



GENESIS, CHAPTER 2

- 1 Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. **a**
- 2 * On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. **b**
- 3 God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation. **c**

The Garden of Eden.

- 4 This is the story* of the heavens and the earth at their creation. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—
- 5 there was no field shrub on earth and no grass of the field had sprouted, for the LORD God had sent no rain upon the earth and there was no man* to till the ground,
- 6 but a stream* was welling up out of the earth and watering all the surface of the ground—
- 7 then the LORD God formed the man* out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. **d**
- 8 The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,* and placed there the man whom he had formed. **e**
- 9 * Out of the ground the LORD God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **f**

- 10 A river rises in Eden* to water the garden; beyond there it divides and becomes four branches.
- 11 The name of the first is the Pishon; it is the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.
- 12 The gold of that land is good; bdellium and lapis lazuli are also there.
- 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon; it is the one that winds all through the land of Cush.**g**
- 14 The name of the third river is the Tigris; it is the one that flows east of Asshur. The fourth river is the Euphrates.
- 15 The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it.**h**
- 16 The LORD God gave the man this order: You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden**i**
- 17 except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die.* **j**
- 18 The LORD God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suited to him.* **k**
- 19 So the LORD God formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the air, and he brought them to the man to see what he would call them; whatever the man called each living creature was then its name.
- 20 The man gave names to all the tame animals, all the birds of the air, and all the wild animals; but none proved to be a helper suited to the man.
- 21 So the LORD God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.**l**
- 22 The LORD God then built the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman. When he brought her to the man,

23 the man said:

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones

and flesh of my flesh;

This one shall be called ‘woman,’

for out of man this one has been taken.”*

24 **m** That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.*

25 The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame.*

* [2:2] The mention of the seventh day, repeated in v. 3, is outside the series of six days and is thus the climax of the account. The focus of the account is God. The text does not actually institute the practice of keeping the Sabbath, for it would have been anachronistic to establish at this point a custom that was distinctively Israelite (Ex 31:13, 16, 17), but it lays the foundation for the later practice. Similarly, ancient creation accounts often ended with the construction of a temple where the newly created human race provided service to the gods who created them, but no temple is mentioned in this account. As was the case with the Sabbath, it would have been anachronistic to institute the temple at this point, for Israel did not yet exist. In Ex 25–31 and 35–40, Israel builds the tabernacle, which is the precursor of the Temple of Solomon.

* [2:4] **This is the story:** the distinctive Priestly formula introduces older traditions, belonging to the tradition called Yahwist, and gives them a new setting. In the first part of Genesis, the formula “this is the story” (or a similar phrase) occurs five times (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10), which corresponds to the five occurrences of the formula in the second part of the book (11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1[9]; 37:2). Some interpret the formula here as retrospective (“Such is the story”), referring back to chap. 1, but all its other occurrences introduce rather than summarize. It is introductory here; the Priestly source would hardly use the formula to introduce its own material in chap. 1.

The cosmogony that begins in v. 4 is concerned with the nature of human beings, narrating the story of the essential institutions and

limits of the human race through their first ancestors. This cosmogony, like [1:1–3](#) (see note there), uses the “when...then” construction common in ancient cosmogonies. The account is generally attributed to the Yahwist, who prefers the divine name “Yhwh” (here rendered LORD) for God. God in this story is called “the LORD God” (except in [3:1–5](#)); “LORD” is to be expected in a Yahwist account but the additional word “God” is puzzling.

* [\[2:5\]](#) **Man:** the Hebrew word *'adam* is a generic term meaning “human being.” In chaps. [2–3](#), however, the archetypal human being is understood to be male (Adam), so the word *'adam* is translated “man” here.

* [\[2:6\]](#) **Stream:** the water wells up from the vast flood below the earth. The account seems to presuppose that only the garden of God was irrigated at this point. From this one source of all the fertilizing water on the earth, water will be channeled through the garden of God over the entire earth. It is the source of the four rivers mentioned in vv. [10–14](#). Later, with rain and cultivation, the fertility of the garden of God will appear in all parts of the world.

* [\[2:7\]](#) God is portrayed as a potter molding the human body out of earth. There is a play on words in Hebrew between *'adam* (“human being,” “man”) and *'adama* (“ground”). It is not enough to make the body from earth; God must also breathe into the man’s nostrils. A similar picture of divine breath imparted to human beings in order for them to live is found in [Ez 37:5, 9–10](#); [Jn 20:22](#). The Israelites did not think in the (Greek) categories of body and soul.

* [\[2:8\]](#) **Eden, in the east:** the place names in vv. [8–14](#) are mostly derived from Mesopotamian geography (see note on vv. [10–14](#)). Eden may be the name of a region in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), the term derived from the Sumerian word *eden*, “fertile plain.” A similar-sounding Hebrew word means “delight,” which may lie behind the Greek translation, “The Lord God planted a paradise [= pleasure park] in Eden.” It should be noted, however, that the garden was not intended as a paradise for the human race, but as a pleasure park for God; the man tended it for God. The story is not about “paradise lost.”

The garden in the precincts of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem seems to symbolize the garden of God (like gardens in other temples); it is apparently alluded to in [Ps 1:3](#); [80:10](#); [92:14](#); [Ez 47:7–12](#); [Rev 22:1–2](#).

* [2:9] The second tree, the tree of life, is mentioned here and at the end of the story (3:22, 24). It is identified with Wisdom in Prv 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4, where the pursuit of wisdom gives back to human beings the life that is made inaccessible to them in Gn 3:24. In the new creation described in the Book of Revelation, the tree of life is once again made available to human beings (Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).

Knowledge of good and evil: the meaning is disputed. According to some, it signifies moral autonomy, control over morality (symbolized by “good and evil”), which would be inappropriate for mere human beings; the phrase would thus mean refusal to accept the human condition and finite freedom that God gives them. According to others, it is more broadly the knowledge of what is helpful and harmful to humankind, suggesting that the attainment of adult experience and responsibility inevitably means the loss of a life of simple subordination to God.

* [2:10–14] **A river rises in Eden:** the stream of water mentioned in v. 6, the source of all water upon earth, comes to the surface in the garden of God and from there flows out over the entire earth. In comparable religious literature, the dwelling of god is the source of fertilizing waters. The four rivers represent universality, as in the phrase “the four quarters of the earth.” In Ez 47:1–12; Zec 14:8; Rev 22:1–2, the waters that irrigate the earth arise in the temple or city of God. The place names in vv. 11–14 are mainly from southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), where Mesopotamian literature placed the original garden of God. The Tigris and the Euphrates, the two great rivers in that part of the world, both emptied into the Persian Gulf. Gihon is the modest stream issuing from Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:8; 1 Kgs 1:9–10; 2 Chr 32:4), but is here regarded as one of the four great world rivers and linked to Mesopotamia, for Cush here seems to be the territory of the Kassites (a people of Mesopotamia) as in Gn 10:8. The word Pishon is otherwise unknown but is probably formed in imitation of Gihon. Havilah seems, according to Gn 10:7 and 1 Chr 1:9, to be in Cush in southern Mesopotamia though other locations have been suggested.

* [2:17] **You shall die:** since they do not die as soon as they eat from the forbidden tree, the meaning seems to be that human beings have become mortal, destined to die by virtue of being human.

* [2:18] **Helper suited to him:** lit., “a helper in accord with him.” “Helper” need not imply subordination, for God is called a helper (Dt 33:7; Ps 46:2). The language suggests a profound affinity between the

man and the woman and a relationship that is supportive and nurturing.

* [2:23] The man recognizes an affinity with the woman God has brought him. Unlike the animals who were made from the ground, she is made from his very self. There is a play on the similar-sounding Hebrew words *'ishsha* (“woman,” “wife”) and *'ish* (“man,” “husband”).

* [2:24] **One body:** lit., “one flesh.” The covenant of marriage establishes kinship bonds of the first rank between the partners.

* [2:25] **They felt no shame:** marks a new stage in the drama, for the reader knows that only young children know no shame. This draws the reader into the next episode, where the couple’s disobedience results in their loss of innocence.

a. [2:1] [Is 45:12](#); [Jn 1:3](#).

b. [2:2] [Ex 20:9–11](#); [31:17](#); [Heb 4:4](#), [10](#).

c. [2:3] [Ex 20:11](#); [Dt 5:14](#); [Neh 9:14](#).

d. [2:7] [Gn 3:19](#); [18:27](#); [Tb 8:6](#); [Jb 34:15](#); [Ps 103:14](#); [104:29](#); [Eccl 3:20](#); [12:7](#); [Wis 7:1](#); [Sir 33:10](#); [1 Cor 15:45](#).

e. [2:8] [Is 51:3](#); [Ez 31:9](#).

f. [2:9] [Gn 3:22](#); [Prv 3:18](#); [Rev 2:7](#); [22:2](#), [14](#).

g. [2:13] [Sir 24:25](#).

h. [2:15] [Sir 7:15](#).

i. [2:16] [Ps 104:14–15](#).

j. [2:17] [Gn 3:2–3](#); [Rom 6:23](#).

k. [2:18] [Tb 8:6](#); [Sir 36:24](#); [1 Cor 11:9](#); [1 Tm 2:13](#).

l. [2:21] [Sir 17:1](#); [1 Cor 11:8–9](#); [1 Tm 2:13](#).

m. [2:24] [Mt 19:5](#); [Mk 10:7](#); [1 Cor 7:10–11](#); [Eph 5:31](#).

