

The Crowning Glory of Creation

Genesis 2:5-17

sermonnotes

Introduction

God created mankind in His image giving it dignity, worth, and significance. God also gave mankind a purpose Often referred to as the "Cultural Mandate.": co-regency on earth, created to "Be fruitful" and multiply a godly line, and subdue any evil and oppression in the kingdom. Because of sin, Christ became the perfect man in order to fulfill God's creation plan and restore to His people a sense of co-regency in His established kingdom (**Hebrews 2:5-9**). God not only gave us dignity and purpose, but He provided sustenance and protection for His creation. God gave them plants and trees for food and the model of rest/sabbath as a built-in need to protect them. Work, rest, and enjoyment of what God had created were "very good," as man was created for glory. Today we are looking again at the creation of mankind from a different angle. Some people see chapter two as another account of creation that the author threw in, but with close examination it appears to be a different look at the same event from another angle. Chapter one gave us a wide-angle approach, while chapter two zooms in on the specific event of the creation of man as God's crowning glory. As we saw last week, God has created us with a designed purpose, today we will continue to evaluate that purpose and--I pray--soak in this meaning filled text so it will transform our lives into kingdom dwellers existing for the glory of God.

From The Head...

Introduction Title to Act Two (**Genesis 2:4**)

As stated in our intro, like Genesis 1:1, this verse serves an introduction (referred to as a "toledot") for the next section (**Genesis 2:4-4:26**). The use of the words "created" (bara, meaning to bring into existence) and "made" (asa, meaning to accomplish/execute), really emphasize that it is truly a divine act that brought forth this universe. It is also interesting to note that we see a rare usage of the "Lord God" (Yahweh Elohim) emphasizing that it is the covenant God, Yahweh, who created this universe, once again placing His stamp only on the creation masterpiece, not a series of gods and goddesses.

The Placing of Man (**Genesis 2:5-9**)

Verses five and six somewhat parallel the barrenness of 1:2, and is not contradictory, since chapter one had the plants and trees created before mankind. In chapter two we see that man is needed to cultivate (till) the ground, and that man actually acts in partnership with God. God brings forth the rains while man tills the ground. On the third day He did bring forth plants and vegetation, but most likely a wild growth (which is reflected in 2:5) that could grow in the wild as its seed spread. But now he's referring to plants that can only grow with man preparing the harvest. Man, unlike any other animal, is key to the land. When he does his job, he brings forth life. When he doesn't, barren and lifeless conditions occur. The very word for "cultivate" (abad) literally means to serve and keep. According to these verses, man was created specially in God's image to be responsible for the land as a cultural mandate. We are given headship over the creation, and the creation will either prosper or die based on our cooperation. In order for this to happen verse seven indicates that God "*formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.*" First we see the word for "formed" (yatsar) has the idea of artistic creation, and is often used for the potter (**2 Samuel 17:28; Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:2-11**). Although the potter's substance isn't dust, there is a powerful imagery of what God does to us as He intimately forms our inner parts (**Psalms 139:13**). After God creates mankind, He graciously places Him in a place designed for him to flourish, where everything is "pleasing to the sight", and "good for food" (cf. **Genesis 3:6**). What God gives for our pleasure we often turn into our destruction. God also put two special trees within His creation. Whether these are symbolic or real is not the issue here. The fact is, God, in an act of grace, created mankind and gave him everything

28 NOV. 2004 PASTOR MIKE GUNN

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needed for enjoyment yet He also created desire and ambition, and just like other good things that could be turned toward an evil motive so He also gave the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” There are many potential possibilities of the intended meaning, but it appears clear that any meaning has to include moral autonomy and power. The tree of life enhances life (see **Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; 15:4** cf. **Revelation 2:7**), while the tree of the knowledge of good and evil brings forth a moral autonomy that we are not called to have because we are not readily equipped to wield this kind of power (see **Proverbs 30:1-6**). Our anxieties are caused by our mistrust of God and our desire to usurp His authority.

A Mesopotamian Wonderland (Genesis 2:10-14)

No one knows exactly why these verses are placed here, and where it may be indicating, however it does seem to locate the “Garden of Eden” in Mesopotamia, and quite possibly in the Fertile Crescent in what is now Iraq and Iran.

A Place to Work (Genesis 2:15)

As stated earlier, we were created with a job to “cultivate and keep” the land. In other words, our job is to serve the creation and till it and harvest it and prepare it for life, not death. We are to fight against and mitigate evil and come to the rescue of the oppressed while thwarting the powerful.

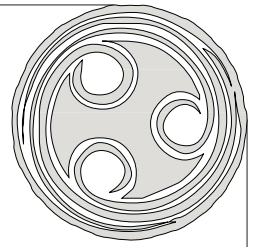
A Paradise to Enjoy (Genesis 2:16)

God created His “good” creation for our enjoyment and satisfaction, which should always look toward His grace and provision for our needs. God provides and puts very few limits on His provision. Everything is permissible (see **1 Corinthians 10:26** cf. **Psalms 24:1**).

A Command to Keep (Genesis 2:17)

We as humans are characterized by all three of these realities. We have a job to do, we have a creation to enjoy, but because God loves His creation, we have a command to obey. All three of these need to be held in tension and understood in light of the others. When we obey the will of God and do not try to usurp His authority as God, we will enjoy life. When we give in to our desire for power and begin to exploit the pleasures that God has given us, we will “certainly die” both spiritually and physically.

In Jesus Christ we are called back into the garden of God’s grace and given a job to do in His kingdom. Jesus indicated that the Kingdom of God was near, and it became obvious that He was its king. We are seated at the right hand of the Father with Jesus as co-regents to rule this earth as humble servants. The grand paradox of Christianity is that if we want to find life, we would die, just as our own savior did for us on the cross. According to Philippians 2, if we want to be great, we will emulate Christ by humbling ourselves and beginning to serve this creation as humble servants as God intended while preparing it for the greatest harvest through the gospel of grace we have received from Jesus Christ.



... To The Heart

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