

Read Genesis 2:21-25.

We began our look at this passage in our last session, with a brief look at v21.

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.

Adam is 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 suggested we imagine the profound difference if Yahweh God 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?

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, but received the breath of life from the body of the man. Thus they were, by the manner of the woman's creation, effectively conjoined.

K&D: The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam, because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man, and the mode of her creation was to lay the actual foundation for the moral ordinance of marriage.

The woman's manner of creation also means that we cannot derive from this "two beginnings to the human race, one in Adam and one in Eve. There was [only] one beginning of the human race in Adam" (Guzik).

v22

And Yahweh God fashioned the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman...

God not only used different materials for His creation of the woman, but He also used a different *process*. Adam had been "formed" he had been "molded," as a potter will form damp clay into a utilitarian vessel or a work of art—the Hebrew verb is *yatsar*.

For God's creation of the woman the verb changes. None of our common versions translate it literally; I could only find it in *Young's Literal Translation* and the *Tree of Life Version*. The latter reads,

Adonai Elohim built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman.

Different from the "molding" that was used for the man, the Hebrew verb is *wayyi'bhen* (vay-bah-NAH), and means to build, develop, construct, such as a permanent residence or temple. According to Leupold, "it applies to the fashioning of a structure of some importance; it involves constructive effort." It is a picture of Yahweh constructing, fashioning the woman piece by piece.

We should also make note that the biblical order for husband and wife, her subordinate position under the familial and spiritual head that we read from the apostle Paul (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, 11-12) has its foundation *prior to* the Fall—not after it. This means it was *God* who ordained this relationship—not sin (cf., Matthew 19:8).

...and He brought her to the man.

I love how this verse closes. It is a beautiful antecedent to the tradition of the bride's father formally offering his daughter to the groom.

I was unable to find evidence that our traditional marriage ceremony was purposely *modeled* after Genesis 2:22-25, but we clearly see the parallels in the text. Verse 22 ends with the picture of the bride's father walking his daughter down the aisle.

He represents not just her dad and the *paterfamilias*, but at least in the traditional (some would say, old fashioned) picture of the young, virginal bride, heretofore he has been the only man in her life. So here is a “changing of the guard,” so to speak, a handing over from one man to another. And I can imagine that it is no small thing for a loving father to give his daughter to a younger man.

In the Creation text, Yahweh God is truly the “father”—literal Creator—of the woman. He alone is the one to hand her over (to me it is a picture of a gracious gift from father to groom); He hands her over to the man. He brings, He *presents* the first woman to the first man. Then, the exultation expressed by Adam in v23 conjures up what I felt in my heart as I watched my beautiful bride being conducted down the aisle toward me.

v23

*Then the man said,
“This one finally is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh...”*

To succinctly translate this into modern vernacular, “Finally, here’s the woman for me!”

Here we have the first recorded words from the lips of the first man. Some claim that what he says reveals that the transfer from his body to Eve’s involved more than just a bone. Perhaps. But it also can be just an expression, such as it was used by Laban to declare his familial tie to Jacob.

Read Genesis 29:13-14. 📖

Of course, if it became a figurative expression later, it had to begin with Adam, so knowing what he meant by it is hard to determine. Martin Luther concludes that Adam knew exactly what he was saying.

Luther: It is worthy of our greatest wonder and admiration, that Adam, the moment he glanced his eye on Eve, knew her to be a building formed out of himself. He immediately said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." These are not the words of an ignorant one, nor of one who was a sinner; nor of one who was ignorant of the works and of the creation of God. They are the words of one righteous and wise, and full of the Holy Spirit...

see also


Judges 9:2
2 Samuel 5:1
2 Samuel 19:12-13

Perhaps. But I also appreciate a comment from David Guzik:

Guzik: What exactly did God take from Adam's side to make Eve? We don't really know, and it doesn't really matter. Modern research into cloning and genetic replication shows every cell in our body contains the body's entire genetic blueprint. God took some of Adam's cells and changed their genetic blueprint in the creation of Eve.

It doesn't matter the specific part Yahweh extracted from Adam. Far more important is the fact that God did it, that God chose the man as the source, and that these two facts combined ensured a unique bond between the man and woman.

*This one shall be called Woman,
Because this one was taken out of Man."*

The etymology  behind the words "Woman" and "Man" is more complicated and convoluted than the text and the traditional explanation make it. For example, the margin notes in my Bible explain that the Hebrew for "Woman" is *Ishsha*, while the Hebrew for "Man" is just *Ish*. Luther writes, "Hence it is that Adam gave the name, 'woman,' *Ischa*, or 'man-formed female,' *virago* or *vira*, [in the Latin] to Eve."

Albert Barnes: "To this" counterpart of myself "shall be called woman;" the word in the original being a feminine form of "man," to which we have no exact equivalent, though the word "woman" (womb-man, or wife-man), proves our word "man" to have been originally of the common gender. "Because out of a man was she taken;" being taken out of a man, she is human; and being a perfect individual, she is a female man.

The idea here is that if we think of the word "Man" in the sense of *mankind*, the "Woman," as the various etymologies reveal, is different, yet of the same genus. She came *from* man, so she is man, but she is a different sex (through the miraculous transformation by God the surgeon), so she is a *Wo-man*—not *Ish*, but *Ischa*. The feminine of *Ish*.

etymology

The study of the origin and history of words, or a study of this type relating to one particular word.

She (literally, to this) **shall be called Woman** (*isha*, i.e. maness, from *ish*, man. Cf. Greek, ἀνδρικός (Symmachus), from ἀνήμρ; Latin, *virago*, *virae* (old Latin), from *vir*; English, woman (womb-man, Anglo-Saxon), from man; German, *manninn*, from *mann*; Sanscrit, *hart*, from *nara*; Ethiopic, *beesith*, from *beesi*), **because she** (this) **was taken from Man**. *Ish*, the name given by Adam to himself in contradistinction to his spouse, is interpreted as significant of man's authority (Gesenius), or of his social nature (Meier); but its exact etymology is involved in obscurity. Its relation to *Adham* is the same as that of *vir* to *homo* and ἀνήμρ to ἀνθρώπος. (The Pulpit Commentary)

v24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Here is the root and essence of biblical marriage. This verse is often assumed to be a continuation of Adam's statement in v23. But all of our common translations close the quotes at the end of v23, and do not place v24 in quotes. This decision by the translators is probably based, at least in part, on what Jesus says in Matthew 19.

Read Matthew 19:4-6.

There Jesus credits the statement to "He who created them"—i.e., Yahweh God. I would add to this that at this point in Creation Adam would surely know nothing of fathers and mothers, so it makes sense to credit this to the writer, Moses. Of course, no matter who spoke or wrote it, it is all by the inspiration of God's Spirit, so ultimately, even if Adam uttered the words, it was of God.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife;

I have long seen the practical wisdom in this statement; and its truth was played out in *our* marriage. Just days after we were wed in Marshalltown upon my return from Vietnam, we packed up all our earthly belongings and headed down the road to return to California, where I was stationed in the navy. Linda and I were all of 18 and 19, respectively. Now, we can attest to making some pretty dumb mistakes in those early days at such a young age, but we addressed those mistakes together, as husband and wife—not by leaning on either of our parents. Dealing with situations that arose with each other, rather than with the counsel of our parents, accelerated the process of becoming one; we met the vagaries and pitfalls of life by leaning on *each other*. In 1971 there was no Internet, no e-mail, no smart phones, and it was too expensive to call across country at every turn. In that first year we were indeed *visited* by our parents, but otherwise we were on our own.

Some earlier translations made this, “a man shall *forsake* his father and his mother,” but that is too harsh. The commandment still stands to honor one’s parents, to respect their counsel and to ensure their well-being. But it is important, as Christ and the apostles attested, to see that marriage, while not breaking the familial tie, does recast, humanly speaking, one’s first allegiance, one’s first dependency, one’s primary bond. God always comes first, but one’s husband or wife comes next.

...and they shall become one flesh.

Note please the important tense of the verb. It is not “*are* one flesh” or even “*are made* one flesh,” but “shall become”: “they *shall become* one flesh.” Like sanctification, becoming “one flesh” is a *process*. This makes clear that it means far more than just the conjoining that occurs on the honeymoon. And, just as with sanctification, the manner in which this occurs and the length of time it takes varies from one marriage to another. For some couples this oneness begins maturing early on; for others, it may *never* occur; for most, I would guess, it takes many years, for it requires learning to take joy together, to share sorrows together, to trust and respect each other *together*.

Being of “one flesh” is difficult to describe; it is one of those things that falls into the category of “you have to be there.” Believe me, at nineteen years of age I had no idea what that would be like.

Again, if we liken it to sanctification, if you became a follower of Christ when you were young, could you possibly have realized *then* what your relationship with Christ and the Father would feel or look like thirty, forty, or fifty years later? I doubt that you could. I doubt that you could imagine the depth of understanding of His word and His ways that comes only by experience and inspiration over the years; I doubt that you could imagine the profound depth of faith and trust in your Lord, that has come only by living and walking with Him all these years. All this comes over the years, and is rather difficult to explain to a babe in Christ.

Just so the experience of being of “one flesh.” Like sanctification in Christ, it can only be realized—and appreciated—by those who give themselves over to it, who embrace the mystical union of husband and wife as something profound, fulfilling, and glorious.

**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
(2 Corinthians 3:18)**

SESSION 20

A Marriage Made in Heaven Genesis 2:21-25

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As to this becoming a traditional expression, see **Genesis 29:13-14; Judges 9:2; 2 Samuel 5:1; 2 Samuel 19:12-13.**

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