

## SESSION 15: THE FIRST “GENERATION”

Genesis 2:4-7

January 28, 2024

As I mentioned in our previous session, lo so long ago, the official break from Chapter One to Chapter Two of Genesis presents us with one of the clumsiest chapter breaks in all of God’s word. Verses 1-3 should by all rights be in Chapter One, but they have been broken away from the narrative and placed in Chapter Two. With v4 of Chapter Two we have the *effective* beginning of the chapter. But first, before we dig into that, please turn to Genesis 25.

In this representative chapter we see a pattern that is employed throughout the Bible’s first book—and is typically used as a heading. Look at v12.

**Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s servant-woman, bore to Abraham;**

Now v19.

**Now these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham became the father of Isaac;**

Now turn to Chapter 5; here we see it again.

**This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.**

But the *first* instance of this heading we see in v4 of Chapter Two, where we begin our text.

**These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven. ☞**

**Read Genesis 2:4-7.**

If we think of the OT—and especially the Pentateuch—in cinematic terms, we see that it repeatedly begins with an establishing wide shot, then narrows down to a series of close-ups. The whole thing begins, in Genesis 1, with the wide shot of the creation of the heavens and earth, but then quickly focuses on the details of equipping the earth—just one planet out of innumerable planets in the universe—for man.

### **generations**

*K&D:* Just as the [generations] of Noah, for example, do not mention his birth, but contain his history and the birth of his sons; so the [generations] of the heavens and the earth do not describe the origin of the universe, but what happened to the heavens and the earth after their creation.

Following the creation of Adam and the first family, God presents, in Chapter Six (and using the standard heading) “These are the generations of Noah” (establishing wide shot), down to his three sons in Chapter Ten: “These are the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth,” narrowing it further to “the generations of Shem,” then further to Terah, and finally the close-up of Abram and his seed, eventually from which the nation of Israel will be born.

Wide shot to close-up, wide shot to close-up.

Like any good storyteller, Moses opens the scene in v4 with not just a wide shot—the heading, “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created...”—but backing up from where he left off (God’s seventh day of rest in vv1-3) to reestablish the earliest days of creation, so as to set the stage for his primary topic: the close-up story of the first farmer and his mate. The recurring theme throughout Chapter Two is the “ground”—i.e., the soil. The story is earthy, natural, a garden in Eden, rivers and streams, and fertile soil for growing things—and *making* things, including man himself.

The purpose of Chapter Two (from v4 on) is not to offer a *different version* of Creation; nor was it written by a *different author*, who knew God as *Yahweh Elohim* instead of just *Elohim*. In Chapter One Moses gave us the essential, bare-bones outline of the Creative Week. In Chapter Two the same author backs up a little to fill in some of the details left out of the previous account, all for setting the stage for the Fall of man and God’s establishment of His chosen people, Israel.

#### v4

*These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created,*

Two components of this first verse stand out, and the first of these is the word translated “generations” or “account,” depending on your version. The Hebrew is *toledoth* (toe-lay-DOT), and, as we have seen, is often used to set up generational descendants of a common progenitor, e.g., Abraham, Noah, etc.; here it is God Himself. In a sense it is an “historical account”—in the way that a biography is also history—which means that it also can be, as Leupold insists, a “story.” But we cannot ignore the element of *descendancy* inherent in the word—as seen in so many of its applications in the OT.

#### pronunciations

Shem = **shame**

Ham = **khawm**

Japheth = **YEH-feth**

Terah = **TEH-rakh**

Abram = **Ahv-RAHM**

#### v4a as a heading

By taking 4a as a heading, we mean that it is *not* a summation of what has preceded, but is a pointer to what proceeds after it—even though the narrative that follows itself shifts back to earlier stages of Creation.

(the NKJV has “history”)

And this adds some poetic texture to this chapter, as revealed in the second part of the verse.

*...in the day that Yahweh God made earth and heaven.*

In a human sense, all people on this earth can trace their lineage back to the first couple: Adam and Eve. But that is too restrictive; our true progenitor—our true forefather—is “Yahweh God.”

And the passage (along with Chapter One) makes clear that He is not just the forefather of all humans, but He is the Creator/Progenitor of all that is: heavens and earth, growing things and rain and weather, fertile soil, rivers and streams, beasts of the field and oceans and rivers, and then man to manage it all.

Here we have, however, the second component of interest. Here God has a new name. Up till now God has been referred to as *Elohim*, but now we are introduced, for the first time, to His personal name: *Yahweh*, *Jehovah*, *yhwh*.

#### **Read Exodus 3:13-15.**

Here we have the root of the name Yahweh (typically rendered, “the LORD”) expressing “I AM WHO I AM.” *haya* (“I AM”) is a primitive root meaning to exist, i.e. be or become, come to pass; it is always emphatic. So included in the Lord God’s personal name is the concept and fact of His self-existence. His name alone expresses the fact that He is the root and cause of all that is—the true and only progenitor of everything in His created universe.

One more thing before we leave v4. Although just about everyone agrees that the first portion of the verse is a heading for what follows, some go so far to say that the punctuation should be different: changing a comma to a period. We see the difference in the two NIV versions for vv4-5:

**NIV2011** (and most of our common versions): This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

**NIV1984**: This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground...

That is, some commentators say that the heading of 4a should be isolated with a period, beginning a new sentence with 4b flowing seamlessly into v5f—the NIV84 does not close the sentence until the end of v7. ❏

#### v5

**Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet grown, for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.**

Verses 5-6 hearken back to, roughly, Days Two and Three of Creation. We discussed this passage back in Session 9 (November 19, 2023), at which time I said,

Man will not be created until Day Six. So those plants created for the brand new soil of earth in Day Three (in Chapter One) will be on their own for a few days; it must be vegetation that does not require human intervention and husbandry. In other words, the vegetation created in Day Three was of a sort that was what we would term “wild,” or at least uncultivated.

The original text reveals the difference; the words for the vegetation created in v1:11 (Day Three) are different from those used in our text in Chapter Two. The newer NIV leaves out this distinction, which can cause confusion, but all our other versions make the distinction, as in the LSB with “shrub of the field”—i.e., vegetation requiring the cultivation and attention of man.

Thus the first part of v5 does *not* mean that it is speaking of a time before there was any vegetation whatsoever, just (as the third part points out with, “there was no man to cultivate the ground”) vegetation requiring cultivation: wild plums and wild black raspberries, but no soybeans or corn.

The second part of v5 presents more of a challenge: To what moment in the Creative Week does it refer, with “for Yahweh God had not caused it to rain upon the earth”? Verse 6 offers more information.

#### v6

**But a stream would rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.**


I do not have a strong opinion on this, as I do not think it makes a lot of difference; neither option alters the facts, context, or meaning. Since none of our other versions follow the NIV84, we will go with them.

The word translated “stream” or “mist,” depending on your version, in v6 is *edh*. This reference to mists or streams watering the land is difficult to place in the timeline of the first chapter, so we are probably better off not trying to force it into one place or another.

We take this to mean that prior to His implementing regular rain from above, God watered the wild vegetation by other means—whether by underground streams or springs, or by a daily mist. More important than *when* this occurred, or *how* it was accomplished, is the fact that God was meticulously setting in place everything necessary to sustain His new Creation every step of the way.

#### v7

**Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and so the man became a living being.**

The Bible is filled with passages meant to drive us to our knees in reverence and fear of our God; it is filled with passages that speak of his omnipotence, His righteousness, purity and holiness. In contrast to that, few verses in the Bible so splendidly speak of His condescension, His down-to-earth, intimate, hands-on love for His people than v7. 

Chapter One records that when God made those beasts nearest to man, He commanded “the earth [to] bring forth living creatures,” followed by the simple declarative, “God made the beasts of the earth” (vv1:24-25). Verse 27 records something similar for man: “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” But for human beings more details are necessary and appropriate in Chapter Two, to demonstrate their position of authority over the other created beings and, not least, their “likeness” to God.

Here we see in this one verse the measure, and depth, of man’s relationship with God. On the one hand we see in Yahweh Elohim’s personal fashioning of Adam “a work of God that significantly displayed the faithful mercy of Yahweh as well as His awe-inspiring power” (Leupold). It is true that *all* of Creation, whether literally spoken or thought into existence, was personally accomplished by God.

If we can tie this into the timeline of Chapter One at all, vv5-6 link back to, roughly, vv6-13 in Chapter One, but v7—along with vv21-25—skips ahead to v27 in Chapter One, during Day Six.

But *this* creation is described in a more intimate, tender manner, revealing its personal importance to an omnipotent God. The verb *yatsar* (formed) refers literally to a potter molding a vessel from damp clay. It is not necessary to anthropomorphize our God, taking this to mean that He literally, physically dug His “hands” into the damp dirt of the earth to fashion the first man. No, we need not waste time imagining *how* it was accomplished, only to accept that this particular portion of Creation was realized by a more intimate, personal involvement by Yahweh.

At the same time, however, the episode reveals that even though man has been created in God’s own image (1:27), this is not meant to place him on a level equal to deity.

*Leupold:* The writer tells us that the material God employed in making man was “the dust of the ground.” *'Aphar*, rendered “dust,” does not refer to dry pulverized earth only. Here, without a doubt, a damp mass of the finest earth is under consideration. Luther’s rendering is still unsurpassed, “lump of earth.” Lest man form too high an estimate of the first man, it is here recorded that, in spite of the high station involved in being made in the image of God, man has a constituent part in his makeup, which forever forbids unseemly pride on his part.

I am reserving discussion of the rest of v7 for our next session. It is too important, too fascinating to quickly tack it on to the end of this session, so we will return to v7 in Session 16.

# SESSION 15

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### Why Chapter Two?

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### “I AM”

Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am about to come to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ And they will say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” And God furthermore said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name from generation to generation. (Exodus 3:13–15)

Here we have the root of the name Yahweh (typically rendered, “the LORD”) expressing “I AM WHO I AM.” *haya* (“I AM”) is a primitive root meaning to exist, i.e. be or become, come to pass; it is always emphatic. So included in the Lord God’s personal name is the concept and fact of His self-existence. His name alone expresses the fact that He is the root and cause of all that is—the true and only progenitor of everything in His created universe.

### Timeline

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