

Genesis 2 • First Things

Introduction

There's a seminary term known as "progressive revelation". This is meant to express the fact that God did not reveal every single thing about Himself or the Law all at once, but did so gradually in stages. Sometimes people call these "ages" or "dispensations" to reflect the fact that what was revealed to Adam was not as much as later revealed to Noah, and that not nearly as much as would come through Abraham and Moses. God progressively reveals more and more about Himself until the ultimate fulfillment in His Son. But here at the beginning, we have four of the very first things He ever revealed which provide the building blocks for all things to follow.

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ²By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Read v.1-3 The First Sabbath

Q: What does "Shabat", the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" actually mean?

A: It simply means "to cease". God did not "rest" because He was weary since God does not become weary. Rather, He "ceased" from His creative works as those tasks were now completed.

*Behold, He who keeps Israel
Will neither slumber nor sleep.
— Psalm 121:4*

Q: So what might be significant about the fact that God "blessed the seventh day"?

A: God blessed the creatures (Gen. 1:22) and man (Gen. 1:28) and now blesses the Sabbath by setting it apart as a special day.

Point: *There is as yet no commandment to observe the Sabbath. In fact, since Adam was created on the sixth day, the Sabbath Day was actually the first day for him.*

Q: How is the Sabbath referred to in the rest of Genesis?

A: This is a trick question since the term "Sabbath" never appears in all of Genesis and is not formally used until Exodus 16:23. God does not give the Sabbath to Israel as a special sign of His covenant with them until Exodus 20:8-11.

Q: Did God ever tell the Gentiles to observe the Sabbath?

A: No such direction is recorded in the whole of Scripture. In fact, it is made quite clear that the Old Testament Law given through Moses was given only to Israel.

*He declares His words to Jacob,
His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.
He has not dealt thus with any nation;
And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.
Praise the Lord!
— Psalm 147:19-20*

Point: *One reason Israel was sent into captivity was because the people profaned the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-22), in effect breaking their covenant with God. While on earth Christ observed the Sabbath since He lived under the dispensation of the Law, but He did not follow the man-made rules of the Pharisees which had broadened the conditions of the Sabbath far beyond God's original intentions. (See Mk. 2:23-28)*

Q: So why do Christians generally meet on Sunday rather than Saturday?

A: In the Early Church Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead, was referred to as "The Lord's Day" and became the church's special day for fellowship and worship. (See Acts 20:7; 1 Co. 16:1-3; Rev. 1:10)

Point: Whereas the “Sabbath Day” related to the old creation and was given expressly to Israel, the “Lord’s Day” relates to the new creation through Christ and belongs especially to the church. The Sabbath represents the Law as six days of labor followed by rest, but the Lord’s Day represents grace because we begin the week with rest followed by works.

Q: Is it permitted for Christians to worship on the Sabbath?

A: Yes, as long as they do not judge or condemn believers who do not join them.

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

— Colossians 2:16-17

In fact, the legalistic keeping of the Sabbath by Christians is actually seen as a return to bondage from which we’re supposed to be spiritually free from.

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

— Galatians 4:9-11

Paul even suggests in Romans 14:4-13 that Sabbath-keeping can be the mark of an immature Christian who has a weak conscience.

Application: We have to examine the whole of Scripture to fully understand what it means to “rest” or dedicate a special day to the Lord. Hebrews 4 indicates that the greater spiritual meaning of the Old Testament Sabbath is as a type for the future kingdom of rest as well as the spiritual rest we obtain through faith in Christ.

Read v.4-11 The First Garden

Q: What are the four gardens which could be used to summarize biblical history?

1. The Garden of Eden, where sin entered.
2. The Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ yielded to death.
3. Calvary, where Christ died and was buried. (See Jn. 19:41-42)
4. The garden in paradise in Rev. 21 as part of the new creation.

Q: What is the one, common characteristic of each one of these gardens?

A: The Tree of Life appears in each and every one of them.

Q: What was God’s plan for man?

A: Man was not meant to simply live in the garden, but was to “cultivate the ground” (v.5). If we sneak a peek at v.15, it further indicates man was supposed to “keep” the garden, a word often associated with “guard” or “protect”. In other words, man was to work and keep the garden according to God’s standards.

Application: God’s plan for mankind can be divided into three phases: Creation, New Creation, and Re-Creation. What is lost in the first Creation is recovered spiritually through the work of Christ to make us a new creation in Him, and at the end of time will be physically restored to God’s original plan when everything is re-created in the form of the New Heaven and New Earth.

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven. ⁵Now 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. ⁶But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then 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. ⁸The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ⁹Out 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.

¹⁰Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹The name of the first is Pishon; it flows

around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. ¹⁶The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷but 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."

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹Out 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. ²⁰The 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. ²¹So 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. ²²The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. ²³The 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."

Read v.15-17 The First Law

Q: So what can we deduce about Adam where the nature of sin is concerned?

A: Although he was a perfect creation of God who had never sinned, Adam had the ability – the free will to exercise his choice – to sin.

Point: *God has always wanted His creatures to love and obey Him of their own free will and not out of compulsion or because of reward.*

Q: Why do you suppose it was necessary for Adam to be tested?

A: Among other things it may be due to the fact that Adam was actually made a kind of king with dominion and authority. (Gen. 1:26) A ruler can only rule others if he can rule himself. He must be accountable personally for whatever he makes others accountable for.

Q: How is it possible that we can characterize this as a "fair and just" test?

A: Adam and Eve not only enjoyed personal liberty but abundant provision in the Garden. They had no **NEED** for the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Application: *Through Christ God has provided everything that we need, and yet what areas of your life do you seem to want more? What are the things which you may be yearning or striving for beyond what you really need spiritually?*

Read v.18-25 The First Marriage

Q: Why does God's statement in v.18 regarding Adam's loneliness stand out in stark contrast to the rest of Genesis to this point?

A: Because everything else was deemed "good" by God with the exception of this.

Q: What are the main reasons for marriage?

1. To provide companionship.
2. To sustain and carry on the race.
3. To help one another and bring out the best.

Application: *How does this compare with the reasons you got married or the reasons people today hold up as the purpose for marriage?*

Q: Why might it be significant that the woman is described in v.18 as a "helper"?

A: The Hebrew word "ezer" not only describes someone who assists another with what is needed, but refers to the power to accomplish a task. It's a very strong way of denoting the spiritual partnership a husband and wife are to have in accomplishing God's will in their lives together.

Q: Why do you suppose that of all the parts of the body, Eve was "fashioned" from a rib?

A: It's possible that she was not made from man's feet so as to be trampled by him, or from his head so as to rule over him, but from his side to be near his heart and loved by him.

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²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Q: How do these events provide a deeper picture of Christ and the church?

1. Christ, the Last Adam, gave birth to the church as He slept in death on the cross and men opened His side. (Jn. 19:31-37)
2. Christ partook of our human nature that we might be partakers of His divine nature.
3. Eve was the object of Adam's love and concern just as the church is for Christ.
4. Eve was formed before sin came onto the scene just as we were chosen in Christ "*before the foundation of the world*". (Eph. 1:4)
5. Others?

Q: What are the three pictures of the church in these verses which correspond with the church as pictured in Ephesians?

1. Eve was the bride. (Eph. 5:21-33)
2. Eve was part of Adam's body. (Gen. 2:23; Eph. 5:29-30)
3. Eve was "*fashioned*", a word which also means "made" or "built", a term used to describe the church as the temple of God. (Eph. 2:19-22)

Application: Nearly every rule and example of marriage in Scripture teaches us something greater about our intended relationship with Christ.

Overall Application

These four things are very prominent, repeated themes throughout the entire Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. It's important that we properly ascribe to them their greater spiritual meanings as well as seek to understand the greater teachings the Holy Spirit is trying to speak to through them since they encompass the entire range of the purpose of God's Law to the application of His grace, to our personal relationships both physical and spiritual.