

**Text:** Genesis 2:4-25

**Title:** Man and Woman in the Ideal Garden

**Truth:** God sets up man in an ideal living arrangement.

**Date/Location:** Sunday August 28, 2022 at FBC

## Introduction

There is an issue in the interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2: is this an account of more creative work of God, or is it another perspective of what already was written, or is it contradictory of what was already written? God is well able to avoid contradiction, and the text told us in 2:3 that God stopped His work. That leaves one viable option, namely that this text is another look at some of the details of the creation, especially as regards Adam and Eve.

### I. The Creation of Man, 2:4-7

- A. 2:4-6 describes the circumstances of the earth sometime around early day 3 of the creation week. There were no plants yet, no hydrological cycle, no man to plant or tend a garden, and so forth. However, it was a humid kind of situation with a mist that served to water the land, perhaps like the Amazon rainforest.<sup>1</sup> The mist may be translated as *springs* or *streams*. In any case, I believe, the early earth was very fertile and productive. There was no drought condition anywhere.
- B. Fast forward a couple of days to day 6. God formed the man out of the dust of the ground. He took the clay and fashioned it into the body of a man. Obviously, it was a *bit* more complicated than that because this was not a mere sculpture. Think of the great sculptors of history and their works. And then realize those are only outward forms of something that God made outwardly *and* inwardly with billions of complex functioning parts! If a sculpture takes a sophisticated designer, how could anyone think that the actual body—of which the sculpture is only a fraction of a percent of its complexity—was not designed by an even more sophisticated designer?! Like a master craftsman, God did His work (1 Cor. 3:10).

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<sup>1</sup> I read that in the Amazon, humidity is 88% in the rainy season and 77% in the dry season.

- C. God took previously created earthy material and made some of it into a human body. The human body is thus sourced organically from the earth itself. “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). You are connected to the earth, friends. I think this has some implications for those who try to “sanitize” their lives away from dirt and the outdoors and everything natural. We are part of nature, not distinct from it.
- D. But not only did God create a body, He breathed into the body the breath of life. This is not just air, or oxygen and carbon dioxide. This refers to the “spiritual” part of humans. We are not just material, but also have a spirit, a non-material part. Both parts of put together into a whole to make a human being. Without one or the other, something is missing.
- E. The combination of the two parts means that man became a “living being” or a “living *nephesh*” or a “living soul.” Thus body + spirit = soul. In common usage, soul and spirit are basically interchangeable. It is tough to specify a technical difference between them. Of course, God’s word can distinguish the two (Hebrews 4:12) and I think it does so right here by telling us that a living soul is a combination of a body and spirit so that the soul and spirit are not precisely the same thing. If the body and spirit are separated, the person is no longer a living soul. They are dead in that case. Indeed, the Scriptures can show us the true thoughts and intentions of our hearts and help us get down to the difference between what we desire in our flesh and what our spirit as led by God wants.
- F. This simple verse (2:7) reminds us that when we deal with people and their problems, we must keep in mind that people are not just bodies, and not just spirits. They are both, united into one gloriously created, complex being. What affects the body affects the spirit, and vice versa.
- G. Do not get too down on yourself because you think, “I’m no better than dirt!” Your value comes from your creator combining the earthy with the spiritual into a glorious human being.

## II. A Perfect Garden, 2:8-14

- A. It is a lot of work to plant a large garden in the spring, and then to manage it throughout the summer. God planted a garden in Eden, which is “eastward” from the nation of Israel’s location where the Pentateuch was written. This garden was an oasis, a paradise, a perfect place for humans and God to fellowship, for man to tend and as a headquarters to have dominion over the earth and its creatures.
- B. The garden had all kinds of trees that were beautiful to look at and were good fruit trees. Their leaves probably also were of interest to the palate and perhaps also for strength and sustenance. Remember, 1:29 mentioned food and so we understand that from day 6, humans were created to eat. This food was not simply for enjoyment, but for sustenance. The finite creature evidently needs some source of ongoing strength, and God created food for that purpose. It is needed on a regular basis. God provides it, to oft remind us of our dependence on Him.
- C. Two trees were called out for special comment.
1. The tree of life, appropriately located centrally in the garden. This tree is mentioned again in 3:22-24 and again after long absence in Revelation 2:7, 22:2 and 22:14. In those verses, both the fruit and the leaves of the tree of life are of note. Whether God imparted special qualities to the “chemicals” in the tree’s fruit and leaves—or whether God simply designated it as a special tree, the eating of which connects one to God’s life-sustaining power—is not clearly spelled out. I strongly lean toward a non-mystical interpretation.<sup>2</sup> It was evidently eaten just like the other trees. There is no mention of a luminous glow around the tree or a halo or anything of that sort. God simply set it apart so that if you eat of the tree and ( I believe) continue to eat of it, you will live forever. The power to accomplish that ultimately comes from God. This is like “abiding in the vine” (John 15) and continually receiving the life-giving flow from God. Once cut off from that, humans begin the slow process of death

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<sup>2</sup> <https://dbts.edu/2022/05/23/the-two-trees-part-2-the-tree-of-life/>

and eventually run out of the supply of strength with which God initially endowed them.

2. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree is like the first tree in that it was designated by God to have a special result if it was eaten. The result was not from the fruit itself (which was part of God's *very good* creation, after all), but from the act of disobedience when the designated fruit was eaten. Eating of the tree, because of the disobedience of that act, would change Adam and Eve's relationship with good and evil and would bring on God's judgment against sin. They already knew good and evil inherently because as humans they had a functional conscience and understood obedience to God's commands. They were perhaps tempted to become judges of good and evil, arbiters of good and evil, enjoying a kind of autonomy with respect to it and thus to be more like God.<sup>3</sup> What they did not realize under the sway of the tempter (see chapter 3) was that they would not achieve that goal. Instead, they would be plunged into a deep experiential knowledge of evil because of their new condition—total depravity. They would experience good in a limited sense, but they would know evil in a way that they could not in their initial innocent state. Further, they would experience the curse of God because of their disobedience. They thought they would know good and evil in a good way, but instead they only got to know it in a bad way. Disobedience could not result in a truly good outcome.

- D. The remainder of this section, verses 10-14 describes the layout of Eden's neighborhood, with its four rivers, gold, bdellium and onyx, and the relationships to early editions of Cush, Assyria, and the well-known Tigris (Hiddekel) and Euphrates rivers. It seems this Eden was somewhere in the Fertile Crescent, also known as Mesopotamia. That word is from *meso*, middle or between, and *potamos*, which means river. It is the land amid the rivers. The common geographic name of an ancient place is thus connected to the Bible. The first two rivers seem to be lost to us.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://dbts.edu/2022/05/13/the-two-trees-part-1-the-tree-of-the-knowledge-of-good-and-evil/>

### III. Garden Instructions, 2:15-17

A. God settled man in the garden and gave him stewardship over the garden. He was to care for it, which I imagine includes harvesting, pruning, etc. I do not believe his job included pollinating (bees did that job) or weeding or watering.

Furthermore, God told the man that he could eat of every tree except one—the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This was a simple instruction and test which would determine whether Adam would trust His maker or himself. He was obviously given a measure of freedom to choose whether to obey the command.

B. The penalty assigned to eating of the forbidden tree was death—certain death. Ultimately this death includes both spiritual and physical death. We do not know how much Adam understood of the distinction between separation of the spirit from the body (which is physical death) and separation of the spirit from God (which is spiritual death). The latter occurred instantly as soon as the disobedience was chosen; the former took many years to come to fruition. The timing of spiritual death was immediate. The timing of physical death—centuries later—raises a question about the phrase “in the day that you eat of it.” That phrase combined with “you shall surely die” expresses certainty—the *certainty* of both kinds of death was assured.

### IV. The Creation of Woman, 2:18-25

A. The lack of a comparable partner for Adam was well-known to God but became observationally clear to Adam when he named all the animals. This naming was not that Adam somehow intuitively knew what God had already named the animals. Rather, Adam was the steward in charge of all the creation, and God gave him the privilege and authority to *assign* names to the animals. Nevertheless, the intellect that Adam possessed is impressive—that he could classify and appropriately name probably hundreds of *kinds* of animals is amazing.

B. Back to the search for a partner, Adam easily noted that the animal kinds always came in pairs for the purpose of reproduction, but the lone human had no second partner yet.

- C. God designed that Adam would recognize this omission in the creation, and then experience the supply of God in it. God put Adam to sleep, did some quick surgery and used part of Adam as the basis to create a woman. So, it can be said that woman came from man, but today all men come through women (1 Cor. 11:12). A man and woman, pictured by every good marriage, are partners interconnected to one another and humanity. The ontological equality of men and women is thus assured even though there are different assignments given by God to them. (The idea that because of the way God created woman that man has one less rib than woman is simply false. Men and women both have 12 sets of ribs. That “one less rib” idea arises from uneducated speculation of one too lazy to figure out the truth. Some genetic anomalies result in more or less ribs, but these are birth defects or abnormalities.)
- D. Adam was obviously very pleased to see the result of God’s handiwork and expressed that she would be called “woman” to indicate that she is inseparably connected to man even though she is a fully formed and separate person created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).
- E. Verse 24 is somewhat surprising because it suddenly zooms out from the first human pair to a general statement about men leaving their birth families and being joined with a wife to become one flesh. This is a powerful instruction. It marks the marriage of Adam to Eve, even though they had no parents to leave. But they were joined together in the first marriage—after the shortest meet-and-greet, courting, and engagement period ever to occur in human history. The directive also explains that a man and woman become one flesh. This is indeed physical in the marital union, but it is also designed to be—not always practically so—oneness in purpose, spiritual direction, and really all aspects of life. Oneness does not mean sameness, but it means togetherness. Married couples must work to cultivate this kind of union.
- F. Finally, the text notes something that seems extraneous, that both the man and woman were naked. That’s how they were created, and they were entirely comfortable with that state. They were not ashamed like modern people are. Why not? Because there was no sin in world yet. There was no feeling of exposure or insecurity, no

temptation when seeing the opposite sex unclothed, no fear of judgment in the gaze of others, no inappropriateness of the unclothed state, no lack of dignity, no distraction, no shame, no fear of what happens to a naked person in a sinful society.

When sin entered the world, however, there instantly became a sense of all these feelings and an innate knowledge that we are not supposed to be exposed that way except in very limited contexts like marital intimacy and special situations like childbirth or other medical necessity. Clothing covers the shame of sin and reduces temptation. As such, clothing, though not negative itself, is a daily reminder of our sinful state. In addition, who can avoid the remembrance of the clothing of a robe of righteousness, which reminds us that our sin and shame were taken away in Christ.

## **Conclusion**

There are myriad directions we could explore the text of Scripture further. Perhaps you would like to think of one or two this week. Consider for example your stewardship responsibility as one of Adam's offspring. Think of your marriage situation and how your oneness could be worked out in better fashion. Think of the need to obey God in whatever instructions He has given you, lest you experience more ill consequences of disobedience. Consider that if you trust in God, you will someday get to partake of the tree of life.

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