**GOD’S BEAUTIFUL DESIGN (GENESIS 2:4-25)**

The second chapter of Genesis is a great chapter and we actually studied it in this class about 3 years ago. In this chapter we are given a detailed account of God’s creation of man and woman. Let’s start reading the text…

READ Genesis 2:4. The term “Lord God” appears for the very first time. This is the covenant name for God, Yahweh. It’s the formal name used by God’s people for God. This verse definitely has man and his relationship with his Creator in mind. I see verse 4 as a transition verse. The focus up to this point has been God’s creation generally. From this verse to the end of the Bible the focus is on God’s relationship with the last of His creation and the only one described as being made in God’s image – human beings or mankind or humankind.

READ Genesis 2:5-6. This is how the world was operating prior to the fall. A lot of people have mistakenly interpreted v 5 as referring back to Day 3 when God created plants and trees. Some wrongly see these verses as a rehash of the creation account. But that’s not the case. We are in Day 6 when God creates man. We know plants and trees already exist. The “bush and plant of the field” are obviously different plants. But what plants are they? These plants here are those that become quite prominent after the fall in Chapter 3, namely, thorns, thistles and weeds and cultivated crops that will be the product of man’s tilling of the soil. Before the fall there is no cultivated land. The earth brings forth its own food naturally produced by seeds of its own.

The last part of v 5 tells us that at this point there is no rain yet, no evaporation of water up into the clouds and then released over the earth. Instead there is, v 6, a “mist” that rises up from the earth and waters it. This mist can be better translated as flow. So a flow of water, most likely underground springs gushes up and keeps the ground saturated. This allows plant and tree life to flourish. It is in this environment that God forms man. These verses lay out the setting for man’s creation.

READ Genesis 2:7. Notice that there is no evolution process mentioned here. Humans did not evolve from apes! Instead God forms man. God personally forms man out of the dust and then breathes into him life. And then God takes great care of this newly created man.

READ Genesis 2:8-9. God makes a special home for man, the Garden of Eden. God becomes the first gardener. “Eden” means well-watered place. It’s a garden paradise. Moses describes Eden’s location, v 8, as “in the east.” It’s impossible to know for sure where Eden was because the world that existed before the great Flood was somewhat different both geographically and topographically than after the Flood. But “in the east” probably means it was east of the Promised Land, east of Israel. The most beautiful trees are planted in the Garden of Eden as well as the best plants for food. Man has everything he needs to survive. The prophet Ezekiel (Ch 28) talks about the Garden of Eden as “the holy mountain of God.” This indicates that Eden was likely up on an elevation as opposed to down in a valley. We know this must be true because as we are about to see rivers flowing out of Eden in different directions. And we know that water flows downhill. Ezekiel Ch 31 talks about how the Garden of Eden contained towering trees, cedars and firs, and how all the birds of heaven nested in their branches.

In addition to all the trees present in this garden paradise, God also places two supernatural trees in the middle of Eden: (1) the tree of life and (2) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both have special properties. The tree of life could sustain life. The other tree somehow produces the knowledge of evil. Man already has the knowledge of good because good was all that was around him. It is all he knows – a perfect world unstained by sin. We know from Genesis 1:31 that the finished creation is “very good.” The tree of life is a unique tree which we will see again in the eternal kingdom (Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14). But the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will NOT be part of the eternal kingdom. Yet God in His sovereignty chooses to place this tree in the Garden of Eden. Why would God do that? Well He had a reason and we’ll talk about that a bit later.

READ Genesis 2:10-14. A river flows through the garden. It divides and becomes 4 rivers, which in turn flow out of the garden. The names of the rivers are given: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates. We know from Genesis 10 that the river Pishon flows southward probably toward Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The land of Havilah where there is gold is likely the same as Ophir in Genesis 10 and talked about several times in the Old Testament. It is always associated with much gold. The river Gihon flows westward to the land of Cush (Ethiopia). The Tigris river flows NW toward Assyria. The Euphrates flows SE toward the Persian Gulf. These rivers flow out of Eden so it must be at a higher elevation than the places the rivers are flowing toward.

READ Genesis 2:15-17. God gives newly created man a task to perform – he is to work and to keep the garden. Remember that this is prior to the fall and before the great Flood, so no irrigation is required; there are no leaves to rake; no trash to pick up; no weeds to pull; no planting of seeds required. Oh, I’m sure there must have been some things that needed tending to, but it sounds like before the fall man’s job is fairly easy. God gives him one command – ONE simple rule to follow, v 16-17, “You can eat of any tree in the garden except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The penalty for eating from that particular tree is stated: “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” This is interesting because at the time God gives this command there’s no death or at least no death has been recorded yet. Somehow man knows what dying means though he has not seen it. Whatever “surely die” means it must not be a good thing.

Well we all know how the story goes. In Genesis Ch 3 man disobeys God and eats of this tree. He sins and death results. Do you think God knew all of that would happen? Yes, of course He did. So why would God place this tree here in His garden where it could potentially be a temptation? God knew it would be the source of man’s undoing, right? This is one of those great theological debates. One commentary I read said that it was to test man’s loyalty and love for his Creator. Perhaps. But knowing what would happen, sovereign, all-knowing, wise God puts this tree there anyway. Why? In order that the whole story of the redemption of man might play out, which it does, and reveal to us in His time the greatest characteristics of God – His love, grace and mercy.

Now, from a purely logical standpoint there is no reason at all for man to disobey God and eat from that tree. He has everything he needs (or at least he will after God makes woman). The consequences for disobedience are dire. Logically it doesn’t seem like much of a temptation given man’s great life there in the garden. To me it’s a bit like walking along the edge of a cliff – why would anybody in their right mind do that?

READ Genesis 2:18-23. In the account of God making woman it’s interesting to note that God recognizes man’s need for a partner, a helper even before man does. We see that in v 18. God said, “This is not good. I will make him a helper fit for him.” Then God brings all the animals to the man to name, v 19. In the process of naming all the animals the man notices that each of the various animal species has a partner. Each are male and female. But none of these creatures, v 20 says, were “fit for him.” None of the animals met the man’s need for intimate companionship. The man recognizes that he alone has no partner. So while the man sees his need in v 20, God had already planned to do something about it, back in v 18.

And so it is that in v 21 God becomes the first anesthesiologist and the first surgeon. God performs surgery on the man. God pulls out His divine scalpel and the ESV says He takes out a rib. A better translation of the Hebrew here would be “side.” God removes some flesh, tissue, blood and bone from the man and uses that material to form a female version of man, later called woman. So man was formed out of dirt while woman was formed out of man. When man and woman are created they are full grown adults. And both were made in the image of God. After the surgery is performed God brings this newly created partner to the man.

Have you ever been to a wedding? You sit there in eager anticipation. Then all of a sudden that music begins to play and here comes the bride! Everybody stands up and turns and looks at the bride. The next time you go to a wedding instead of looking at the bride I want you to turn and look at the groom and his facial expression. That’s worth the price of admission! That’s what Adam’s expression looked like when he saw woman for the first time. Adam’s excited to have this newly created partner and he’s very happy.

In v 23 we have the first ever recorded love song. The man sees his new partner and breaks out in song. We used to read Bible stories to our grandkids at bedtime and I remember telling them when man saw his new partner his reaction was, “WOE, MAN!!” Although I said that as a joke I don’t think it is too far off. Man was impressed. He liked what he saw! “God, you did good!” The Hebrew word for man is Ish. Woman is Ishshah. The verb form of Ishshah, means “to be soft and delicate.” The man and woman, though both are human beings and made in the image of God, are uniquely different. And while they are partners together in God’s plan, they complement each other – they go together. God knew what He was doing!

READ Genesis 2:24-25. Here God establishes the foundation for marriage. This is His design. One man, one woman, each one leaving their parents and holding fast (KJV “cleaving”) to each other, becoming one flesh. Notice what the Bible does NOT say… Not two men, not two women, no adultery, and no divorce. You can argue and even justify your position on each one of these issues. But listen to me – they were not part of God’s original design as laid out here in Genesis Ch 2. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”

Chapter 2 ends with an interesting statement, v 25, “the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Why were they not ashamed? They didn’t know evil. At this point they’re completely innocent like little children. There is no sexual immorality. The first man and woman do not have any twisted, perverted thoughts or desires. That was all produced by the fall, which comes later.

 After the fall there is a downward spiral. In Genesis Ch 4 you have polygamy; Genesis Ch 9 you have evil thoughts and evil words; Genesis Ch 16 you have adultery; Genesis Ch 19 you have homosexuality; Genesis Ch 34 you have fornication and rape; Genesis Ch 38 you have incest and prostitution; Genesis Ch 39 you have seduction. As soon as the fall of man the enemy of the souls of men and women, Satan, goes after the marriage relationship with a vengeance. We are not even out of Genesis and we see all sort of evil taking place! None of it was God’s design. The evil one came and perverted men’s and women’s minds and all that stuff came from him. Satan continues his assault even in our own day.

So then, pray for each other. Yes, pray for individuals but also pray for the various couples and their marriages. Our marriages are under attack like never before. I challenge you to look closely at God’s design for marriage. It’s a beautiful design!