 1:112)

The Bible begins with a garden and ends with an eternal garden city that contains the tree of life and is in some ways paradise restored. But the only way to be in these new heavens and new earth was revealed in a third garden – Gethsemane – where Jesus prayed His high-priestly prayer, submitted to the will of His Father, and gave Himself up to those who would crucify Him. To those who would repent like the thief on the cross, He says “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Paradise lost is paradise regained to all who are in Christ.

Q: When Was Man Created? A: Day Six (v. 4-7, Gen. 1)

The verse says “This is the account” – your Bible may have “history” (NKJV), literally “generations” – this is a heading referring to what follows.

Some of your Bibles may say in verse 4b “in the day that the LORD God made” - this Hebrew phrase *be’yom* is a Jewish idiom meaning “when”² – it’s a summary of the time of creation of heavens and earth, or it could refer to the day when God had created everything except man and woman (Day 6).

Verse 5 speaks of certain types of shrubs or plants of the field that had not grown yet in the “land” (ESV better than “earth” in other translations)³ because man wasn’t created yet and apparently God hadn’t caused it to rain yet at this point in the creation week.

This has confused a lot of people, because Genesis 1 has plants created on day 3 and man on day six, but 2:5 speaks of plants that hadn’t grown because there was no man yet to till the ground.

IS THIS CONTRADICTORY OR COMPLIMENTARY TO GEN. 1?

The phrases used in verse 5 are not the words used in Genesis 1 for the plants God created earlier in the creation week. The first word means “shrub” or “bush” and is only used one other time in the Bible for the desert shrub or bush that Hagar hid Ishmael under in Genesis 21:15. Apparently this type of plant was not in Eden and developed later – Moses is writing to the Israelites in the desert wilderness seeing those gnarly shrubs and bushes, and perhaps he wants to remind them that what they see here is a different picture than God’s original creation in Eden of a lush watered paradise?

Cassuto, a great Jewish scholar of the Hebrew text, explains: ‘These species did not exist, or were not found in the form known to us, until after Adam’s transgression, and it was in consequence of his fall that they came into the world or received their present form.’ The first term he equates with weeds and explains, ‘In areas, however, that were not tilled, the earth brought forth of its own accord, as a punishment to man, *thorns and thistles* – that ... *siah of the field* that we see growing profusely to this day in the land of Israel *after the rains*.’⁴

The second term referring to field plants can be translated “herb” (NKJV; Barrick); or even “edible crops” (Kidner, 59)

*Note that this phrase is repeated in 3:18-19 describing plants and verse 19 speaks of eating bread.

Cassuto says that this second phrase refers to barley, oats, wheat, any cultivated grain that you make bread out of. Adam is told “you’re going to sweat tilling the ground to bring forth crops, and making and cultivating food, unlike the fresh fruit and easy pickings you used to have so easily and readily available in that orchard I made you in Eden.”

See also 3:23 and 4:2-3 – tilling of ground / crops was done later

So the plants in Genesis 2:5 are not the same vegetation or trees or plants of chapter 1, it’s speaking of the world known to Moses’ readers after the fall with desert shrubs and weeds and thorns and thistles, as well as the post-fall cultivation of grains and crops

Delitzsch writes ‘The world of nature was ... designed to be tilled and tended, it runs wild without man, who can and ought (as is shown, for example, by corn, vines and date palms) to make it more useful and habitable’ (137).

This fits with the end of Genesis 2:5 because it says the reason these things hadn't developed yet is that there was no man to till the ground and cultivate these types of crops

Verse 6 says there was a mist that watered the ground, or the NIV gives an alternate translation "streams came up from the earth and watered." It may be understood as an underground spring or artesian or subterranean flowing water that thoroughly irrigated Eden – whatever water cycle God used, the point is that he was making a lush and green and vibrant and fertile flourishing garden for man to be his home.

Q: Why Was Man Created this Way? (v. 7)

1. *To teach us about God*

In Genesis 2:7 the word "formed" includes the meanings of intent or design (ex: Gen. 6:5). The noun form of this word is translated as "frame" and combined with "dust" in Psalm 103:14 "For He Himself knows our **frame**; He is mindful that we are but **dust**."

This word for God forming man speaks of framing, fashioning us

- It is used of an artist or craftsman with his material, indicating great skill (ex: Ps 94:9 'he that formed the eye')
- It is used of God forming the delicate unborn child in the womb (Jer. 1:5, Isa. 44:2, 49:5) as well as all the days God has planned and created for our lives
 - Psalm 139:16 (NKJV)
 - 16 Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days **fashioned** for me, When as yet there were none of them.
- This Hebrew word translated "formed" in Genesis 2 is also used of the potter and clay, emphasizing God's sovereignty over His creation

Jeremiah 18:1-6 (NASB95)

- 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying,
- 2 "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will announce My words to you."
- 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel.
- 4 But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.
- 5 Then the word of the Lord came to me saying,
- 6 "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.

Isaiah 29:16 (NASB95)

16 You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made would say to its maker, "He did not make me"; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?

Isaiah 45:9 (NASB95)

9 "Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker— An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands'?"

Isaiah 64:8 (NASB95)

8 But now, O Lord, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.

The word *'breathed'* in Genesis 2:7 is warmly personal, with the face-to-face intimacy of a kiss and the significance that this was an act of giving as well as making; and self-giving at that. Cf. Job 32:8; also John 20:22, where Jesus bestows the Holy Spirit as the animating breath of the new creation, the church. (Kidner, 60)

What a picture of God's condescending, bending down, stooping down to man, to bring Himself down to the face of dirt, and perform mouth-to-mouth regeneration by breathing life into non-life, dust and glory (His image). The God of the Bible is personal and intimate and cares, and God's Spirit is the source of life.

2. *To teach us about ourselves*

Gen 3:19 "till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

You may recall the story of the little boy who came in some excitement to his mother and said, "Mother, is it true that we are made from the dust and that after we die we go back to the dust?" She said, "Yes, it is." "Well," he said, "I looked under my bed this morning, and there's someone either coming or going!"

What does dust teach us about ourselves? This leads to the last point ...

Q: How Should We Then Live?

1. With humility, remembering we are dust and will return to dust

Dust often refers to nothingness, and dust in the Bible also symbolizes defeat and humiliation

Gen 3:14 "*dust you will eat all the days of your life*"

Snakes do not literally eat dust, but God is talking not just to a serpent, but to Satan here about his certain defeat and humiliation. The devil's most bitter mouthful of dust was at the resurrection, but his final defeat and humiliation will come after Christ returns

This phrase has even been carried over into our popular culture with phrases like "another one bites the dust"

We are all made of common clay and that is why we all have the same problems. As someone has well put it, "We're all made in the same mold—only some are moldier than others."

Another has said 'Remember that man was made out of dust, and when dust gets stuck on itself it only turns into mud.'

Jesus washed the dusty dirty feet of his disciples, and in John 13:10, He spoke of spiritual cleanness this represented.

Nothing is more lowly than dust, and the lowest task to the Jews was one who had to wash off the dust and dirt from one's feet.

Job uses this word "dust" 22 times to speak of the littleness of man in his misery, and his final words are "I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6)

Gen 3:19 "till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

It doesn't say merely "you are *from* dust" but "you *are* dust"

Abraham understood this in Genesis 18:27: "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes"

God seems to intentionally have created His earth creatures from the dust as a reminder to them that they are earthy and little more than dust without God's gracious work in them.

John Flavel writes: "The consideration is humbling, and serves to tame the pride of man", who is apt to dote upon his own beauty. Man's body was not made of heavenly matter, as the radiant sun, and sparkling stars: no, nor yet of the most precious and orient earthly matter: God did not melt down the pure and splendid gold and silver, or powder the precious pearls and sparkling diamonds, but he formed it of the vile and despicable dust. We find that the sprinkling of dust upon new writing prevents many a foul blot: I am sure, the sprinkling of our original dust upon our minds by serious consideration, is the way to prevent many a proud boast.'⁵

John Calvin wrote on this verse in his commentary: 'the body of Adam is formed of clay, and destitute of sense; to the end that no one should exult beyond measure in his flesh. He must be excessively stupid who does not hence learn humility.'

2. *With thankful hearts to God for His goodness*

God is not just the source of our daily bread, He's the source of our daily *breath*. Every time air goes in our nostrils is a gracious unmerited gift of a loving God who stooped down to earth to personally and intimately give us clay creatures the breath of life.

Isaiah 2:22 "Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?"

James Boice adds: "We might paraphrase Isaiah's command by saying, "Why trust in man who is able to take only on noseful of breath at a time? Trust God, whose breath is inexhaustible." The breath of God in us may be our glory, but it is still received by us only one breath at a time. We breathe in. We hold our breath. We breathe out. But then we must breathe in again, or die. Nothing could better characterize our utter dependence on God. And what if God should withhold his breath? Job answers by saying, "If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to the dust" (Job 34:14-15)'⁶

But that's not all God graciously gives mankind (*Gen. 2:9, 16*)

1:29 Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;

30 and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food”; and it was so.

Think of all the amazing food and fruits and vegetables God has created for us to enjoy, to sea and smell and savor with tongues and taste buds that can treasure and delight in all the different textures and types and tastes of tomatoes and tropical mangoes and guavas and peaches and pineapple and passion fruit.

Psalm 34:8-10 (NKJV)

8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.

10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.

- David also said “He satisfies our mouth with good things” (Psalm 103:5).
- Solomon said “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.” (Eccl. 5:18)
- James said “Every good and perfect gift comes from above,” (1:18).
- Paul said “He has given us richly all things to enjoy,” (1 Timothy 6:17)
- Jesus said “how much more will the Heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him?” (Matthew 7:11).

‘Everywhere Adam looked, food was literally hanging on trees. The whole world reflected the abundant goodness and generosity of God. After all, God could have made a brown sky, brown water, and a colorless world—with nothing to eat but plain rice. But instead, He filled the world with a vast array of wonderful fruits and vegetables. He created all these things for us to enjoy.

And he gave us senses to enjoy them with. Imagine how bland all life would become if we lost the ability to taste and smell. God has given us those capabilities to bless us—to enable us to enjoy to the fullest everything He made. And Adam and Eve were given full and unfettered freedom to enjoy anything they wanted in the garden of God.

Again, however, there was one significant exception. In all the vast array of fruits and vegetables God had created, just one tree was declared off limits.’⁷

The original readers of Genesis were wanderers in the wilderness, eating manna every day, and God required that they be thankful for that, how much more should we be thankful and bursting in gratitude for the incredible variety of fruits and flavors and foods God has provided!

I have been trying to apply this truth every time I open the fridge, or pray before a meal, or drink some Apple Hill fresh-squeezed apple juice, to truly praise and thank God from my heart.

But the point of God’s provision and goodness in this incredible garden and orchard of

perfect delight – the application is that we should be thankful, as Matthew Henry reminds us:

‘The Lord is for the body; from him we receive all the supports and comforts of this life, and to him we must give thanks. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, not only for necessity, but plenty, plenty, dainties, and varieties, for ornament and delight. How much are we indebted! How careful should we be, as we live upon God’s bounty, to live to his glory!

... [It also] should make us temperate and content with our lot. Though Adam had dominion given him over fish and fowl, yet God confined him, in his food, to herbs and fruits; and he never complained of it ... If God give us food for our lives, let us not, with murmuring Israel, ask food for our lusts, Ps. 78:18; see Dan. 1:15.

... but even the young lions and the young ravens are the care of his providence; they ask and have their meat from God. Let us give to God the glory of his bounty to the inferior creatures, that all are fed, as it were, at his table, every day. He is a great housekeeper, a very rich and bountiful one, that satisfies the desire of every living thing. Let this encourage God’s people to cast their care upon him, and not to be solicitous respecting what they shall eat and what they shall drink. He that provided for Adam without his care, and still provides for all the creatures without their care, will not let those that trust him want any good thing, Mt. 6:26. He that feeds his birds will not starve his babes.⁸

Isaac Watts said it beautifully:

*I sing the goodness of the Lord, that filled the earth with food;
He formed the creatures with His word, and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed, where e’er I turn my eye;
If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky.*

“The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Ps. 145:9).

New Testament Application

Acts 14:15-17 (NASB95)

15 and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

16 “In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

17 and yet **He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.**”

Acts 17:24-31 (NASB95)

24 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since **He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth ... 28 for in Him we live and move and exist [or “have our being”]**

30 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, **God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,** 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

¹ *MacArthur Study Bible*.

² See Barrick notes; Holladay, *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 10.a; Collins, 104; BDB, 400a; Jouon-Muraoka, *Grammar*, 129p (A.2);

³ Collins, 111, argues for “land” meaning region of or around Eden.

⁴ Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, Part 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), p. 102. For more on this, see <http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/90-226.htm>

⁵ <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/ipb-e/epl-10/web/flavel-pneumatologia03.html>

⁶ Boice, *Genesis*, 1:120.

⁷ MacArthur, J. (2001). *The battle for the beginning : The Bible on creation and the fall of Adam* (171). Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group.

⁸ Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ge 1:29). Peabody: Hendrickson.