

When you're out in a very dark place there is something awesome about looking up and seeing the stars **{slide 2}**. To see their multitude, the vast array, those billions of twinkling lights out there.

The night sky is beautiful from a distance **{slide 3}**, and it is even more stunning up close, it reveals even more of its beauty. Its substance hasn't changed, but our view of it has, and what is revealed is just as majestic and beautiful.

Last week we opened Genesis 1 and we had that big picture, dark night sky view of God at work, creating all things by his powerful word, and blessing what he had made. This week in Genesis two we are zooming right in on the detail we'll spend a little bit of time considering the consistency in the design of the two passages vv.4-7 **{slide 4}** before we move on to the two key points today God's provision vv.8-15, vv.18-25 and vv.16,17 God's prohibition.

We are going to hit some pastoral challenges, that make this passage personal, I expect that for all of us there will be uncomfortable moments as we work through this passage, why don't we pray and ask God to help us hear his voice?

Pray

i) Accounting for the different accounts vv.4-7 {slide 5} Last week, in that big picture, big night sky image we saw that God created everything by his powerful word and blessed all that he made. Now we will see God sustain His creation. The account in chapters 1 and 2 do look different.

We can see why in 2:4. **{slide 6}**

The words we translate here 'this is the account of the heaven and the earth, when they were created.' Is a signal in Hebrew of a *tôlêdôt*. **{slide 7}** Genesis is made up of several *tôlêdôt*. Which are usually accounts of 'what became of' a person. **{slide 8}** Adam, Noah, Isaac Jacob, - all have *tôlêdôt* 'the things that happened to them' recorded. The creation account functions as a Prologue, setting the scene, hammering home that ultimate truth that God made all things by his word, that the earth is his and everything in it is subject to his rule and authority. **{slide 9}**

In this zoomed in view we start to see the detail, and surprisingly a great deal of crossover between these two accounts.

There is a summary statement in each: 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." 2:4 'These are the *Tôledôt* of the heaven and earth when they were created, when the Lord God made earth and heaven'

There is an emptiness in each account 'Now the earth was waste and void' 'Before any sprig of the field was in the earth,' followed by two negative clauses, and then one positive clause showing God's care for his creation, and the change he affects on the created order bringing light and life. **{slide 10}**

It is helpful for us to understand the function of this passage, so that we aren't tied up in knots trying to reconcile the differences of the prologue, or wide view, and this *tôledôt*, which is zoomed right in. It tells a different aspect of the story, 'what happened to' all that God had made in 1:1-2:3.

ii) God's Provision vv.5-15, vv.18-25 {slide 11} We've seen God's good provision for all that he made, and now we zoom in and magnify that provision.

v.5 highlights the incomplete nature of the work taking place as God creates by His Word; we know the outcome; that what God creates is good, but here the earth is still dry and barren. God hasn't yet sent water, and there is no one to till the soil and make it productive. God makes this not yet finished, good by sending water v.6, and creating a man to share in his creative purpose v.7

God reaches down into matter, and forms man. For the blessing of creation, for its care, and for his good purpose to be worked out he reaches in.

If you've ever experienced hongi you have an idea of how up close and personal this experience is. Sharing breath isn't something you can do from a distance. When you lean in you are committed! There is a personal and intimate connection taking place.

Here it's more than just breath into lungs, it's more than just animation, but the breath of life given to man. It isn't given to anything else in all creation. In this drawing near and breathing, God is marking us as a different substance. This close and near God is imparting something, his image, his likeness, moral, creative, and rational capacity.

Breath is given to those who are born again; Do you remember at pentecost we considered John 20:22 where 'Jesus breathed on them and said "receive the Holy Spirit."' ?

In that act, Jesus the one who left his heavenly throne room, to get close, to draw near to his creation, was forging a new people. He was close, drawing near not through temple cult worship, but giving His Holy Spirit so that we might carry out his purpose of sharing the Good News.

This is a pointer, to a full redemption, a being re-made that will come in Christ, and a future return to outworking our creation purpose in the new heavens and the new earth. A new heaven and a new earth that will be like the place God put Adam, v.8 a garden in the East, Eden.

This is a place that is such a wonderful example of God's provision; there is a bountiful provision of food v.9, and fresh cool water. From Eden flow good things of great value, gold and incense vv. 12.

And here is the place Adam can work out God's creation purpose v.15, but not alone. V.18 shows us something 'not good' - 'The Lord God said, "it is not good for man to be alone."

Something about the man is incomplete, and God in his intention for order and perfection fills that incompleteness just like everything else in creation: the sky, the sea, the earth it all needed filling to be complete, nothing God made has been self-fulfilled, and man is no different.

No suitable helper is found in all the animal Kingdom, even as Adam exercises dominion over the beasts by naming them, there is none like him, none that will be complementary. They are not social, moral, spiritual, ethical beings, they are not bearers of the image of God; and so God makes another. Woman. The bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, the one who is like in nature and form. She is the perfect helper and partner.

Our 21st Century selves can get confused when we hit this point in the passage. If you're a woman you might be very well thinking "I'm not some helper for a man, I'm a strong independent woman, don't you try and lower me to some second tier status Zane Elliott!"

The woman God makes is not subservient to man, She is made after man, but she isn't second rate. She is part of God's original and perfect plan for humanity in creation. This passage can not be used to justify misogyny or chauvinism, and more than it can be used to justify feminism and the ridicule

of men. These concepts of 'the war of the sexes' which are never justifiable from the Bible.

Victor Hamilton helps us here; **{slide 12}** woman 'will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole... **{slide 13}** Any suggestion that this particular word denotes one who has only an associate or subordinate status to a senior member is refuted by the fact that most frequently this same word describes Yahweh's relationship to Israel.¹

Eve, bears the image of God, equal, and complementary, to work out God's creation purposes with Adam, in a perfect one-flesh union v.24. **{slide 14}**

This union, where a man leaves his home and now man and woman cling to each other gives us the crowning text for God's intention for marriage 'which is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church'²;

God's intent is clearly for one man to be in a one flesh, open, nakedness relationship with one woman. This is the only occurrence in the OT of nakedness being without humiliation. They relate to one another perfectly, completing their one-ness in covenantal relationship, in giving of themselves to each other.

Adam is not gifted many wives, Eve is not given many husbands. They aren't to causally take a partner when it suits them to fill the earth and multiply. They are given, to complete each other. Jesus draws on this same intent as he reinforces the Father's design in Matthew 19, when questioned about divorce. Marriage is the God designed place for sexual intimacy, here is the pattern for a marriage commitment which points us to Jesus' commitment to the church.

I know that's not everyone here's reality, I grew up in a broken home. I know the realities and messiness of real life, of divorce, and breakdown. We don't all enjoy a lifelong, exclusive marriage relationship.

¹ Hamilton, V. P. (1990). The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17 (pp. 175–176). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² The Book of Common Prayer, 1662., from 'The Form of Solemnisation of Matrimony.'

God doesn't hold this standard out to punish us, depress us, but to help us long for his ideal. Where we haven't lived that reality come to Jesus who offers forgiveness full and free.

We also hit the increasingly unpalatable truth that God made men and women. Two distinct genders. Opposite, and complementary. To say that today is borderline at best, we live in a world that has embraced self-definition of gender-identity.

There is an argument, sadly even within the Church which says the Bible is wrong here. That Moses could't possibly understand same-sex attraction or gender-dysphoria. In this very chapter God is revealed as omniscient, all knowing. We are a pale reflection, our knowledge is a shadow. We have a lived experience, but its a broken experience. Experience can not be the stick we measure truth against.

Church I haven't been afraid to mention same-sex attraction, or gender identity from the pulpit, because I am certain that these are challenges for some of us. Too often in the church we have ignored these struggles, and pretended like they are only 'out there.'

This few minutes isn't a pastoral response to issues that touche so many of us. If there are concerns here that you need to work through, to pray through, then please come and ask.

We serve a good and loving God, a God who has made us in his image. He forgives, redeems, transforms his people, and promises us a wonderful future in the Lord Jesus, where brokenness is undone, and perfected, where we will be made new, and the hurt and pain of our broken lives will be undone, in the new heaven and new earth. Boy I long for that.

iii) God's Prohibition: {slide 15} In God's provision God gave an abundance of food from the trees of the field;
We've skipped two other trees; we know them don't we? vv.9 Tree of life, and Tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Man is like God, but not the same. We saw it last week, man needs rest - God does not! Man is creative, but not Creator. Another distinction is drawn here; he is not omniscient, all knowing.

While Adam was still alone, God set a prohibition **{slide 16}** vv.16-17 'And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."'

This prohibition highlights God's goodness, his parental care for his creation, he has given Adam every tree to eat from, except one. In this prohibition is a command, and clear warning about the consequence. **{slide 17}**

God increases the capacity for relationship with Him. By obeying this command, Adam will lose absolutely nothing. He will grow in closeness and trust, as he obeys, the very things relationships are founded on.

God gives Adam free will, something shared by Eve. The power to choose. The power to obey God's good Word, or to deny it. The power to grow in close relationship, relying on God's Word to set the bounds, or to reject it, choosing self rule, and death, over the liberating rule of God.

Man has the opportunity to live in obedience to his God, to trust his word over all, to live in a way that is pleasing to him by respecting the limitation, the prohibition not to reach out and take from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Next week we'll unpack how that develops, and its consequences more fully.

{Slide 18} This week we've worked pretty hard together, as we've sought to see how these two accounts are compatible, the same story from different angles, one the wide view, and the other zoomed in.

We've seen God's good provision in his creation intent, culminating in a beautiful one-ness between the first man and woman who lived in a one flesh relationship, and we've thought about how the prohibition was a platform for trusting the Lord God's Word, the word which formed the whole created order. We have without a doubt hit a nerve or two, as we've considered some of the pastoral implications for our lives of the design and intent of our God, why don't we come before him in prayer, and ask him to shape us by what we've heard. Let's pray.