

SESSION 19: A COMPARABLE MATE

Genesis 2:18-20 (2:21-25)

February 25, 2024

Because I wanted to spread out our examination of the Fall, I have purposely addressed it at “stations” along the way, rather than holding off until the actual event, recorded in Genesis 3. It being a monumental event that will forever change man and the world in which he lives, I did not want to reserve it, cramming it all into one session.

So we have discussed it in Chapter One, at v1:26 and vv29-30; Chapter Two, v7 and, just last week, vv15-17.

The downside of this is that we might prematurely think of Adam and Eve as fallen before they really are in the narrative. As we approach v18 in Chapter Two Adam is still alone, and remains in his created pristine state—as Leupold states it, “a moral being standing on a very high plane of perfection.”

Read Genesis 2:18-20.

v18

Then Yahweh God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” 📖

Once again it is necessary for us to be reminded of the narrative timeline. Some might read this verse and think they see a contradiction: How can God now identify something that is not good? Didn't He declare *all* of His Creation “very good” at the end of Chapter One? Indeed He did, but the creation of woman was accomplished within the sixth day, which is where this passage (vv18-25) resides in the narrative. It was in v1:31, *after* the creation of the woman that God declared that all was “very good.” Once again, Chapter Two expands upon Chapter One; it does not compete with it. 📖

I can only speak from personal experience, but from that, over the last fifty-three years, I have seen and lived the wisdom behind God's genius in stating that man is incomplete without woman. And God's genius works both ways: both husband and wife complete each other—in fact, as Paul writes, both *own* each other.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-4.

K&D

“a help of his like: i.e., a helping being, in which, as soon as he sees it, he may recognise himself”

God's Method

It is easy to have a skewed perception of this episode. We could read it as the Almighty discovering, to His surprise, that something is missing in the man's life and then trying out a number of possible solutions before finally discovering the correct one. That is not at all what is happening in vv18-25. There is, as we will see, a purposeful method to God's actions here.

Perhaps you, like me, have read this passage in the past thinking that God parades all the “beasts of the field” past Adam, and only then decides that none of them are what He is looking for, and so proceeds to create one that is more “suitable” for the man. But if one reads carefully one sees that cannot be the case.

God says that He “will make” a suitable helper for the man—that is, He hasn’t done it yet. Verse 19 states that God “*had formed*” the beasts, et al—that is, he had done that in the past, so obviously none of them were suitable for the man.

David Guzik makes a good point regarding the word translate “helper” (*ezer*).

We only see “helping” as a position of inferiority when we think like the world thinks. God considers positions of service as most important in His sight (Matthew 20:25-28).

Read Matthew 20:25-28.

Out of all the ways this phrase “helper suitable” is translated, I favor the NKJV, which reads “a helper *comparable* to him.” Leupold writes, “Her position is further defined by the expression ‘like him,’ *keneghdô*, literally, ‘as agreeing to him,’ or ‘his counterpart.’ She is the kind of help man needs, agreeing with him mentally, physically, spiritually. She is not an inferior being.”

Guzik adds, “She should be considered and honored as such. A woman or wife cannot be regarded as a mere tool or worker, but as an equal partner in God’s grace and an equal human being.” And not to put too fine a point on it, in 1 Corinthians 12:28 the apostle Paul includes “helps”—the role the woman will be filling—in that list of spiritual gifts.

v19

And out of the ground Yahweh God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and He brought each to the man to see what he would call it; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.

As we discussed in class last week, Adam was assuredly no slouch in the intellect department. And note that God did not *command* the man to name the beasts and birds, but just waited to see what he would call them.

had formed

Except for NASB and KJVs (see K&D below). These were created during the fifth and early sixth days of Creation, prior to the Creation of man and woman (1:20-25).

K&D: “The circumstance that in Gen_2:19 the formation of the beasts and birds is connected with the creation of Adam by the imperf. c. 1 consec., constitutes objection to the plan of creation given in Gen 1. The arrangement may be explained on the supposition, that the writer, who was about to describe the relation of man to the beasts, went back to their creation, in the simple method of the early Semitic historians, and placed this first instead of making it subordinate; so that our modern style of expressing the same thought would be simply this: “God brought to Adam the beasts which He had formed.”

I don't know about you, but every time I read v19 and the beginning of v20 I wonder, *Why are you telling me this here, God? What does this have to do with creating a partner for the man?*

Before I suggest some possible answers to this, let me first energetically declare what is assuredly *not* happening in this scene. Yahweh Himself is *not* searching through these beasts in an attempt to find a mate for Adam; that would be entirely out of character for our omnipotent, omniscient God. ❏ Let me offer some reasons for this being included in the account here.

First, it mirrors the pattern and sequence of Chapter One, vv24-27, in which the “beasts of the earth” are created during the sixth day of Creation just before God makes man.

Second, one must keep in mind that in this scene Yahweh God is the teacher, and Adam the student. In this, the parade of animals before the man becomes a visual aid and object lesson to illustrate a fundamental truth for the human.

Third, we should not imagine that Adam is viewing and naming every last animal that has been created. Verse 19 specifies just the wild, non-domestic beasts and birds; v20, curiously, adds domestic beasts (“cattle,” “livestock”) to the parade. There is every reason to believe that this would encompass a subset of animals—for example, fish and “sea monsters,” and “creeping things” are excluded. So this seems to suggest that he assigns names only to those animals and birds he lives with regularly.

Fourth, there is the “curriculum,” as it were, that Yahweh is teaching the man. First He shows a *contrast*: God is demonstrating how the animals are *different* from Adam. Second He shows a *similarity*: God shows Adam that all the animals have corresponding mates—which Adam lacks; *he* needs one too. All the animals and birds can propagate; he cannot. As Leupold states it, in this “a realization of man’s loneliness was to be aroused in him.”

Finally, there is something that the naming of these animals teaches *us*.

Leupold: At once we are made aware of the high intelligence level of the father of the human race. For the expression to give names, in the Hebrew usage of the word “name,” involves giving a designation expressive of the nature or character of the one named.

Utterly ridiculous—as well as breaking the pattern of God's creative process itself, with its emphasis on grouping together beings with others of the same kind.

This was not a crude fable, where, according to a Hebrew notion, the accidental [utterance] at the sight of new and strange creatures were retained as names for the future. Here was a man in deeper sympathy with nature than any have been ever since. That these names were appropriate and significant names for the various creatures appears also from the confirmatory statement of the author: “whatever man called each living creature, that was its name.” Such a statement, imbedded in so marvellous an account, could hardly be made, unless the names given had been appropriate and worthy of man’s intelligence. ❏

K&D

“God does not order him to name them; but by bringing the beasts He gives him an opportunity of developing that intellectual capacity which constitutes his superiority to the animal world.”

We will make just a start at the next passage, then complete it in our next session.

Read Genesis 2:21-25.

v21

So Yahweh 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.

God does some of His best work after putting someone to sleep.

- In Genesis 15 God causes a “deep sleep” to come upon Abram before establishing with him His covenant and promise for the Promised Land.
- In Genesis 28, Yahweh declares Himself to a sleeping Jacob: “I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your seed” (Genesis 28:13).

Here we have Adam being put to sleep so that Yahweh God can perform the first recorded surgery during the first anesthetic. This was not a trance or a state of ecstasy, as some suggest; the Hebrew *tardemah* means a sound, insensible sleep. After the Fall, God will not hesitate to inflict pain upon man, but here he intends a painless surgery. I doubt He even left a scar.

As to what this surgery and its location represent, practically every commentator—especially older ones—expresses something similar, but David Guzik shares *this* version from Donald Barnhouse:

There is a beautiful Jewish tradition saying God made woman, not out of man’s foot to be under him, nor out of his head to be over him, but “She was taken from under his arm that he might protect her and from next to his heart that he might love her.”

Consider, for a moment, the genius of our God. Imagine the profound difference if He had made the first woman in the same way He made the first man:

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. (Genesis 2:7)

If Yahweh had repeated the same process in His making of the first woman, where would be the unity, where would be the intimate association? If that had been the process we might imagine the first words from Adam's mouth as, *Who are you? What are you? Are you here to supplant me, to take my place here in the garden? Am I to compete with you?*

Instead we have, in v23, Adam's immediate and exquisite realization that

**"This one finally is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
This one shall be called Woman,
Because this one was taken out of Man."**

She was not drawn from the dust, but from the bone and flesh of the man; she was not given breath from Yahweh God (we can only assume, for it is not stated), but received the breath of life from the body of the man.

This passage, vv21-25, is one of my favorites, for it beautifully—even poetically—encapsulates the genius of the marriage union between man and woman. And I recommend that, especially in these dark times in which there are those doing their best to corrupt and destroy the beauty and love of that union—even going so far as to reconfigure and redefine the very concept of the two sexes—that we take the time to dwell on, to savor, to reinforce in our own minds how lovingly, how sweetly God planned it from the beginning.

There are those in our society hell-bent—and I mean that literally—hell-bent on destroying the beauty of God's Creation, the beauty that exists within the union of husband and wife. Let us take the time—and we will in our next session—to remember how our God always meant for it to be.

SESSION 19

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Timeframe for v18

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God's Creative Genius

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