



GENESIS



MARTINE E. MAYER

EDITED BY
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LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY

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LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL* – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS* – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE* – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE* – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

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Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page. The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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GENESIS

MARTIN E. MAYER

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In Genesis God gives His children answers to their basic questions concerning their origin and their relationship with Him. We should, therefore, not look for answers to things that God did not consider important for us. Genesis is not a book of science, but a book of faith.



THE NAME

The word “Genesis” (from the same root word come “genes” and “genetics”) means “the beginning.” Genesis has this name because it describes the beginnings of the world, the human race, and in particular, the chosen people of God.

THE AUTHOR

Moses, who led God’s chosen people out of slavery in Egypt, is credited with being the author. In the New Testament his name is used for the books he authored (Luke 16:29). Jesus referred to Moses as the author of “the Law” (John 7:19), the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Pentateuch. Jewish tradition raises no question about Moses’ authorship. The Holy Spirit has further convinced us that we have here the revelation of the truth of God.

THE PURPOSE

In Genesis God gives His children answers to their basic questions concerning their origin and their relationship with Him. We should, therefore, not look for answers to things that God did not consider

important for us. Genesis is not a book of science, but a book of faith. For that reason we need to note this caution: we dare not put into the text ideas not actually in the text, ideas which may have come out of some other source. We must also be careful not to overlook anything that the text does say. The important thing is that we look at the text as God has given it to us.

We might summarize the purposes of Genesis in this way:

1. God desires to reveal to man his origin and purpose.
2. God also desires to show man his fall into sin — the reason life is marked by pain and suffering.
3. God wants to make man aware of the great promise that He has given about the Savior who will come to bring healing and redemption to this fallen world.
4. God also shows us the beginnings of His chosen people Israel as a people blessed to be a blessing to the whole world, the people from whom came that Savior.

THE PLAN OF GENESIS

The book of Genesis has a natural division:

- The first eleven chapters cover many years and tell us in a very few words the early history of the human race, including its fall into sin.
- The last thirty-nine chapters then pick up the story of one particular family and help us see this family developing

into a nation. This nation is going to have a key role to play in the carrying out of God's plan of salvation.

One commentator said that, very simply, the two divisions in Genesis address the following questions:

Chapters 1–11 Who are we and why is the world in such a mess?

Chapters 12–50 What did God begin to do to rescue His fallen world?

How did this world as we know it come into existence? There have been many responses to that question. Almost all cultures have attempted to supply answers. In some ancient creation stories, there are multiple gods. In their account, the world that came into being is the result of a chaotic battle between rival powers. Other more recent accounts describe the origin of the cosmos as purposeless, a gradual development that happened for no particular reason.

But God in His majestic love for us did not want us to have such a concept of how the world came into existence. Contrary to the creation myths of the nations, Genesis makes clear that there is but one God, and that the world's creation was neither random nor "accidental," but purposeful and orderly. God is the Creator (Gen. 1:1).

Of course, the account of an "intelligently-designed" creation requires faith (Heb. 11:3), but then so does the notion of accidental development of this highly-ordered universe! But it certainly appears from our present knowledge of the universe and human life that the biblical explanation is more logical and addresses our human condition more cogently.

Stated plainly, the Bible is not a “book of science.” Instead it speaks in a popular way, so that people from every culture and educational background can grasp what it says.



SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE

It is a misconception to believe that science stands in opposition to the Bible. God has revealed much about Himself in the “book of nature” (cf. Ps. 19:1 and Rom. 1:20), especially about His glory and power. God has also spoken eloquently in the “book of Scripture,” the Bible, especially about His grace in Christ (cf. John 1:17), and God does not contradict Himself. Where science and Scripture appear to be in conflict, it is likely that our understanding of one or the other (or both!) is incomplete. A thorough understanding of both sources of God’s revelation will result in harmony.

Stated plainly, the Bible is not a “book of science.” Instead it speaks in a popular way, so that people from every culture and educational background can grasp what it says. Some of its statements, therefore, may not be scientifically explainable (e.g. when Joshua commands the sun to stand still in Joshua 10:12). Since most readers are not scientists, God communicates in a language we can all understand. It must be noted that many scientists (including Galileo, Kepler, Newton, and Pasteur) have accepted the Bible as the truth, acknowledged the creative hand of God, and bowed in faith before the Savior, Jesus Christ.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES

In this whole matter we must recognize that there is a different approach to the subject of creation, on the one hand between the

scientist and the theologian, and on the other hand between the Hebrew and the Greek minds.

In the first case, the scientist begins with the “now” and, using the tools at hand, measures backward. The theologian, however, starts from the beginning and looks forward. An example: A scientist looks at the stalagmite and measures and continues to study and measure it, and so determines its age. The theologian looks at it and says in the beginning God created all things. He created this stalagmite too, and since its creation it has grown to what it is now.

Then too there is a difference between the way people with a Hebrew background and those with a Greek background think. We westerners have grown up in a culture that asks “Greek questions.” The Greek wants to delve into the “why, how and when” of things. You know how true that is of us! The Hebrew mind, on the other hand, focuses more on the “who” of identities and relationships. One reason we struggle with questions about Genesis is that we ask Greek questions of a book written for Hebrew minds. The Bethel Bible Series used to challenge its students to “think Hebrew.”

AGE OF THE EARTH

One of those Greek questions is “How old is the world?” Bishop James Ussher, a luminary in the Irish church, attempting to answer in Greek fashion, provided a

chronology for the Bible that was found in the margin of the King James Version. He dated the creation of the world at 4004 BC. This has been a problem for many serious Bible students, since even many “young earth creationists” simply cannot agree that the world is only six thousand years old. So we keep in mind the caution voiced before. The Bible is not answering the question of the earth’s age. The Hebrew mind was focused on the issue of “who” we are and of our relationship with our Creator.

EVOLUTION

Another Greek question asks “how?” What was the mechanism by which things developed? Science’s considered answer is “Evolution,” a word coined to describe changes in species that occur over time. Almost all Christians agree that there have been developmental changes in both animal and plant life, sometimes called “micro-evolution.” But they disagree about whether larger changes from one species to another, sometimes called “macro-evolution,” have occurred. The record of Genesis makes clear that the theory of evolution is not a satisfactory or sufficient explanation of the existence of the earth and all upon it, and especially not of the meaning of human life! Our faith tells us that the world came from the creative hand of God, and that we were made to be like God (“in His image”) and to be stewards of the creation (“have dominion”). These are issues that science does not address.

Here are a few basic considerations:

1. God established the various species in the act of Creation. Change within species is evident, but change across species is not as readily apparent.
2. The progression of history gives evidence of a “fall,” of serious decline rather than unbroken “progress.”
3. While humans share marked similarities with other mammals, especially primates, we reject the notion that humans are simply animals with more complex brains. One of the noteworthy differences is the “incurably religious” nature of humans — “he has put eternity into man’s heart” (Eccl. 3:11).
4. We must object when scientific explanations of the world rule out God’s role in creation or claim that the origin of the world was “accidental” rather than purposeful. It is not in the purview of science to make such claims.

THE GREAT FLOOD

If we accept God as the Creator, we must then also accept God as the one who stands in judgment over His fallen world. Genesis 3–11 tells the recurring story of how God responded to human sin with punishment. One of those punishments was the Great Flood of Noah’s time. We mention this because this Flood likely had a tremendous effect upon the earth, raising questions both scientists and theologians must address.

PRE-HISTORIC ANIMALS

Dinosaurs and other pre-historic life forms existed, but likely were not taken into Noah’s Ark. Their natural history is not revealed to us in Genesis because God deemed it not important. The focus in Genesis, we have stated before, is on humanity — our identity and relationship to the world and to God.

THE MAIN POINT AT ISSUE

In summary, we say that the important questions are not “when” or “how” God created the world, but rather “who” we are and “why” we were made. It is in that spirit that we want to approach the study of the book of Genesis.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

GENESIS 1

Pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance as you read Genesis 1.

1. Upon whom does this chapter focus? What qualities of God are indicated here?

2. What was the original condition of the world?

3. What are the two expressions used often in this chapter to describe the “creative process”? How many times do you find each phrase?

4. How does the Holy Spirit demonstrate His presence at Creation? (1:2; Compare Job 26:13; Ps. 104:30; Ps. 139:7)

5. Where was the Son of God at Creation? (John 1:1–3, 14; 17:5; Col. 1:15–19; 1 John 1:1–2; Rev. 19:13)

6. Why would God create light first? (John 1:5; John 3:19; 1 John 1:7–10)

7. There are varieties of “darkness.” Share a darkness in your life that God has illumined.

8. The use of the word “heaven(s)” in verses 1 and 8 may be puzzling. What do you ordinarily think of when you hear the word? How is it used here?

9. What do you understand Moses to mean by the words “according to their kinds” throughout this chapter?

10. How do we measure time? How is that indicated in verse 14? See also Ps.74:16 and Ps. 136:7–9.

11. According to this chapter, when in the order of things was man created? Keep this in mind for our study of Chapter 2.

12. Why are the words “us” and “our” used in verse 26? John 10:30 may help you as well as John 15:26.

13. Read about the creation of the sexes and sexuality dealt with in vv. 27–31 (see also 2:24–25). How does this begin to answer the question, “What does the Bible say about sex?”
-
14. Besides telling man and woman to reproduce, what other responsibility does God place upon them in verse 28? (Also 1:26; 2:15)
-
15. As you read verses 29–30, describe the diet of man and beast.
-
16. What does that indicate about the relationship between all the creatures immediately after creation? Do we still have this kind of relationship today?
-
17. Express God’s summation about His final act of Creation compared to that of each of the previous days seen in verse 31.
-
18. Describe the impression that you get of yourself as a result of this whole description of Creation in Chapter 1.
-
19. Read Psalm 8:3–9 and write the words and phrases that echo the Genesis story in the following verses:
- Psalm 8:3 _____
- Psalm 8:4 _____
- Psalm 8:5 _____
- Psalm 8:6 _____
- Psalm 8:7 _____
- Psalm 8:8 _____
- Psalm 8:9 _____

LIGHT AND DARKNESS – GENESIS 1:3–5	9
FIRMAMENT – GENESIS 1:6–8	10
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The more we delve into the secrets of the earth and observe its astonishing orderliness, the more we become convinced of the Creator's divine design.



GOD'S ACT OF CREATION

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter has two parts. The first two verses speak of a “preliminary” creation, almost like when a builder sets up the shell for a house. The remaining verses, the bulk of the chapter, describe the details of the actual creation of our world over a very orderly six days. Here are added all the things that make a complete home.

Be sure that you take a careful look at this chapter, because the story of creation told in Chapter 2 is different, and we will try to discover why. This chapter constantly points to God as the Creator and lets us know at the outset what a wonderful God He is. We see in God's whole work of creation His great love, as well as His almighty power and wisdom. All is carefully planned and all is worked out in detail with that plan.

THE PRELIMINARY ACT OF CREATION

GENESIS 1:1–2

The story begins with “In the beginning.” Up until now, the element of time had not existed, because with God there is no time (Ps. 90:4). Here we see that time itself is part of the created order, but at the beginning, there was as yet no way to measure time. The sun and moon, which mark off the days and months, were not yet created.

God is identified as the Creator, and from this point on everything in the story of Creation points to Him (Ps. 19:1). The more we delve into the secrets of the earth and observe its astonishing orderliness, the more we become convinced of the Creator's divine design.

"God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). The word "create" indicates more than just the making or constructing of something. To create means to originate something, and in this case it is obvious that there was no "raw material" from which God could create. Therefore, the word "create" used here means to make something out of nothing.

And what did God create? Everything! Immediately in focus is "the earth." We become more and more aware of the unbelievable range and scope of this creation through our modern methods of transportation and communication. Every aspect of this world received special attention, and the proper plants and animals were provided for each section of the earth. A balance also was introduced into the whole structure, which would make possible the sustenance of all life. A masterwork!

Framing the creation of the earth is that of "the heavens." By this, the Bible means everything beyond the realm of this earth: the sun, the moon, and the vast starry host. We are just beginning to realize the immensity of the universe, with its untold millions of other galaxies besides our own Milky Way. In the heavens, too, everything was created in perfect balance, and it is fitting that the Psalmist should build up our confidence in our Creator by saying to us in Psalm 121: "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

Verse 2 describes the preliminary Creation: "The earth was without form and void" (in Hebrew *tohu vobohu* — a state of complete confusion, a shapeless jumble). The verb could also be translated "became." Why would a world created by an orderly God become a "shapeless jumble"? In answer, some biblical scholars proposed what they called the "gap theory," according to which God initially created a beautiful, orderly world, but then through some great disaster it became "without form and void." The Gap Theory (referring to the supposed "gap" in time between verses 1 and 2) originated in the 19th century when the new discipline of geology was on the rise. It was an attempt to accommodate the geologists' claims that the earth's formation took millions of years. A place had to be found for the vast prehistoric ages, and the most likely place seemed to be between the two aforementioned verses. How was the great disaster that ruined the pre-historic world explained? The theory's proponents linked that disaster with the fall of the angels, and they used the texts of Ezekiel 28:12–16 and Isaiah 14:12–14 as their biblical basis. Such an explanation seems too contrived, and it runs against the repeated assertion in Chapter one that everything created was "very good."

While we generally ascribe the act of creation to our heavenly Father, we observe that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, was present to move upon the face of the water. We have always considered the Holy Spirit as the life-giver, and He would certainly be there in creation to give life. We know the Son of God was present also, for we are specifically told that He played a role in creation (John 1:3). So from the very beginning, the Bible makes us conscious of the Holy Trinity.

God's Orderly Creation in Six Days

GENESIS 1:3-31

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

GENESIS 1:3-5

The creation of the world as we know it today begins with verse 3. It is a systematic work, outlined according to six orderly days of activity. The almighty power of God's Word is shown in the fact that He simply commands the unknown and the known occurs. Ten times in Chapter 1 comes the phrase, "And God said." Again and again comes the companion fulfillment, "And it was so."

Out of chaos and darkness He commanded light to appear, and instantaneously light was there. That God begins with light is more than a matter of optics. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Light, in contrast with darkness, is a symbol which goes with the whole spirit of the Gospel, the Good News of grace in Christ Jesus. Those who have faith in the Savior live in spiritual light and their lives become light for others. Those who reject Christ live in spiritual darkness, and their lives in turn lead others into this darkness (1 John 2:8; John 3:20).

God did not completely remove darkness from the world but divided each day between light and darkness. During the daily period of light, humans are active and working. The daily darkness He called night, when people rest in sleep from their labors.

This was the total activity of the first day. Interestingly, though sun and moon have not yet been created, it is called "the first day," one that even had an "evening" and a "morning." The mention of evening before morning is a reminder for us readers to "think Hebrew," since in Hebrew reckoning, the day began when evening came (literally at sundown).

FIRMAMENT

GENESIS 1:6–8

The second day involved the creation of the firmament (ESV “expanse”). Exactly what this firmament was we do not know. The original Hebrew word *raqiah* indicates something solid (as does the English word “firm-ament”). The stated purpose of this firmament was to separate “the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse” (v. 7) like an enormous dome lid. In his book *The Flood*, Dr. Alfred Rehwinkel suggests that the firmament might have been like a great filter that surrounded the earth and produced a very humid moisture instead of rainfall like we have today. This continuous moisture provided all that was needed for plant life. He believes that this firmament was destroyed by the flood when “the windows of the heavens were opened” (7:11).

“God called the expanse Heaven” (v. 8), and this word is used here in much the same way as it is used in verse 1. “Heaven” here is, very simply, the sky, everything outside the realm of the earth.

EARTH, SEAS AND VEGETATION

GENESIS 1:9–13

On the third day, God became much more active in the work of creation. It began with the separation of the dry land from the water, so that the original shapeless mass began to take on form. The result was vast continents and oceans. The former, God named Earth, and the latter, He named Seas.

Again, I refer to the work of Dr. Rehwinkel. He asserts that at the time of creation there was more dry land on the surface of the earth and less water than now. The same amount of water was there, but it was stored in underground lakes and rivers. He believes all the continents were linked, which is actually in agreement with scientific evidence (scientists have dubbed the original super-continent Pangaea).

But with the flood all this changed. The source of water for the flood was not only the rain that came down from above, but also the underground “fountains of the great deep” (7:11) The result was a great settling of the earth, and as the flood receded the water could not return to the underground areas.

Having now created the dry ground, the loving God of order now began to fill it. So He created all the various kinds of plant life, grasses, shrubs, and trees. Here, too, the plants reflect God’s orderliness. Each plant was designed to reproduce itself, but in a prescribed fashion, “according to its kind.” So God established the limitation of species, with each plant producing its own seed, from which seed new life would proceed.

Many interesting things have been done in the field of botany. Luther Burbank, for example, crossed different fruits and produced some very exotic varieties. But these were not new species because these fruits have not been able to reproduce themselves. Imagine the ensuing chaos if God had not placed this limitation on plant life.

SUN, MOON, AND STARS

GENESIS 1:14–19

Many students have recognized the marked orderliness of the six days. Three days of “forming” (1–3) are followed by three days of “filling” (4–6) which parallel them. The fourth day (creation of “lights”) parallels the first (creation of “light”). Light itself already existed (v. 3), but God decided on the fourth day to create the dispensers of that light, the bright sun for the day, and the far lesser light of the moon for the night. Even in the night, God would not allow complete darkness.

The purpose of these lights is also stated. These lights are the means by which we establish the seasons of the year — spring, summer, fall, and winter. They also help in measuring time by days and years. Let us not forget the stars (v. 16), used for centuries in navigation across land and sea. Up until this time, this was impossible. Now we “have moved fully from timelessness into time.”

FISH AND BIRDS

GENESIS 1:20–23

The fifth day, in similar fashion, parallels the second. On the second day, God had formed sky to separate the waters. Now on the fifth day He created “sky and water creatures” — the birds and fish — to fill the world. God began with the various types of birds, which would serve many purposes. Then He moved to create the marine animals, which we note He created abundantly. The water “swarmed” with them (v. 21), because God in His great wisdom knew that this was necessary for the preservation of the balance of the earth. To each of these many varieties of creatures God gave the ability to reproduce, but always “according to its kind.”

Now the great moment has come: God is ready to create man, for whom this whole creation was intended. God says, "Let us make man in our image." Many commentators understand this plural to indicate the Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



LAND ANIMALS AND MAN

GENESIS 1:24–31

Now comes one final magnificent day of “filling” what God had previously “formed.” Day three had witnessed the formation of dry land. The sixth day parallels the third as God, in His usual orderly fashion, filled that dry land with living creatures. Interestingly, instead of a simple “Let there be,” we read that God commanded the earth to “bring forth” living creatures in some fashion not explained. In this manner is described the creation of all the land animals, which of course reproduce “according to its kind.” Once again, we marvel at the intricacy with which God planned the various types of animals, and gave each its purpose, all in perfect balance so that all animal life may be preserved.

Now the great moment has come: God is ready to create man, for whom this whole creation was intended. God says, “Let us make man in our image.” Many commentators understand this plural to indicate the Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A few believe this reflects God addressing the “heavenly council” (see, for example, Ps. 82:1 and Ps. 89:6–7), though it is God alone who does the creating. As we shall see from Chapter 2, this act of creation was different from all that preceded. This time it was not “Let there be” or even “Let the earth bring forth,” but God getting “personally” involved in the making (see 2:7), for man was to be the crown of His creation.

The fact that God made man in His “image” does not imply that man was made a spirit as God is. Rather it means that man had certain qualities that God had. When God made Eve, He made her from a bone of Adam, which shows he was no spirit. One understanding of the image of God is that it indicates an original righteousness or holiness. The first man was not made with a sinful nature. With that holiness came the ability to enjoy perfect happiness and contentment. Life could be perfect with no concerns. This image was given to man, not to other creatures, for it was man whom God wanted to have with Him to all eternity, man who was given the task of being God’s steward over the rest of the creation. The image of God may also indicate other similarities (intelligence? creativity? awareness of eternity?) which persist even after the Fall. Genesis 9:6 contains God’s prohibition of murder on the basis of people being in God’s image. One writer has pointed out that this may be one very strong reason for the prohibition of images (idols), for God has created the only valid “image” of Himself!

As the crown of creation, man is to have a very serious responsibility. He is to be the ruler (v. 26 “dominion” means “lordship”) over all of God’s creation. It is all there for man’s good, and therefore he should control it for his own well-being. Scientific research that is made today using any of God’s creation for the good of mankind is certainly in agreement with God’s purpose.

In verse 27, the creation of mankind, both male and female, is stated very simply. Both male and female bear God’s image — women are decidedly not a “lesser sex”! In verse 28, God speaks to both of them and assigns another responsibility. With God’s blessing, they were to be fruitful and multiply. The whole act of human reproduction was to be part of the perfect joy God intended for the human race, a participation with Him in the ongoing creation.

However, with the command to reproduce, God also places a responsibility that is often overlooked. Man is to replenish the earth and subdue it, and to that end, he is to use the wisdom God has given him. This surely would include using good judgment in the reproduction of children and in all other things.

Six times in Chapter 1, we read that what God had made was “good.” Here at the apex of creation, the forming of humanity, the text expands the observation to “very good.” We are not simply being informed that God was pleased with what He created. We are being forcefully reminded that the pain and suffering so evident in the world, the “mess we are now in,” is not God’s doing. Chapter 3 will make that very clear.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

GENESIS 2

Pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance as you read the entire chapter of Genesis 2.

1. Chapter 2 could be called “the Second Creation Story.” Does it seem to you like a continuation or an alternate account? What name for God is used in Chapter 1:1–2:3?

Chapter 2:4–25?

2. On what part of creation does Chapter 2 focus almost entirely?

3. Verses 2–3 concern the institution of the Sabbath, but that word is not used here. It is simply called “the seventh day.” How did God use the seventh day according to verse 2? (A clue to the meaning of “Sabbath”!) How can we follow God’s example? (See Heb. 10:25; Eccl. 5:1; Ps. 26:8)

4. What practical things can you do to help you and/or your family observe the Sabbath?

5. Describe the manner in which God’s action showed that man was the foremost of all of his creatures. In 1:26

In 2:7

Genesis 2:15–17

6. What special provision did God make for Adam and Eve’s daily life? What was the specific purpose for which God placed them where He did? (2:15)

7. Name the two special trees in verse 9.

8. What would be the result if they were to eat of the first tree? (2:9, 16)

9. What would be the result of eating of that second tree according to verse 17? (See also 3:19; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:56)

10. What single prohibition did God give Adam? Why were no other commandments needed at this time? (Rom. 2:14–15)

Genesis 2:18–25

11. How does Adam show himself as the master of the created world according to verse 20?

12. What did God say was the only thing that was “not good” in His creation? Accordingly, the first purpose for marriage is what?

13. Observe Adam’s immediate reaction to the woman that God created for him (2:23). Give the words by which he expressed this.

14. Why was she called “woman” (2:23)? Explain why, in addition, Adam gave her the name Eve (3:20).

15. Explain what is implied in the phrase “they shall be one flesh” in verse 24. Also see Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9; Eph. 5:32–33. How would you state the Bible’s original evaluation of sex?

16. Why at this time would their nakedness in no way affect Adam and Eve?

17. What have you learned from this chapter about yourself that has made you more conscious about your relationship to God?

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God's will for man is that he find a wife, and when he has done that, he is to break the ties with mother and father. Marriage between a man and a woman is the original design for humans.



GOD RESTS

GENESIS 2:1–3

These verses are actually the conclusion of Chapter 1, which narrated the six days of Creation. Now we read how God brought all to completion on the seventh day. This climax of the Creation story is the institution of the Sabbath, regarded as one of the pillars of life by the Jews, a special gift from God to all His people.

The seventh day we now call Saturday. For God it was a day of “rest.” God actually needs no rest, as humans do, for He does not grow exhausted. He simply ceased working, and in so doing made this day of rest a pattern for us. According to God’s design, for every six days of labor there should be a seventh day for rest. What is implied by the word “rest” is an open question (Ps. 116:7; Lev. 25:5; Mark 6:31). Rest can simply mean to cease working, as it does here. Or it may mean a change of pace or place, such as taking a day of recreation at a lakeside cottage after sitting at an office desk all week. It remains an important consideration for us who live at a harried pace in our 24/7 culture.

God hallowed that day, set it apart as a day of rest for all of His Creation. Besides providing physical rest for us, it is a day for spiritual renewal and refreshment in which we take time to remember God and His blessings.

These blessings come most powerfully through His Word (Luke 11:28). So the hearing of God's Word has always been considered an especially joyful part of the keeping of the Sabbath Day. Today most Christians do not observe the seventh day as a "Sabbath." Since the earliest days of the church, our day of rest and worship is Sunday, a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, which we observe not by divine command, but voluntarily out of a desire to glorify God (Rom. 14:5–6).

A SECOND CREATION ACCOUNT

Verse 4 commences a second account of creation. The two accounts differ in interesting ways. In Chapter 1 the focus is upon God the Creator; in Chapter 2 the focus is upon man, the crown of God's Creation. In Chapter 1, God is simply called "God" (Hebrew *Elohim*). In Chapter 2 (from v. 3 onward) He is called "the LORD God" (Hebrew *Yahweh Elohim*). The climax of Chapter 1 is the institution of the Sabbath. The climax of Chapter 2 is the institution of marriage. The two accounts are beautifully synchronized.

SETTING THE STAGE

GENESIS 2:4–6

This second account takes up the story before there was any plant life upon the earth, before God had provided any rainfall to sustain such plants, and before there was man to care for this plant life. Verse 6 bears out what was said in the previous lesson about the firmament and the fact that there was a very humid condition on the earth. "A mist was going up from the land" seems to undergird that one source of water was beneath the surface of the earth, and that the earth was not dependent entirely upon rainfall.

In verse 5, the land lies bare, as if waiting. It is like a field unplowed, an empty garden plot. The stage is set, but needs action. Who will appear to "work the ground"?

THE CREATION OF MAN

GENESIS 2:7

In a single verse, God brings His work of Creation to its completion and sets all in motion: "then the LORD God formed the man." We may say that Creation finally and fully begins with man. Paul later reflected that God's Creation was through and for Christ (Col. 1:15–16), who would come down upon the world's stage and make His entrance as a man. The creation of man is done as nothing else. With everything else God simply said, "Let it be!" But with man, God worked "hands on," so to speak, much as a potter shaping clay with his hands.

Like that potter, God actually made a mold of man out of clay, shaping every part of him carefully. The human body is the most intricate, marvelous thing ever created. It is more complex than any other creature. Just think, for example, of the human brain, an astonishingly compact computer which neuroscientists estimate can store a minimum of 10 thousand gigabytes of information!

Into that clay mold, God "breathed" the breath of life. God is life (John 5:26), and He now breathed His eternal life into man, because man was to be the capstone of His Creation. That breath of life animates the man, makes him a "living creature" (ESV). The NIV translates it "living being." These translations are better renderings than others that use the word "soul" to translate the Hebrew word *nephesh*. For many people the word soul carries the unfortunate sense of an "immortal essence" that resides in human bodies. Such a view is mistaken. It is important to note that *nephesh* is a word used of both humans and animals (but not plants), and is generally understood to indicate a "sentient creature." Rather than saying man "has a soul," we more properly say man "is a soul," that is, a living being. The man actually "becomes" a living being — the breath of God makes him so.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

GENESIS 2:8-14

Following the creation of man, the rest of the creation is now described in its relationship to the man, beginning with plant life. God creates a garden or a park for him. The text says in Eden or to the East. Into this garden He placed the man. God provided food for man by causing the trees and all the other vegetation to grow.

These verses also speak of the location of the Garden of Eden, mentioning four rivers. The Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers we know, for they are still in existence. They begin in the Caucasus Mountains and flow into the Persian Gulf to the southeast and finally into the Indian Ocean. They border ancient Mesopotamia (“land between the rivers”), modern-day Iraq. But the Pishon and the Gihon have not been identified. The land of Cush mentioned here is actually Ethiopia in Northeast Africa (2:13). The most likely location of Eden, then, is somewhere in what we call the Middle East. Haley notes that Eden was at the center of the Eastern Hemisphere. God had placed the man He created in the very center of things.

There were two special trees in this garden. One was the Tree of Life, the fruit of which would grant immortality to the body, indicating that our immortality or eternal life is dependent on something outside ourselves. After the fall into sin, when death became one of the punishments, man was no longer allowed access to this tree. But it will, in fact, finally be accessible to those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 2:7, 12:11).

The other tree was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It was apparently a beautiful tree, and good for food (3:6). Popular culture pictures it as an apple tree, though there is no evidence of that. We do not know the exact nature of the tree, but it was the eating of its fruit that constituted the sin of Adam and Eve. God had forbidden them only this one thing: they were not to eat of this tree (vv. 16–17).

Why had God forbidden this tree to them? One answer is that it was a test of their obedience. As long as they refrained from eating of its fruit, they showed that God was the Master of their lives. “The knowledge of good and evil”? His Word was sufficient to know what was good for them, or bad for them! When they finally did eat, they made themselves their own masters. They were saying, “We will decide what is good or evil for ourselves. We will not let you tell us, God!” That is the essence of sin: to presume to run our lives to suit ourselves. That part of the story must wait until the man receives his mate.

LONE MAN IN THE GARDEN

GENESIS 2:15–18

After having prepared this garden, the Lord then put Adam into it to take care of it. In so doing, He gave man the work of being His steward, the manager of the garden, and indeed the whole earth. Even before the fall into sin, man was not to be idle because this is never good. The ability to work is a blessing, while idleness is the devil's workshop (Eccl. 10:18).

For now the man must work alone. But not for long! Verse 18 indicates how God planned to meet that need. This verse begins by acknowledging the natural loneliness that individuals have. God Himself observed the one thing in all creation that was NOT good: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (v. 18). God had also placed into man the sexual instinct, and He determined to provide Adam a partner who would complement his nature and provide companionship as well. Note how beautifully it is stated: "I will make him a helper fit for him."

The story of the making of a woman from a rib while Adam slept provides an explanation for the origin of the word "sex," which comes from a Latin word meaning "to cut." This cutting, this divine surgery, illustrates how the two sexes are cut from the same original whole and made to fit back together ("one flesh" v. 24)! An ancient Syrian proverb says in effect: "God did not make woman from a bone in man's head that she might be superior to him; nor from a bone in man's foot that she might be subservient to him; but from a bone from man's side, so that she might stand beside him."

CREATION OF THE ANIMALS

GENESIS 2:19–20

God had created man and provided a home in which the man could live. But the problem of the man's loneliness was as yet unsolved. The mention of the animals seems to be an audition for "a helper fit for him" (v. 20)! We are perhaps puzzled by the fact that He also formed these creatures "out of the ground" (v. 19). There really is no explanation, save that the animals were created in a manner similar to the man's own making. A clear difference between man and the animals, however, is the absence of the "breath of life" in making the animals, along with the earlier commission that humans were to have "dominion" over the whole animal world (1:28).

God then shows Adam that He had really turned His whole Creation over to him to care for and to utilize for his own good. Adam begins to exercise his dominion by carefully giving names to all the creatures, and the names have stuck in many cases to this day. Dominion, yes. But a "helper fit for him"? Not yet.

THE CREATION OF WOMAN

GENESIS 2:21–25

Among all the animals, Adam found no partner for himself. So God proceeded to create a partner for man. He undertook a special effort to create woman, and we might, in jest, say that His second effort was better than His first! God provided that partner in a memorable way. She comes out of the man, for she is to be a part of him, a vital part. A rib of Adam is used for she is to stand at his side as his helper. God carefully formed her body in complementary fashion to that of the man and brought her to him. It was the first

As Adam and Eve were important to Him in His plan for the future, so we, too, are important to God in His plan for the future. Our presence on earth was planned by Him, and this exalts human existence to a point where we want to do the best we can with our lives in service to our wonderful Creator.



wedding ceremony. Can you appreciate the feeling of the two when they first saw each other? It was pure delight that came to them from their loving Creator, a delight that prompts the first poem (2:23).

Adam at once recognized that this creature was for him. He calls her “woman,” knowing that she was taken from his side, out of man. The similarity of the words “man and woman” parallel that similarity of the Hebrew words from which they are translated (*ish* and *ishshah*). Then follows definition of marriage: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh,” a beautiful statement that Jesus later cites (Matt. 19:5). God’s will for man is that he find a wife, and when he has done that, he is to break the ties with mother and father. Marriage between a man and a woman is the original design for humans. Homosexuality is not according to the will and design of God, but reflects a rupture in the created order, as Paul later makes clear (Rom. 1:26–27).

The last verse is important, for it shows that there is nothing shameful about being sexual creatures. The original sin was not sex, as some have tried to teach, but disobedience. Before the fall into sin, nakedness caused no feeling of shame and guilt. That feeling came only after the humans disobeyed God (3:7).

The whole chapter ought to make us very conscious of our importance in the eyes of God. While God created Adam and Eve in a very special way, let us not forget that He also created each one of us by a miracle of His grace. As Adam and Eve were important to Him in His plan for the future, so we, too, are important to God in His plan for the future. Our presence on earth was planned by Him, and this exalts human existence to a point where we want to do the best we can with our lives in service to our wonderful Creator.