

From the Dust of the Ground

Lesson Text: Genesis 2:4-7, 15-24 **Devotional Reading:** Psalm 150. **Background Scripture:** Genesis 2.

TIME: Unknown **PLACES:** Heaven and earth; Garden of Eden

Golden Text: *“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”* (Genesis 2:7).

INTRODUCTION

Never has one subject received as much attention as the Bible's account of God's creation of "the heavens and the earth." Nor has any one topic been at the center of so much debate about how any of us got here. Have you ever been to a play that opened with a prologue? Maybe one of the characters addressed the audience before the acting began—giving some background information so that the words and drama about to take place would make more sense. Well, Genesis is very much like a prologue to what follows in the rest of the Bible. It sets the stage for everything the reader is about to read.

Genesis takes us back to the beginning—the very beginning—of everything.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The word "genesis" means "origin," or "beginning." Origination is certainly the theme of Genesis as it relates to its readers the beginning of: the universe (Gen. 1), the world (Gen. 1,2), people (Gen. 1,2), work (Gen. 2:8-17), the family (Gen. 2,4), evil and sin (Gen. 3), salvation and redemption (Gen. 3, 12), cities (Gen. 4), the nations (Gen. 10), languages (Gen. 11), and the nation of Israel (Gen. 12).

Most scholars of the Bible agree that Moses is the author of Genesis; that he wrote and compiled the book in the Wilderness of Sinai. Biblical and extra-biblical evidence suggests that this is very likely true. The important fact to remember, though, is that its writing was inspired by God and is beneficial to those who believe its account of divine creation.

HOME FOR MAN Genesis 2:4-7

This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

Before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground;

But a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Recently, my husband and I chose a local irrigation company to install our underground sprinkler system at our new home. On the day of install, all of the ugly black hosing and water heads poking out of the ground in every corner and along the sides before the sod was laid caused our yards to look a total mess. But, when the landscaping was designed to include a curving flowerbed, and the green rolls of sod were put in place and rolled out to cover the underlying piping, it was a beautiful sight to see. But the wonder did not stop there. A computerized control center was installed in the basement to regulate the sprinklers' zones around the clock—providing instant irrigation to a thirsty yard. Magically, our entire lawn and flowerbeds are being watered from an underground water source twice a day.

Many years ago, God provided the same type of underground watering technique as is described in Genesis 2:6, because there had not been any rain falling from the sky. And besides this, neither was there any *"one to work the ground."*

1: How does the Bible say the earth was first watered? (Gen. 2:5,6)

Prior to God's creating man, there was no one around to take care of any plants (ref. V. 5). For this reason, among others, man was made by God from *"the dust of the ground."*

Two interesting points stand out here. One is that man did not have life until after God blew *"the breath of life"* into man's nostrils. This tells us that God is the One who gives life, and ultimately it is also He who takes life away. Point two is that the Hebrew word for "formed" signifies that God physically fashioned man as a potter fashions clay. There were some divine creative juices flowing when God did this. And because we were "created in His image," we are reflections of Him. It is not by chance that we have one head, two eyes, two ears, two arms, two legs, one mouth, etc. Psalm 139:14 says that we were *"fearfully and wonderfully made."* There may be continuous advancements of cloning as scientists discover and develop new techniques, but there will never again be the creation of life from nothing but *"dust from the ground."*

Take the time to read the entire number of Psalm 139.

And for those of you who see a dual/spiritual connotation to God's statement in Genesis 1:26a, *"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,"* I add that God placed man as living symbols of Himself on earth to represent His reign. We are God's images; it is we who are in His likeness, not animals (see Question 3 below). This is the reason why God values people so much—we are made to reflect His majesty on earth.

2: From what was man made? (Gen. 2:7)

While we share life with the rest of creation, God has endowed human beings with another dimension that animals do not possess. We are spiritual beings, capable of making rational choices, not merely instinctive ones as animals do. We are able to think, feel, and choose, thus setting us apart from and above the animals. In fact, God gave Adam *"rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground* (ref. Gen. 1:26-29)."

3: How are humans different from the animals? (ref. Gen. 2:7)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAN Genesis 2:15-17

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying: *"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."*

But there is a more significant meaning to God's placing Adam in the garden. The work ethic of man today has diminished somewhat since the time of Adam. The American work culture is one where employees can be found doing as little as possible while wanting to be paid as much as possible while doing it! And, when was the last time any of us gave our employers a "day's work for a day's pay?"

Adam was placed into a tropical paradise! Eden was an extraordinarily appointed garden with choice specimens of the finest trees and plants. The well-supplied garden showed God's meticulous touch of love for His created. Everything Adam needed to "tend" and "keep" was there for him—already in place. An analogy is in order here: God was Adam's supervisor. He told Adam what to do, what to enjoy, what to eat, and what to avoid. If Adam had lived in our time, he probably would have been written up or fired for being insubordinate on the job.

4: Why was Adam put in the Garden of Eden? (Gen. 2:15)

The name of the forbidden tree was *"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* Personal experience of such knowledge would bring only pain and death to the human race. The other mentioned tree that grew in the garden was the *"tree of life* (Gen. 2:17, 3:24)." This knowledge would also result in man being barred from the tree of life.

5: What was the name of the forbidden tree? What other tree grew in the garden? (Gen. 2:16,17)

COMPANION FOR MAN Genesis 2:18-25

And the LORD God said, *"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.

So, Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: *"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."* That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

God observed that, *"It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* The "helper" that Genesis describes was a partner who was truly fitting, fully adequate, suitable, appropriate-just right. "Helper" does not refer to someone who is inferior or secondary.

Question 6: What did God say about man's being alone? (Gen. 2:18)

After God formed each group of animals, He assigned to Adam the task of naming them. In order to do this Adam had to observe them, study their behaviors, and then classify each. It probably was not an easy assignment since there were many varied animals in the garden. Adam demonstrated his right as God's regent; as lord over all that God had created. Furthermore, Adam's names were permanent, that is, he showed perfect insight in the names he used for the animals. They were more than titles; they were terms that described the animals accurately.

But, in Adam's observation of all that God had created and allowed him to label, Adam did not see another creation like himself. Someone with intelligence and personality; someone with ethics and moral sensitivity; someone with God's spirituality. (Remember the differences between man and animals as discussed in Question 3 above.)

7: What task was Adam given concerning the animals? (Gen. 2:19,20)

God performed the world's first surgery! He used an unusually "deep sleep" to serve as an anesthetic for the task. Adam's response in v. 22 seems to indicate that he had an awareness of what was going on during his supernatural slumber. God then took a rib from Adam's side and formed woman. Adam's side rib gives reference to the fact that woman was to be protected by man, and remain close to his heart in cherishment. If forensic scientists can take a tiny molecular structure of DNA and solve a 20-year-old murder mystery, why can't we believe the Bible's account of God's formation of man and woman and that we see and know? Think about it. God is the One who gives wisdom to man to carry out scientific experiments...

8: How did God create a helper for Adam? (Gen. 2:21-23)

It is not The Church's intent to clobber any individual group or individual's life's choices, but it is our duty to love the sinner but hate the sin—as God does. And since God has mandated how the family should be organized, it is with that authority that we answer this question in the following manner. The very first institution that God established for the human race was that of marriage. The fact that many denigrate marriage today, or even try to redefine it, does not diminish one iota the importance of this divinely ordained institution.

Genesis admonishes man and wife to, *"be fruitful and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28)."* The family (one husband, one wife) is the only proper setting for this God-given endeavor. If it were not for one mother and one father, none of us would be here today.

Genesis 2:24 also stresses the permanence of the marriage bond. Divorce was not God's plan for marriage. "What God has joined together, let not man separate (Matt. 19:6)." [Read Matthew 19:1-10, and verses 11,12 to see how Jesus responded to the Pharisees concerning divorce and celibacy.] Children suffer as a result of divorce, even do family members. Everything turns topsy-turvy when it lies outside of God's order for life. God is the god of order and peace, not of chaos and heartache.

It is important for the Church to take God's posture on certain non-negotiable topics that have become popular in the world's view, but still remain on the Christian's list of "Things That Do Not Give God Glory." An Old Testament translation of this would be, "Things That God Abhors/Detests/Despises/Hates." God is a god of love, but He is also a god of wrath. Time is running out for His children to take non-defensive postures when tough topics like same-sex marriage, abortions, adultery, cheating, lying, etc. come up. Children of the enemy are bold in their professions. It is time for God's army to take a defensive stand for righteousness.

9: What does the Bible say about the origin of marriage and the family? (Gen. 2:24)

PRACTICAL POINTS

- We are created from humble elements, but our life comes from the very breath of God (Gen. 2:4-7).
- God will give us great responsibilities and privileges if we are faithful in the little that He asks of us (Gen. 2:15-17)
- The Lord often has to make us aware of our needs before He will provide them (Gen. 2:19,20).
- The Lord does not often use the strange and exotic in giving His gifts to us; He uses that which is closest to us (Gen. 2:21,22).
- Marriage is one of the most enduring and precious gifts that God has given us (Gen. 2:23,24).

CONCLUSION

This fall quarter's series of lessons deals with God's beginning and His new beginnings, His creation and His re-creations. So, the drama of His first recorded creation ends on a high note of triumph. God set the stage and provided the persons for a drama that ought to end "they lived happily ever after." When unhappiness invaded the drama, it was the fault of the creatures, not the fault of the Creator.

PRAYER

Father God, thank you for creating us in Your image. You are so awesome in Your works. We love you for being the Sovereign God, the Omnipotent God, the Omniscient God, the Holy God. Thank you for forgiving us from our sins, and giving us new and eternal life with You through Jesus Christ. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who strengthens us to do Your work in a dark and dying world.

We thank You for Your holy written Word that has been made available to us for study and discussion. May seeds be planted, and may You give the increase. Continue now, Lord, to bless this ministry and all those who work diligently to share Your plan of salvation with others over the Internet. Help us to take a bold stand for what is right, and flee from that which is displeasing to You.

And help us to meet the mark as we continue on our journeys through this corrupt world. We know that this is not our home; that we are just passing through.

For we have a heavenly home prepared especially for us with You in glory. We love You, Lord, and give You all of the honor, the glory, and the praise-because You are truly worthy. In the matchless name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

We are all just dirt; some forgiven dirt, others unforgiven dirt-but, all dirt, nonetheless.