

A Living Soul

Genesis 2:4-15

There are all kinds of foolish explanations of Genesis chapter 2, comments about how much different chapter 2 is from chapter 1. The prevailing theory among those we might label as liberals is that chapter 2 was written by a different author than chapter 1, because a different Hebrew name for God is used frequently, the vocabulary of chapter 2 seems different, even the view of God is quite different, and the sequence of the creation account appears different. That's the so-called JEDP theory, with each of those initials representing a different author writing at a different time. It is alleged that chapter 1 is written by the P author, the latest writer of the four, and chapter 2 written by the J author, the earliest of the four. In fact, one writer sums up by stating that the two chapters are "glaringly incompatible in details."

Let me briefly analyze that theory for you. I'll try to be plain and easy to understand. It's rubbish. That theory is absolute rubbish, total foolishness, and not worth the paper its written on. Genesis 2 was written by the same author as Genesis 1, Moses. He wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore wrote without error. So let's move on to more important matters.

We come to a new section in chapter 2:4, introduced by the words, "This is the history..." That phrase appears ten times through the book of Genesis, and was likely the author's own division of the material. Logically, the chapter break should be between verses 3 and 4 also, but it isn't, and there is no way to change that!

The first words of verse 4 refer to the account, the story, or perhaps most accurately, the history of what is described. We have here, the history of the heavens and the earth when they

were created. I might note that this Hebrew word was translated into the Greek word for origins, the word *Genesis*, which gives us our title of the book. But actually, this particular Hebrew word doesn't refer to origins. The word in chapter 2 verse 4 doesn't tell how things or people came into existence, but rather what happened after they appeared on the scene. It's a reference to history, not origins. And that's the primary distinction between chapters 1 and 2. No contradiction whatsoever in anything that is taught. Just a distinction.

Chapter one is an accurate description of the origins of the heavens and the earth. The seven days of creation. Chapter two is an accurate description of the history of what happened during the very early days of the creation of the world. And that history is very much centered upon man. As we studied before, man was created in the image of God, something that separated him from all the other creatures. Man alone among all creation would have a moral relationship with his creator. Man alone would reflect the moral nature of God, and therefore be held accountable for his actions. As we saw two weeks ago, now explained more fully,

I. MANKIND COMPLETED GOD'S WORK OF CREATION.

Verse 4 refers back immediately to the time before the creation of man, the six days of creating activity. Verse 4 actually refers to the time before the third day of creation,

v.5a "...before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown.

Vegetation had not yet come. Not until the third day. We read,

Gen. 1:11 Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed

according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. 13 So the evening and the morning were the third day.”

And something else hadn’t happened yet. There was no rain.
v.5b “For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth...”

Now, rainfall wouldn’t become part of the creation until after the flood, but God did provide abundant water to sustain the vegetation that would grow, as we read in,

v.6 “...but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.”

The word translated mists refers to vapors or even fog. The earth was abundantly watered, and the point is being made that,

A. God created the world so that it would sustain life.

That’s the whole point of these verses. God created the world in such a way that when the time came, on the sixth day, to create man, he would be able to live.

Actually, verse 6 gives us a fascinating description of how the earth was watered before the flood. The seas were created separately from the dry ground, and my assumption therefore is that the seas were, from creation, salt water. Unable to sustain human life. But the earth was different. The earth had it’s own water supply. The springs, streams, rivers and fresh water lakes would be part of the dry ground. In the beginning, the water system was vastly different from that system that began after the flood.

To explain that, let me read as I’ve done in previous weeks from a commentary by Henry Morris. But before I read, let me tell

you that as a civil engineering student many years ago at Virginia Tech, I took a course on water supply and the textbook was written by this same man, who had in previous years been the chairman of the Civil Engineering Department at Va. Tech. He is a PhD scientist, a civil engineering professor and nationally recognized expert in the field of hydrology, or water supply. He is also a Christian, who believes the words of Genesis.

Therefore, he understands that, “the original hydrologic cycle was thus vastly different from that of the present day. The present cycle which began at the time of the great Flood, involves global and continental air mass movements, and annual and seasonal temperature changes...This present cycle centers around the solar evaporation of ocean waters, transportation to the continent in the atmospheric circulation, condensation and precipitation in the form of rain and snow, and transportation back to the oceans via rivers. In the original world, however, there was no rainfall on the earth. As originally created, the earth’s daily water supply came primarily from local evaporation and condensation. There was also, as noted later, a system of spring-fed rivers.”

He goes on to write that, “The change in temperature between daytime and nighttime apparently was adequate to energize daily evaporation from each local body of water and its condensation as dew and fog in the surrounding area each night.”

And so, the waters above the expanse, or above the firmament, formed a great vapor barrier, and the water under the great expanse was formed into the great seas. And there was no rainfall. As we read in,

Gen. 1:6 Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” 7 Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which

were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

9 Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. 10 And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.”

Indeed, it was very good. Rain would first come as God’s judgment in the flood. At creation, there was no need for such rainfall, for there was an abundance of water from the mists and vapors coming up from the earth. God watered the earth, for one particular reason. So that the earth would sustain life.

Particularly, above all else, human life. Therefore, skipping days four and five of the creation story from chapter 1, we read in,

v.7 “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.”

Here is the personal account of when man was created, when the dust of the ground was shaped into a human form, and when that “dust of the ground” was actually given life. When the ordinary elements of the earth, including nitrogen, oxygen, calcium, and others, were energized into life. And it was so very personal. The other animals were brought to life by the word of God. Man was brought to life by the very breath of God.

v.7 “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.”

What we see in that verse is that,

B. God gave man life in order to inhabit the earth.

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground in order to inhabit the earth, and to take care of the earth. But breathless, lifeless dirt doesn’t amount to anything. So God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” A living soul.

The breath of life is a very descriptive definition of life. To be alive is to breathe!

Now, I know that there are all sorts of medical possibilities today, of brain waves continuing after breathing stops, and I know that machines can actually breathe for you, but the basic principle remains true. Breathing is life. Life is breathing.

There are a couple corresponding ideas. First, death is defined as losing the breath of life, breathing out, or expiring, language we still use today. Speaking of her death, the prophet Jeremiah writes that,

Jer. 15:9 “The mother of seven will grow faint and breathe her last. Her sun will set while it is still day; she will be disgraced and humiliated.”

Death is, therefore, breathing out the breath of life.

Secondly, spiritual life is also spoken of in terms of breathing, for the word for breath is the word for spirit. And so we read of spiritual life, spiritual regeneration, spiritual rebirth, as a breathing in of life.

Ezek. 37:9 Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ “ 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet —a vast army.”

In the language of John's gospel, we have this same idea.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Spiritual life means to be born of the spirit, born of the breath of God. And just as God gave man life by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, so he gives his people spiritual life, making them alive by breathing in them. Yet let me say again that the breath of life is not the distinction between man and animal, but rather the distinction between animals and plants. The breath of life is what separates animal life from plant life.

Plants are alive, to be sure. And they die. To be sure. But they do not have conscious life. They do not breathe. They are not living creatures! They are not living souls.

And that is important because before the fall, plants were used as food, and therefore, inasmuch as plants die, there was death. But there was no death to living creatures, living souls. There was no death of any creature which had the breath of life. Not until the sin of man.

Note, as we did last time, the words of,

Gen.7:21 "And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. 22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. 23 So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground:

both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive."

So all the animals have the breath of life in their nostrils. Similarly, all the animals, like man, are called living souls. But nonetheless, even though man and animals are both living souls with the breath of life, still there is a great distinction. Man, created in the image of God, and apart from all the other animals,

II. MANKIND ENTERED A MORAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AT CREATION.

God created man, and personally breathed into his nostrils the breath of life in order to take care of the garden.

v.8

v.15

God made man to fulfill a task, to accomplish a job. He was to work the garden and take care of it. To review a point from chapter 1,

A. Man was given the moral responsibility to take care of God's creation.

The animals weren't given that responsibility, for they didn't have the moral capability of doing so. Animals are governed and controlled by instinct and urge, by conditioning and training, but not by moral choice. God does not entrust the care of his creation to them. But to mankind, created in his own image.

Specifically, we read,

Gen. 1:28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

With that responsibility,

B. God provided man with abundant provisions to sustain life.

Look at what this garden was like.

v.8

It was in the east, that is, quite obviously, somewhere east of where man was actually created. Man was put there, by a loving and gracious father.

And it was a delightful place, for the word “Eden” means delight. Eden itself would be used in Scripture as a symbol of fertility and prosperity. The Garden of Eden would become synonymous with the Garden of God, on the Holy mountain of God. The Hebrew word for “garden” is translated into Greek with the word “paradise.” And ultimately, the Garden of Eden becomes a symbol of paradise, and we see that our eternal home in the new heaven and the new earth will be a return to the delights of the Garden of Eden.

Rev. 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Look at the incredibly rich symbolism of the following verses in Genesis 2,

v.9

What delightful abundance! Two trees mentioned specifically. First the tree of life. The tree that would sustain life. The tree which represented life itself. Notice how that tree also carries over to the imagery of the new heavens and new earth described in Revelation,

Rev. 22:1 “And he showed me a pure river of water of life,

clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.”

The tree of life. In the garden of life. And the river of life.

v.10-14

Now, since we live in after the flood, the accurate identification of these four rivers, and even the exact location of this garden of Eden, are difficult if not impossible to determine. The flood changed the whole geography and topography of this earth, and so, of the four rivers mentioned, only two are recognized in the modern world. The Tigris and the Euphrates. And there is certainly the possibility that those rivers were “moved” during the flood.

But what stands out is the presence of the great river, the river described in Revelation as the river of life. Again,

Rev. 22:1 “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse.”

So right from the garden of Eden, everything that man needed to sustain his life, for eternity, was provided for him. Everything. Everything was a delight. And so it remains today, that everything we need for for life is ours, in Christ. And in the future, in the future age to come, in the new heavens and new earth, we will

have what amounts to a restoration of this glorious experience of fellowship between God and man. We shall have total and complete access to the tree of life. And there shall be no more curse.

So study Genesis with a view toward the future. Understand the glory that we lost at the fall, so that you might understand the glory that will yours in heaven, you who believe in the Lord Jesus.

Rev. 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”