

THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN LIFE

Genesis 2

The heavens and the earth were finished when God created man in His own image. Then the universe was what He designed it to be. When He looked upon the whole of it, He said, "It was very good."

I. The First Sabbath. Genesis 2:1-3.

These verses are in very close relationship with chapter one as the crowning point of the record of the days of creation. In these first three verses we come to the seventh day, the day on which God rested "from all his work which he had made." This is not the rest of exhaustion, but that of satisfaction. God had finished His work upon this creation. That work was perfect, and there was not anything that He could add to it.

As the Sabbath is mentioned here for the first time, we are justified in inquiring as to its fundamental purpose and principles. The Sabbath should be considered first in its primary meaning. In the light of God's creative work the fundamental and primary idea of the Sabbath is twofold: cessation from work and satisfaction after work. God set apart the Sabbath for a special purpose. It is God's purpose that His people should share with Him this rest of satisfaction. While the Sabbath affords physical rest and re-creation of energies, it also calls for the worship of God. The law of God and the nature of man combine to make the observance of the Sabbath an absolute necessity.

This seventh day was established in human life as a perpetual reminder of two things. First, the week looks back to the past and is intended to bring constantly before our minds the fact of creation and the debt that we owe to God for the gift of existence. Second, the Sabbath is a recurring picture of the future rest that is in store for the people of God.

God did two things for the seventh day. First, He blessed it. He intended that the Sabbath be the means of producing spiritual fruit in the lives of His people. Its opportunities for rest and worship were to draw them near to Himself, bring out their love and trust, strengthen their faith by attention to His Word, teach them to worship, and build up their spiritual lives. The day was also to be the dominating factor in the lives of the people of God. Second, God sanctified the seventh day. This means that He set it apart from the other six and consecrated it to activities connected in a special sense with Himself and His worship. The consecration of the day has always involved the assembly of the people of God for acts of common worship, again not possible while each is engaged in his ordinary duties.

II. The Formation Of Man. Genesis 2:4-7.

The point of verses five and six seems to be that from the very beginning it was God's purpose to make man, and that he was made direct from virgin soil. The existence and growth of plants and herbs did not effect the composition of man. He is not dependent upon them for existence. He was not affected by the descent of rain from the clouds. The earth from which he was made was there in its entirety before a drop of rain fell. When it came to the formation of man, nothing lay

behind but the Creator Himself and the virgin earth of which He formed him. These facts prove two things: first, that the creation of man was the real purpose of God in making the earth at the very beginning; second, that man has no connection by descent or otherwise with the plant or animal life that preceded him. The implication is that they were all made for him, to supply his need, to afford him pleasure or to teach him moral lessons.

It has been said that these two accounts of the creation of man in Genesis one and two are contradictory, but that statement is incorrect. They are complementary but not contradictory. In the first chapter the creation of man is set forth as the consummating glory of the handiwork of God; in the second chapter that event constitutes the starting point in human history. In the former, the fact of his creation is declared; in the latter, the process of his formation is described.

These two chapters form a splendid illustration of a law, the recognition of which is essential to all intelligent Bible study, namely, the law of recurrence. Doctor Gray defines it as "that peculiarity of the Holy Spirit as an author by which He gives first the outlines of a subject and then recurs to it for the purpose of adding details." In Genesis 1:27 the fact of the creation of man is announced; in chapter two the Spirit describes separately and in detail the creation of man and of woman.

You doubtless have observed that from Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 the Divine Name is "Elohim" or God, whereas the remainder of chapter two uses the title "Jehovah Elohim" or the Lord God. Elohim, which is usually translated "God," is the creatorial name and has special reference to His power and might. "Jehovah," which is usually translated "Lord," is His redemptive name. Elohim is His far-off name, while Jehovah is His near-by name. God formed or molded man out of the dust of the ground and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. There was a combination of the material and the spiritual.

In I Thessalonians 5:23, we read, "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus we find that the integral parts of a man's being are three in number--spirit, soul and body. The spirit is the highest and noblest part of him. It is that by which we are able to apprehend God and worship Him. The soul is the seat of the intellectual and emotional faculties, giving us capacity for fellowship with our fellow-men. It includes mental perception, imagination, memory and natural affection. The body gives us the use of the five senses--sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell.

Each part of our nature can be satisfied only with the nourishment which is suited to it. The body has its appropriate nutriment and sustenance, which is found in air, food and water; and its highest welfare is reached through the good habits of cleanliness and physical exercise. The soul has its own sustenance and satisfaction, as it feeds on thought, knowledge, learning, human enterprise and natural affection. But, the spirit has both higher wants and capacities. It yearns after knowledge of God and fellowship with Him, verifying the word of Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and we are restless till we rest in Thee."

To summarize, let us state it this way: The spirit is the seat of our God-consciousness (Romans 8:16); the soul is the seat of our self-consciousness (Psalm 43:5); the body is the seat of our world-consciousness (II Corinthians 5:1).

III. The Home Of Man. Genesis 3:8-15.

Human life requires a locality, a home for its proper expression and development, so we read of God's provision for this great necessity. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." The locality of this garden has been the subject of much discussion, but nobody knows the exact site. Evidently, it was somewhere in the country watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates. No man has ever been able to describe fully the garden of Eden as it was seen in its original state. Eden means pleasure; it suggests a scene of delight, in which everything was found that could minister to the natural happiness of an innocent man. It was a paradise, a term which implies everything that could be desired to make one happy. The garden was beautiful. It was a masterpiece of natural beauty. Even the trees were pleasant to the sight. The garden was fruitful. It contained every kind of fruit that was good for the temporal needs of man. God manifested His great love to man by combining the beautiful things in nature with the most appetizing of food for the physical man. The garden was well watered. Eden is a symbol of fertility. The river was the source of the fertility of the garden. Everything that grew in Eden was either beautiful or useful. The purpose of man's being put into the garden was to dress it and to keep it. The man was not to be idle, but an activity was provided for him. From the very first, man was intended for work, and the necessity of service is one of the fundamental principles of man's existence.

IV. The Prohibition To Man. Genesis 2:16-17.

Man was commanded not to do a certain thing, namely, eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A thing is right if God commands it and wrong if He forbids it. God gave man a clear warning of the consequences of disobedience, and here we have the first expression of the great scriptural principle that death is inseparable from sin. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This is not a threat. It is not a defiance or a challenge. It is a revelation; it is a warning. When you tell your child not to touch a hot stove or heater or it will be burned, you do not threaten the child. You simply warn it in love and solely for its own good. Foolish would the child be, if it asked why there should be any fire; and foolish are we, with high aggravations, when we ask why God should have set the tree of life and the tree of knowledge in Eden.

Some have wondered why it was that God made that strange prohibition for Adam. Man is not a whole being unless he has a free will. The plan is to bring man to say that the will of God is best. In the beginning, Adam should have said, "What God says is supreme. I will gladly obey, and, if He says no, I will not do it." But, Adam did not say that.

V. The Authority Of Man. Genesis 2:18-20.

We are here taught in detail what is mentioned briefly in Genesis 1:26-- man's original dominion and lordship over nature. Man was intended to be supreme, the culminating point of God's creation.

VI. The Companion For Man. Genesis 2:21-25.

In verse eighteen we have a revelation of the kindness of God to His creature man in that He provided him with a helpmeet--one who would share his joys, his purposes and his enterprises. It was not good that man should be alone, whether we consider man's character and its development, his need of fellowship, or his position as head of the race.

In verses 21-24 we have the details of the formation of woman. Adam was put to sleep presumably for the same reason as an anesthetic is given today, to avoid suffering and inconvenience. When God made woman, He did not take her out of man's head to lord it over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, from under his arm to be protected by him, and from near his heart to be loved by him. Adam thus met with his superior in the Creator, with his inferiors in the animals, and with his equal in Eve. It was beautifully ordered by Providence that woman should be man's stay and solace when smitten with sudden calamity, binding up the broken heart.