

Genesis 2:4 – 25

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. ⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. ⁸ The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶ The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’ ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him [*Hebrew*: “a helper in opposition to him” or “a helper against him”].’ ¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. ²² The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ ²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Historical and Cultural Background

- *Other Creation Stories*: The proper background to Genesis 1 – 4 are the other creation stories from Mesopotamia and Egypt. The Old Babylonian Epic of Atra-khasis, for example, said that the gods toiled for their food and almost warred with each other. They decide to create human beings to be their slaves, to make food for the gods.
 - *Imagery of Kingship?* French archaeologists made the outstanding discovery at Mari of the royal palace. ‘Special elegance was provided in several halls and courts by multicolored frescoes depicting chiefly ritual and mythological scenes, including an investiture of a king (Zimri-Lim?) in the presence of several deities. This ceremony takes place in an idealized garden, its trees guarded by “cherubim” and symbolically watered by four streams flowing from a single source – all reminiscent of the biblical Paradise story.’¹

¹ Jewish Virtual Library, ‘Mari’; <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/mari>.

- *Thematic Parallels to Genesis 1:1 – 2:3*: Some scholars believe that these two sections are incompatible, based on:
 - *Sequence of Creation*: Were animals created before humans (Gen.1) or after (Gen.2:19)? The Hebrew language does not include the past perfect tense. Verse 19 almost certainly should be translated, ‘Out of the ground the LORD God *had formed* every beast of the field...’
 - *Name of God*: ‘The LORD God’ is the translation of ‘YHWH Elohim.’ Genesis 1 uses simply ‘Elohim.’
- *The Garden*:
 - *Location*: E.A. Speiser (1994) argues that ‘Cush’ (2:13; an ancient name for Ethiopia) is an incorrect translation, and that the word should be associated instead with Cossaea, a Greek name for the Kassite lands in eastern Turkey. We do not know the original referent of the ‘Pishon’ (2:11).
 - *Rest*: The Hebrew word for ‘placed’ in 2:8 is ‘nuah,’ which is similar to the name ‘Noah.’ It has a connotation of ‘rest.’ So God *rested* Adam/humanity in the garden, as He rested on the seventh day (2:1 – 3)
- *The Creation of the Woman, and Marriage*:
 - The word ‘rib’ (*zela*) is often translated ‘curve’ or ‘side’, as in ‘the side [*zela*] of the tabernacle’ (Ex.26:26 – 37). Minimally, this semantic connection portrays Eve as a tabernacle, a dwelling place of God.
 - God ‘formed’ Adam as the potter ‘formed’ clay (Isa.29:16; Jer.18:4). Eve was ‘fashioned’ as Israel’s builders ‘fashioned’ the temple (1 Ki.5:3, 5, 18) to be a ‘helper’ or strong ally, as God was the ‘helper’ to Israel, often in a vital, life-saving or military sense (Dt.33:26, 29).²
 - The literal Hebrew of v.18 – ‘a helper against you’ – implies some kind of opposition between wife and husband, which was interpreted by rabbis as a realistic view of marriage!³
- *Marriage over Family of Origin*:
 - Ancient Assyria: ‘And if my daughter K. dies, then A. my adopted son shall under no circumstances leave my house, because he has to care for my gods and my dead ancestors.’⁴

² The Hebrew noun *ezer* is found 21 times in the Old Testament. Twice, Eve is said to be a ‘helper’ (Gen.2:18, 20). Sixteen times, God is said to ‘help’ or be ‘a helper’ (Ex.18:4; Dt.33:7, 26; Ps.20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:17; 115:9 – 11; 121:1 – 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos.13:9) as a military ally or deliverer. Three times, people provide, or fail to provide, ‘help’ as in life-saving and/or military assistance (Isa.30:5; Ezk.12:14; Dan.11:34). The contexts of where *ezer* is used indicates that we should not interpret ‘helper’ in a diminished way, as if Eve were the inferior to Adam, or as if Adam ‘delegated’ tasks to Eve and parsed roles with her. God created Eve in order to save Adam from perishing on his own, a condition which God says jarringly was ‘not good,’ so that Adam might live and flourish. The context requires a robust understanding of the creational blessing and mission God eventually gave humanity (Gen.1:26 – 28) to spread the garden over the earth, down the riverways (Gen.2:10 – 14).

Marg Mowczko, ‘A Suitable Helper (In the Septuagint),’ *Marg Mowczko*, December 28, 2010; <https://margmowczko.com/a-suitable-helper-in-the-septuagint/> analyzes the translation of the Hebrew *ezer* into the Greek *boethos* and finds the same pattern. She says:

‘There are plenty of other Greek words in the New Testament with the meaning of “help” or “assistance” that have a less lofty, urgent or strong sense.’

Literary scholar Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004) p.22 says that he is not satisfied with the English word ‘help’ as a translation for the Hebrew *ezer*:

‘“Help” is too weak because it suggests a merely auxiliary function, whereas ‘*ezer* elsewhere connotes active intervention on behalf of someone, especially in military contexts, as often in Psalms.” And he translates *ezer kenegdo* as “sustainer beside him.”

³ *Genesis Rabbah* 17.2 – 3, a commentary on the Hebrew text compiled in writing between 300 – 500 AD, tries to explain this ‘opposition’ by making it a range: ‘if he is fortunate, she is a help; if not, she is against him’; the Greek Septuagint translation blunts the Hebrew text. The Greek translation reads βοηθὸν κατ’ αὐτόν, meaning, ‘helper corresponding to him’ or ‘helper suitable for him.’ See Marg Mowczko, ‘Kenegdo: Is the Woman Subordinate, Suitable, or Similar to the Man,’ Marg Mowczko, August 1, 2014; <https://margmowczko.com/kenegdo-meet-subordinate-suitable-or-similar/> for discussion about the difference between the Hebrew and Greek.

⁴ K.R. Veenhof, ‘Old Assyrian and Anatolian Evidence’, Marten Stol and Sven Vleeming, editors, *The Care of the Elderly in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, The Netherlands, 1998), p.133. Beyond Assyria, in the Ancient Near East generally, ‘The head of household or paterfamilias, whether the father (the eldest male) or the eldest son, had complete charge of the household’s property, represented the household in court, and was responsible for maintaining its prosperity and credibility within the community...marriages served not only to produce children and a new generation to inherit property, but they also established social ties, economic connections and a network of association that was designed to benefit both parties [families].’ Victor H. Matthews, ‘Marriage and Family in the Ancient Near East’, Ken M. Campbell, editor, *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003) p.2 and 7

- Confucian China, Japan, Korea: ‘The Master said, ‘Observe what a man has in mind to do when his father is living, and then observe what he does when his father is dead. If, for three years, he makes no changes to his father’s ways, he can be said to be a good son.’⁵ ‘Meng Yi Tzu asked about being filial. The Master answered, ‘Never fail to comply.’⁶
- ‘In Genesis 2 a profound, even revolutionary autonomy and dignity is afforded the married couple...Here is a departure from any social arrangement that would violate the integrity of this one-flesh union in the name of filial piety or honor.’⁷

⁵ Confucius, *Analects* I, 11

⁶ Confucius, *Analects* II, 5. ‘In serving his parents, a filial son reveres them in daily life; he makes them happy while he nourishes them; he takes anxious care of them in sickness; he shows great sorrow over their death; and he sacrifices to them with solemnity.’ Confucius, *Classic of Filial Piety*, discussed by Charlotte Ikels, *Filial piety: Practice and discourse in contemporary East Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 2–3. ‘...The three real obstacles to the spread of Christianity in China...are, first of all, the Confucian dogma that man is born good; secondly, the practice of ancestral worship, which, as has already been shown, is incompatible with Christian doctrine; and thirdly, the rules and practice of filial piety, due directly to the patriarchal system which still obtains in China. It has indeed been seriously urged that the unparalleled continuity of the Chinese nation is a reward for their faithful observance of the fifth commandment. In the face of this deeply implanted sentiment of reverence for parents, it is easy to see what a shock it must give to be told, as in Mark x. 7, 29, 30, that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife; also, that if a man leaves his father and mother for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s, he will receive an hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.’ <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/cair/cair10.htm>.

⁷ Erwin Fahlbusch, editor, ‘Family’, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Volume Two, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001) p.284

Questions

1. First, let's get some technical questions out of the way.
 - a. Order of creation: The 'shrub of the field' and the 'plants of the field' refer to cultivated plants, especially those with thorns, which were a problem after the fall when Adam and Eve had less power to cultivate the ground. So, there is no contradiction here between Gen.2:4 – 25 and Gen.1:1 – 2:3. God made vegetation, in general, first, then animals and humanity.
 - b. Scope of the land: The mist that used to rise out of the ground was probably referring specifically to the garden of Eden, not the whole planet.
 - c. Humans: Were Adam and Eve a literal couple? How do we reconcile this genealogy with scientific thought about fossil evidence of the genus Homo?
 - i. What are the other humanoid species?
 1. Homo erectus: from 1 to 2 million years ago, all over Europe, Africa, Asia
 2. Homo ergaster: from 1.3 to 1.8 million years ago, in eastern and southern Africa
 3. Homo heidelbergensis: from 200,000 to at least 600,000 years ago, in Africa, Europe, western Asia
 4. Homo neanderthalensis: could be a subspecies of Homo sapiens; from 300,000 to 30,000 years ago, in Europe and western and central Asia and now genetically part of Homo sapiens
 - ii. Dr. Francis Collins, a Christian geneticist and once director of the Human Genome Project and the National Institute of Health, suggests that God waited until the earth was safe for fully human life, which he calls *homo divinus*. Thus, the presence of other species of the genus Homo is a sign that evolution reached a safety point for human life, which could be dated anywhere from 500,000 to 200,000 years ago. In this theory, it is possible that Cain's wife, for example, was another Homo species, as opposed to being his sister.
 - iii. Perhaps we can place Adam and Eve to about 300,000 years ago, as progenitors of what we now call Homo neanderthalis, as included in Homo sapiens. Although anatomically modern humans are believed to have begun around 200,000 years ago.
 - iv. 'Mitochondrial Eve' is the most recent human female from which all humans have descended. She dates back to 140,000 to 200,000 years ago. It is possible but not necessary for Mitochondrial Eve to be biblical Eve.
 - v. 'Y-Chromosomal Adam' is the most recent male ancestor from whom all humans are descended. He dates back to 120,000 to 338,000 years ago. It is possible but not necessary for Y-Chromosomal Adam to be the biblical Noah.
 - vi. Perhaps there are more possibilities. And scientific discoveries may also come up with more in the future. But it seems important to say that what we consider to be 'human nature' started with one human couple and was passed down through their descendants.
2. How did God intend for human beings to bear His image and be like Him? List all the ways we can see that playing out here:
 - a. Rest in the garden, because the Hebrew word for 'placed' in 2:8 is 'nuah,' which is similar to the name 'Noah.' It has a connotation of 'rest.' So God *rested* Adam/humanity in the garden, as He rested on the seventh day (2:1 – 3).
 - b. Care for the garden, because God cared for the garden
 - c. Spread the garden, because God wanted the whole world to reflect His beauty and order and life
 - d. Enjoy many tastes and fragrances of the fruit He made, because God saw that everything He made was good
 - e. Enjoy beauty of flowers and ordering colors, etc., because God enjoyed colors and patterns
 - f. Name the animals and the created world, because God brings forth life by speaking
 - g. Love one another, because God loves the other human being made in His image
 - h. Make more human life, because God made human life with the ability to produce life in itself
 - i. Enjoy the love unfolding between other humans, because God enjoys love between other humans
 - j. Enjoy the goodness of God's boundaries, because God respects boundaries out of His love for us
 - k. Learn the difference between good and evil by choosing the good and rejecting the evil, because God chooses the good and rejects the evil

- l. Learn how to be other-centered in a God-centered way
 - m. Eat from the tree of life and gain immortality, and not just immortality but share in the very life of God
 - n. Illus: What is this like? My friend Greg Johnson, when he was a young boy, went with his dad to go planting trees in Seattle, WA.
 - o. Application: Notice that God's commission to human beings is to bring forth life. Now that the fall has happened, and Jesus is restoring God's life into human nature
3. What do you think about the interrelationships between things here?
 - a. The ground and Adam
 - i. Adam is a combination of the land and the breath of God. We are not the product of violence, but a peaceful union of earth and heaven.
 - ii. Adam is a microcosm of earth and heaven.
 - b. The source of the water and the rivers downstream
 - i. This is not a natural river, because rivers converge in nature. This river diverges into four 'headwaters.'
 - ii. There was mystique in the ancient river civilizations about what lies at the source of the rivers. There is a man and woman at the source of the rivers. Interesting...
 - iii. This symbolizes the fact that things you do at the source have downstream effects.
 - c. Adam and Eve
 - i. Eve is made from the 'side' not 'rib' of Adam. This continues the pattern of God dividing things from Genesis 1.
 - ii. What do you think about the phrase 'it is not good' in 2:18? This is the first time God said something other than it was good
 - iii. Why do you think God sequenced the creation of Adam and Eve this way? So that Adam could understand his need for a partner equal to him
 - d. This shows us that our commission to bring forth life ultimately reaches back into God Himself. He is the source of life.
 - i. Illus: leader tell a personal story or give an illustration
 4. For more information about the two trees, see the Small Group Leader Notes on Genesis 2:8 – 17, "The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil", found here: www.anastasiscenter.org/bible-torah-genesis.
 5. Marriage over your family of origin
 - a. The issue here is that we need to understand how all ancient societies worked, as far as we can tell. Most traditional societies still do not treat a married couple as their own family. Usually the wife comes into the husband's family.
 - b. For example, I am ethnically Japanese, and when my mom married my dad, she came to live in the house my dad grew up in. His mom – my grandmother – treated my mom like a slave. And my mom was frustrated that my dad didn't stick up for her. She hated it, and when I got older, my mom said, 'Mako, don't grow up to be a mama's boy – a man who listens to his mother over his wife.' She learned the hard way.
 - c. That's why it's so radical that God said from the beginning that a man would leave his father and mother to be joined to his wife. It was taken for granted that a woman would leave her father and mother. But it wasn't the case that a man would leave his family. Instead, the new wife would become part of the husband's family, and be another 'daughter' to the family. Who had the power in the family? The oldest person alive, or the oldest male. That is true patriarchy. But God said that that must not happen.
 - d. It's only in the family of Cain, the murderer, that this reverses. Cain makes it hard for his son Enoch to leave him, by naming his city after his son. Cain was cursed to wander, but he said, 'Forget that. I'm going to settle anyway, and make my son work the land, defend me, justify me.' So the son was made to serve the father for the rest of his life. That is the origin of human civilization. But would it be in the interest of a patriarchal society to promote Genesis 2? And to maintain it in your culture? No way. No one would invent this. It destroys all the power dynamics of one generation over the other.
 - e. By contrast, in Genesis, God made the first married male and female couple in His image (Gen.1:27), because they, like God, could produce human life. The quality of their relationship is part of being in His image.

- f. Application: Who do you think wrote Genesis 2? What traditional human culture would have done that??? None that I know of. It attests to a loving God.
6. Notice how things get better and better – garden, then man, then woman, then a marriage of oneness. And then, if the fall never happened, every new married couple would have inherited their portion of the garden land. God likes this story so much that He keeps retelling it! A second century theologian named Irenaeus of Lyons called this pattern ‘recapitulation.’ God ‘recapitulates’ the original story over and over.
7. Some scholars believe that Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 give incompatible accounts of creation. Let’s find all the similarities, in word and concept.
 - a. *Filling the Creation:* In Genesis 1, God makes realms (days 1 – 3) and then inhabitants to fill those realms (days 4 – 6). There is one human couple made in the image of God. In Genesis 2, God zooms in on the land, and starts with the one human couple to fill the creation with their children and also to spread the special garden over the wild creation.
 - b. *Authority by Speaking and Naming:* In Genesis 1, God shows His power and authority by speaking and naming. In Genesis 2, God invites humanity to speak and name.
 - c. *Marriage:* In Genesis 1, God makes the creation in a progressive way, culminating in the special creation of a human couple, male and female, in the image of God. In Genesis 2, God makes the creation also in a progressive way, culminating in the human couple, male and female, knowing their interrelationship. And because every new human couple is commanded by God to make their marriage take priority over their parents, each new couple ‘recapitulates’ the original creation order, blessed by God and inheriting their portion of the garden land, along with their parents and every other couple.
 - d. *Rest:* In Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, God rested on the seventh day and rested the creation (2:1 – 3). In Genesis 2:4 – 25, God ‘rested’ Adam/humanity in the garden and made the garden as a place of special ‘rest,’ it seems. The Hebrew word for ‘placed’ in 2:8 is ‘nuah,’ which is similar to the name ‘Noah.’ It has a connotation of ‘rest.’
 - e. *Sequence of Creation:* We have seen that there is no conflict of sequencing plants, animals, humanity (see above).
 - f. *Names of God:* There is no real conflict here. Elohim seems to represent God in His functional mode, of creating. YHWH Elohim seems to represent God in his interpersonal mode, of relating.