

Genesis 2

While chapter 1 was a description of the creation in general terms, chapter 2 focuses on the creation and man and woman and the environment (physical and spiritual) for their home.

TRANSLATION - 2:1-3:

1 And they were finished, the heavens and the earth and all their bodies. **2** And God finished on the seventh day from His work which He made and He ceased on the seventh day from all His work which He made. **3** And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He ceased from all His work which God created to make [it].

WORDS:

“Bodies” here is the word often translated “hosts” (487x). It refers to the heavenly bodies here but can refer to the military or troop of angels.¹ The word is related to the verb “to wage war.” “Ceased” (vs 2) is normally translated “rested” (71x). We translate it “ceased” because it refers to God finishing His work. The verb is used synonymously with “finished.” The related word “Sabbath” is found 111x but not in Genesis. “Sanctified” (171x) means to “set apart,” and is often translated “make holy.”

GRAMMAR:

The verb “finished” (vs 1) is a *pual* passive (passive form of the intensive *piel*); in the second verse, the same verb is a *piel*. “Blessed” and “sanctified” are also *piel*.

COMMENTS:

The creation, based on chapter 1, has been finished. There is nothing more creative God needs to do for His creation. This is consistent with what we know from science. Energy is not being created or destroyed, based on the first law of thermodynamics. It is obvious from biblical theology that God does not need to rest; He is all-powerful. Therefore, the cessation of His work was intended to set the pattern for the Israelites later to set one day aside (the Sabbath, or “rest,” a related word to “cease”; cf. Gen. 8:22) for their own rest. God sanctified the seventh day, setting it apart, from the other six days by not creating on that day. In this way, He will set the standard for Jews to keep their Sabbath and Christians to observe their Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10; cf. 1 Cor. 11:20).

God ceased His creating but did not rest from working since He still works today (John 5:17). In the same way, Jesus returned to heaven and sat down on His throne (Heb. 8:1; 10:12) but He still works (Rom. 8:34). No other ancient culture divided its week into seven days as Israel did, which is yet another argument for the original days of creation being typical 24-hour days.

It is improper to take the “Sabbath” use of the seventh day from the Law of Moses, and read it back into the seventh day of God’s creation week as if the patriarchs kept the Sabbath. “Sabbath” is not found in Genesis at all; no one celebrated the Sabbath before the Law was given at Mount Sinai. For the same reason, while the Hebrew writer (4:3-11) uses “rest” as a metaphor for the Christians’ rest, it does not mean that God’s “rest” continues even today. That argument has been used to say that “day” here (in Gen. 2:3) does not mean a 24 hour period. That is not proper hermeneutics, interpreting or handling the word of God accurately.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries: Israel was not supposed to worship the host of heaven (Deut. 4:19). “Sabbath” is found forty-six times in the Law, notably among the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20:11). See also Exo. 16:23-29; 31:13-16.

¹ “Jehovah God of hosts” is only found 18x but “Jehovah of hosts” is found 267x, with the bulk being among the prophets (247x).

Later Hebrew writers: All the heavenly bodies, the “host,” were created by the word of God (Psa. 33:6). With this agrees Isaiah (40:26) and Nehemiah (9:6).

NT writers: The Hebrew writer will quote verse 2 in Heb. 4:3-11 (specifically 4:4), as he discusses the rest awaiting Christians. In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul tells Christians they should not be judged when they do not keep the Mosaic Sabbath law. It was a shadow of things to come, notably Jesus.

TRANSLATION - 2:4-6:

4 These [are] the generations of the heavens and the earth in their creating, in the day Jehovah God made earth and [the] heavens. **5** And all the shrubbery of the field was not yet in the earth and all the herbs of the field had not yet sprouted because Jehovah God had not caused rain on the earth and man did not exist to serve the land. **6** And a stream was bubbling up from the earth and irrigated all the face of the land.

WORDS:

Here is the first time “generations” is used in Genesis. It is odd to think of the universe in terms of being “generated,” but it highlights their creation by God (cf. Psa. 90:2). This is also the first time “Jehovah” is used in the OT. It translates four letters, *yhvh*, which the Jews would not pronounce, for fear of taking the Lord’s name in vain. Instead they substituted the word “Lord” in its place. In our translation, we will be consistent and use the word “Jehovah,” which was God’s unique name among the Israelites (cf. Exo. 3:14-15). “Man” and “land” (vs 5) are related words, the latter giving its designation to the former. Notice man is to “serve” the earth.

GRAMMAR:

“Creating” (vs 4) is a *niphal* (passive) infinitive construct. “Made” is a *qal* infinitive construct. “Cause rain” is a *hiphil* (causative). “Irrigated” is *hiphil*.

COMMENTS:

Once Moses describes the *creation* of the world, he now begins to talk about the generations of the world, namely the first man and woman. Moses begins focusing on the creation of man so he summarizes some thoughts from chapter 1. Man’s job will be to “serve” the land. God, if it was necessary, perhaps slowed the growth of the vegetation, in anticipation of man’s creation. He did so by holding back rain; only a stream watered the land (vs 6). We do not know as much as we would like about life in Eden before the fall. The next time rain will be mentioned will be the flood of Noah’s day.

The designation “Jehovah God” is found in the Pentateuch only in Gen. 2:4-3:24 (20x) and Exo. 9:30. We do not know why Moses only used the two names together in this text. It could be that, with the specific description of Adam’s creation, God begins His personal relationship with humanity. Thus, Moses uses God’s unique name, Jehovah.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries: God will tell Moses that He is the “I Am,” the verbal form of the name “Jehovah” (Exo. 3:14-15).

TRANSLATION 2:7-14:

7 And Jehovah God formed the man of dust from the land and He breathed into his nose the breath of life and the man became a breathing life. **8** And Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden in the east and He put there the man which He formed. **9** And Jehovah God caused to grow from the land every tree desirable to be seen and good for food and the tree of life in the middle of the garden and a tree of knowledge [of] good and evil. **10** And a river was going out from Eden to water the garden and from there it was divided, into four heads. **11** The name of one [was] Pishon. It was flowing around all the earth of Havilah which [had] gold there.

12 The gold of this earth [was] good there, bdellium, and the onyx stone. **13** And the name of the second river [was] Gihon. It was flowing around all the land of Cush. **14** And the name of the third river [was] Hiddekel. It went to the east of Assyria and the fourth river, it [was] Euphrates.

WORDS:

“Formed” denotes the work of a potter. “Breathing” is *nephesh* as we saw in chapter 1 relative to animals. The tree of “life” (vs 9) translates a plural noun (lives) which portrays the abstract concept: life. Gold, bdellium, and onyx stones would provide man with resources for his use. “Dust” shows the physical nature of man; were it not for God’s grace and breath, man would still just be dust. “Garden” is in an area known as “Eden.” The Greek word for “garden” is *paradeisos*, from which we have the word “paradise.” “Knowledge” (vs 9) is used 88x and the concept of “knowing the Lord” is a recurring theme in OT theology. “Bdellium” (Num. 11:7) is identified as a yellow transparent resin. We do not know its purpose. There is also uncertainty about the “onyx stone,” what specific stone it is or its color (see Exo. 25:7; 28:9, 20; 35:9, 27; 39:6, 13). Wisdom is to be desired more than onyx, indicating the value of the onyx stone (cf. Job 28:16; also Ezek. 28:13).

GRAMMAR:

“Cause to grow” is *hiphil*. “Desirable” is a passive participle. “It was divided” is *niphal*. “Was flowing” are participles.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

No doubt due to the massive geological changes caused by Noah’s flood, we do not know where Eden was originally. Yet, it is clear from the geographical details that Moses is portraying a literal place which, at the time, could have been pinpointed with a compass or a GPS. “Pishon” and “Gihon” are transliterations of the Hebrew words. The Hiddekel, or Tigris, and Euphrates rivers are still identified today. The other two are not. “Cush” is later identified as modern Ethiopia but that cannot be the location here since we are talking about a region east of Palestine while Ethiopia is in Africa. All that we can suggest is that Eden was in the area of Mesopotamia, located in the vicinity of ancient Assyria.

COMMENTS:

Man is a living being, just as the animals are (cf. 2:7 with 1:20-21, 24). Yet, of none of the animals was it written that God breathed into their nose. This act draws God extremely close to man, breathing into his nose. Man is clearly unique. The garden was the place where man would spend his life, surrounded by beautiful trees with edible fruit. The gold, bdellium, and onyx stone indicate the resources available for man’s use. Two unique trees were there: the “tree of life” and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Love allows choices and God gave man a choice with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Outside of the Bible, there is no parallel to the “tree of the knowledge.” This is remarkable in light of the plethora of parallels to the “tree of life” in Ancient Near Eastern religions and art. The “tree of knowledge” will not be mentioned again in Scripture after Genesis 3.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries: We’ll see in the next chapter that the result of eating from the tree of knowledge is to experience good and evil in a way that man had not before (Gen. 3:5). The penalty for disobedience will be permanent separation from that tree of life, from which man could eat and live indefinitely (Gen. 3:22). When God punishes man for his sin (Gen. 3:19), God will remind him that he came from dust. The phrase “garden of the Lord” is used in Genesis 13:10, to describe the land close to Sodom and Gomorrah. That is generally understood to refer to Eden. In which case, Eden had a reputation for being well watered and fertile. Abraham’s family will be promised the land that stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates

(Gen. 15:18). Just like Adam and Eve before the temptation, children have no knowledge of good or evil (Deut. 1:39).

Later Hebrew writers: The breath of man dwells in houses of clay, with a foundation in the dust (Job 4:19; cf. 10:8-9; 27:3; Psalms 90:3; 103:14; 104:29; 146:4). Later prophets also use the metaphor of God as a potter (Jer. 18:3-6; Isa. 45:9). The OT is consistent on the idea that man will return one day to the dust from which he was created (Job 34:15; Eccl. 3:20). The prophets will use the expression “God’s garden” as a reference to a beautiful place (Ezek. 31:8-9; 28:13). “Eden” will also be mentioned by name (Isa. 51:3; Joel 2:3). Yet, in Ezekiel 36:35, the “garden of Eden” will be a symbol for a place that is desolate, waste, and ruin. Ezekiel will have a vision in which he sees reenacted God breathing into man’s nose but Ezekiel will see it as God breathing new life into Israel (37:9-10).

Proverbs uses “tree of life” as a metaphor for a number of attributes: wisdom (Prov. 3:18), righteousness (Prov. 11:30), fulfilled desire (Prov. 13:12), a soothing tongue (Prov. 15:4). Isaiah asks if the clay is equal with the potter, if the created can claim the Creator did not make him (Isa. 29:16). Of course, the answer is no.

NT writers: All life comes from God, Paul tells the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:25). In the context of a discussion about the resurrection body, Paul will point to Adam being made a “living soul” (1 Cor. 15:45). John will use eating of the “tree of life” as an inducement to stay faithful to Christ (Rev. 2:7). The tree of life is in heaven (Rev. 22:2), accessible to those whose sins have been washed by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 22:14). Man can be forever separated from the tree of life if he adds to God’s commandments or ignores them (Rev. 22:19). Jesus will use “paradise” (the Greek word for “garden”) to refer to the unseen world in Luke 23:43 (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7). The drying up of the Euphrates will allow Rome to be infiltrated by the kings of the east (Rev. 16:12).

TRANSLATION - 2:15-20:

15 And Jehovah God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to serve it and to protect it. **16** And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, “From every tree of the garden eating you will eat. **17** But from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you will not eat from it because in the day you eat from it, dying you will die. **18** And Jehovah God said, “[It is] not good [for] the man to be alone. Let me make for him a helper proper to him.” **19** And Jehovah God formed from the land every life of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought to the man to see what he will call it and all which the man called to him the breath of life, that [was] its name. **20** And Adam called their names for all the livestock and for the bird of the heavens and for all the animals of the field and for man he did not find a helper proper for him.

WORDS:

To “serve” (289x, meaning to “work, serve, cultivate”) and to “protect” or “guard” (469x) are the primary occupations man would have in the garden. “Command” is found 496x. This word for “knowledge” is found 88x. “Proper” translates a word that means “that which is opposite, or what corresponds to.” “Helper” is used 17 times, sometimes with God described as the “helper” (Exo. 18:4; Deut. 33:26, 29; Psalms 20:2; 121:1-2; 124:8), indicating that the word does not inherently mean inferiority.

GRAMMAR:

“Command” is *piel*. “Eating” and “eat” are two forms of the same verb; the first is the infinitive absolute, the second is a standard *qal* imperfect. The two verbs emphasize that man could eat of *all* the trees, except the one. “Dying” and “die” are also the same forms: infinitive absolute and *qal* imperfect. These two verbs emphasize the extraordinary penalty attached to this command. “Brought” (vs 19) is the verb to “come,” in the *hiphil*, so it is translated causative: “brought.”

COMMENTS:

Adam and Eve have not been told the specifics of their disobedience but they will learn that “death” means separation from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22). They will experience the limitations of their physical existence. Since we do not know how many “kinds” (whether species, genera, families, orders, classes, etc.) of animals God created in the beginning, we do not know how many animals Adam named nor whether he actually designed broad categories. The point was to show Adam that no animal creation was “proper” for him.

APPLICATION:

NT writers: Paul will use the creation of woman as a helper proper to man in his discussion of the veil in 1 Cor. 11:2-16, specifically verses 7-8. In arguing that men are to assume leadership in the churches of Christ, Paul will point to the creation of woman and her role in child-bearing as a counterpart to the men’s role in leadership (1 Tim. 2:13-15).

TRANSLATION - 2:21-25:

21 And Jehovah God caused to fall a deep sleep on the man and he slept. And He took one from his ribs and closed up the flesh under it. **22** And Jehovah God fashioned the rib which He took from the man for a woman and brought her to the man. **23** And the man said, “She finally(!) is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called woman because from man she was taken. **24** From now on, man will leave his father and his mother and he will cling to his wife and they will be for one flesh.” **25** And both of them were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.

WORDS:

“Rib” (40x) is actually “side” (so translated everywhere else except here) so that God may have used more than just the “rib.” Notice that Adam refers to her as his “flesh” as well as his “bone” in verse 23. “Fashioned” (377x) is generally used in the context of architecturally building. Observe how frequently Adam uses “she” in verse 23. “Finally” (118x) can be translated “foot, pace, or time.” Here, it is used in the sense of time: “At last!” The parade of animals proved insufficient. “Finally!” He is impressed with God’s female creation! There is a play on the words “woman” and “man” in Hebrew as the former (*isssha*) comes from the latter (*ish*). English is obviously similar. “Cling” (55x) means to “cling, cleave, or stick to.” “Naked” is a play on words with “clever” in 3:1.

GRAMMAR:

“Caused to fall” is *hiphil*. “Brought” (vs 22) is also *hiphil*, a causative form. “Will be called” is a *nifal*. “Ashamed” is a *hithpael*, an intensive and reflexive concept, even reciprocal idea.

COMMENTS:

Man speaks for the first time, admiringly complementing his new mate for life. This description of the creation of woman is unique among the ANE literature. In every way, Moses presents man and woman as being united. Certainly, God created a heterosexual and monogamous relationship and the man states that his loyalty to his wife takes precedence over any other relationship, including his parents.

Man and woman were naked but were not ashamed. Their moral senses had not yet been awakened by Satan. When Satan deceives them in the next chapter, their moral senses will be stimulated, they will disobey God, and then they will be ashamed (3:7). The words of verse 24 are the words of Moses rather than Adam; Jesus will attribute the words to Jehovah God Himself in Matthew 19:4-5. This shows that Scriptures are the very words of God; ultimately, it does not matter whether Adam said it, or Moses recorded it. They are the words of God.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries: Once Adam and Eve disobey God, they will be ashamed and try to hide themselves from God (Gen. 3:10-11). Mankind later believed it was a shame to see the nakedness of one's family member (Gen. 9:22-23). God will inscribe into law the prohibition against seeing and exposing one's nakedness as well as homosexuality and bestiality (Lev. 18:6-18, 22-30; 19:20, 29; 20:10-21). Rather, there is to be a visible discernment between genders (Deut. 22:5).

Later Hebrew writers: God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). Ruth "clung" to her mother-in-law (1:14) as Adam was to cling to Eve. The Song of Solomon could be seen as a Jewish commentary on Gen. 2:24.

NT writers: Jesus will cite this text in His discussion about marriage, arguing that divorce is not permitted (except in the case of sexual immorality) because it was not part of God's original marriage law (Matt. 19:4-9; Mark 10:4-9). Again, Paul alludes to the creation of woman when he writes (1 Cor. 11:8-9) that the woman originated from man. Finally, as he discusses the relationship between Christ and the church in the context of the husband and wife relationship, Paul will site Gen. 2:24, for support (Eph. 5:31-33).