

2. Why am I here?

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Preacher: Philip Copeland

[0 : 00] Well, good afternoon, everyone. Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the Tron Lunchtime Bible Talks. Good to see you all, especially if you're new, if it's your first time with us. And today we're going to be looking at Genesis 2.

So please do grab a Bible and turn to the very beginning, and we will read Genesis 2 together from verse 4. Hear the word of the Lord, Genesis 2, beginning at verse 4.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.

And a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put man, the man whom he had formed.

[1 : 29] And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. And the name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

And the gold of that land is good. Bedalim and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Jihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush.

And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flowed east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.

[2 : 44] Then the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

[3 : 58] Why am I here? What is humanity's purpose and what is man? It's a colossal question with colossal implications.

What you believe about the purpose of humanity, it will shape your ethics. It will dictate how you treat human life from its very beginning in the womb to the very end of life.

And what is man is also a deeply personal question. Because what you believe about your purpose, it will dictate and master the way you live your life. The way you identify and present yourself to the

world around you.

It will dictate how you spend your time, how you spend your money, what you pursue, whom you pursue, and what you do with your body. So it's an important question, but what is man?

What is our purpose? Let me just quickly consider some of the current responses to that question in our society today. I think it's a fair assessment. You might not agree with this, but I think it's a fair assessment to say that most people in our society and our post-modern culture believe that there just aren't any answers at all to big questions like this.

[5 : 10] And so there's no point in even asking them. We don't have any idea why we are here, so we might as well just eat, drink, and be merry. I think that's one of the reasons why we see so many people in the UK today pursuing serious amounts of pleasure and entertainment.

People seem to be constantly trying to fill up their minds with distractions so that they don't have to comprehend the painful questions that they hold about why they're here, why they exist.

But you know, others in our society have actually considered the colossal question. For example, modern secularists, humanists, they would have you believe that you don't matter because at the end of the day, you are just matter.

You're just stuff. Let me read to you some quotes from notable figures from the past who've held to such worldviews. Bertrand Russell, the atheist philosopher, he said, Mankind is an accidental collocation of atoms.

That's all you are. Francis Crick, the atheist philosopher, said this, You, your joys, memories, ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells.

[6 : 27] Who you are is nothing but a load of neurons. In other words, your consciousness is just an illusion. What really matters, what calls the shots, is chemical reactions within you.

Or more recently, Richard Dawkins, he said this, Man, and obviously woman, is a robotic vehicle blindly programmed to preserve selfish molecules known as genes.

Let me just say, if you believe this, and loads of people do today, then think about the implications. The implication is this, life according to these worldviews is merely about the survival of the fittest. So just think about that. When you see strong human beings crushing weak human beings, that is good, according to these worldviews. That's excellent, because that is humanity doing what it should be doing.

The survival of the fittest. The fitter genes crushing the weaker ones. It's nature taking its course.

Think about that again from another perspective. If two men get into a fight and one man kills the other man, then he's not a murderer at all, according to these secular worldviews, because he's just dancing to the tune of his own DNA, which is to survive, to then breed with someone, and pass on his genes to another robotic being.

[7 : 41] And that would carry on and on and on and on and on. I don't know about you, but I find that an atrocious and utterly terrifying take on humanity. But the Bible's view of mankind is so wonderfully different.

In fact, it's absolutely astonishing what the Bible teaches about man, mankind's purpose, and the dignity that God has placed upon mankind.

So with that in mind, let's look at chapter 2 of Genesis. Eulosis from 2 verse 4. We have a heading telling us that we're now entering into the main book of Genesis.

Chapter 2, if you like, is really a commentary on the same historical events of chapter 1. Genesis chapter 1, you remember those of you who were here last week, it was a colossal account of the creation of the entire cosmos from the divine perspective outside of the universe.

Chapter 2 is like an action replay of the same event, but on a much more intimate scale. It's almost like an action replay and the camera zooms right down onto the ground level into a localized area.

[8 : 49] It's a very hands-on account of creation. Notice too, please, that the name of God changes. In chapter 1 of Genesis, God is referred to as Elohim, a name that emphasizes God's transcendence, His majesty.

In chapter 2, the name of the Lord is Yahweh, the name of God. Every time you see, as you'll know this anyway, every time you see our English translations use the name Lord in block capital letters. It's God's special covenant name that He revealed to His people. So, basically, Moses is saying, God has got up here and God down here. And we need both for the gospel.

So, with all that in mind, what I want us to do is run through this in three scenes just to bring out and see the dignity that God has placed on man. And then we'll think about application for our lives today at the end.

Scene 1, man-made, man-made. The Lord God created man to have a special relationship with Him in His pleasing temple garden of paradise.

[9 : 53] Please look at verse 7. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living creature. So, man is not an accident or a product of chance.

Man has been wonderfully and lovingly made. The image in verse 7 there is of God as being like a potter. And He scoops up a bit of clay in His hand in His workshop. And He starts to mould this clay until He moulds it into a man.

And then He lovingly, literally gives man the kiss of life by breathing life into man. The same word in Hebrew for breath is the same word for spirit.

And so that's what God is doing here. He is giving man His life-giving spirit. And to say it was an immense privilege is one of the greatest understatements of all time. And having given life to man, the Lord then gives him a place to live.

Please look at verse 8. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there He put the man whom He had formed.

[10 : 59] So in the world there was a region called Eden and within Eden there was a special garden of the Lord. The Hebrew word for garden it really just means a fenced off place.

A place that's set apart from the rest of the world. And let me just say if you were to compare the way in which the garden is described here with the way in which the tabernacle and the temple of the Lord are described later on in the Bible you'd find all sorts of similarities between them.

And that's not an accident. It's not a coincidence. That is because the garden the tabernacle and the temple were all created to serve the same purpose. They were to be the special place where the Lord dwells with His covenant people in special relationship.

And that's what the Lord has made here. And again what a privilege for man. He's been made and put in this special place for special relationship with the covenant God.

And what a garden it is. Please look at verse 9. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground. Trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

[12 : 08] In other words the Lord made this temple garden to be a place of abundant food and wonderful delights. All sorts of stuff that would have been a delight to the senses of man. One sometimes encounters people in church who are just a bit pious aren't they?

And you know they act as though the Lord wants us to feel absolutely miserable all of the time. And to feel extremely guilty for finding delight in His creation. Well this verse smashes that to bits doesn't it?

Smashes that to bits. The Lord is so kind and generous. He makes a beautiful paradise for man to live in in special relationship with Him.

And notice that the word there all there was all kinds of trees there. There was a super abundance of food available. You'd never go hungry in this wonderful garden. And in verse 10 to 14 we're told that there was a great river in the garden and it flowed out of the garden into Eden and then from Eden it split off into four great rivers that went through the earth.

The Pishon, the Jihon, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Now I'd like to suggest that these rivers are here not just because they existed but also because it teaches us that life was intended to flow out of the garden into Eden and into the rest of the world.

[13 : 27] In other words this garden was supposed to bring blessing and fruitfulness to the rest of the world. And I think these rivers also tell us that the garden had a huge potential to spread.

And that brings me to my second scene. First scene was man made. Second scene man's mandate. Man's mandate. So the Lord God gives man the great purpose of obediently taking care of his temple garden paradise.

sacrifice. He was to work it and spread it over the rest of the world. Please look at verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work and to take care of it.

Notice please that work is not a product of the fall of man or the curse of sin. We were made to work. Work is very good. In the beginning it was a joyful thing that was supposed to bring about our own good.

If you want to find out why work can be something that's frustrating and painful come back next week when we look at Genesis 3. I hope you will. But what is the work that the Lord God has given man to do?

[14 : 38] And the answer is gardening. Gardening. And let me just say it's wonderful here to put 2 verse 15 alongside 1 verse 28. Just look back at 1 verse 28 would you?

God blessed them that's humanity and said be fruitful and multiply fill the earth and subdue it. So flick back to 2 verse 15 if you put those two mandates together you'll find that man was to care for the garden and work it so that it would spread and grow and grow and grow so that it would subdue the whole earth and fill it.

that's what mankind was called to do. The Lord is saying man be my gardener expand the garden out of Eden along all of these rivers mentioned in 10 to 14 until the whole world is one big temple garden of paradise.

What a glorious calling that is isn't it? What great dignity what purpose. But just notice please man was called to always rule in the garden under the Lord.

[15 : 46] Man was never to ever try and attempt to rule in the garden instead of the Lord. Please look at verse 16 and 17 And the Lord God commanded the man you're 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 of it you will surely die.

So verse 16 the Lord actually commands man to be joyful and to be blessed and to enjoy what he has made to feast on the fruits of the garden eat from every tree and that includes by the way the special tree that was mentioned back in verse 9 the tree of life.

Man is being commanded to joyfully receive eternal life. Personally I take it that the tree of life is a symbol of the life-giving spirit of God.

Other parts of the Bible use the tree of life language in that sense. I really don't think we're supposed to believe in some kind of a magical tree for that would clash with the rest of the Bible's teaching.

Rather to eat from the tree of life seems to be a figure of being in perfect relationship and being in perfect communion with God for he is the source of eternal life.

[17 : 03] And that's what the Lord is saying know me and enjoy me. So the man is commanded to eat and enjoy from the fruit of every tree even the tree of life but there's just one tree notice that there's just one tree there's probably I don't know how many trees there were back then we're not told but there was every trees there's a lot of trees wasn't there but just not one tree the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because the implication is that's the Lord's tree that's not for man so the Lord says Adam eat from all these trees go and enjoy it all please just not that tree because it's mine and Adam because I love you because I don't want anything bad to happen to you I'm warning you the day you eat of that tree you will come under the sentence of physical and spiritual death I don't want that to happen so do not eat from that tree and again I don't think we're supposed to see that this is a magical tree with magical fruit rather I think it's a figure for rejecting the Lord and his loving rule if man eats from this tree then what he'll really be saying in his heart is that he's setting himself up as a rival to God as the head of a rival kingdom to the Lord's kingdom for the man will be acting as though he has the right the wisdom and the knowledge to decide what is good and what is evil but friends that is wrong because it's only the Lord only the Lord has the prerogative to know and decide what is good and what is evil the day man does this he will no longer be in covenant relationship with the Lord he will no longer be in communion with the giver of eternal life one commentator says it like this active faith is a prerequisite to this home doubt in God's word or doubt in God's character will not reside in this temple garden of paradise so it's clear the Lord God has placed Adam on some sort of probationary period and the question you're thinking in your mind as you read this is will Adam choose to walk by faith will he love the Lord will he give himself to the Lord's loving life-giving commandments and live in wonderful covenant fellowship with God or will he decide to trash that and spurn the grace of God and spurn his life-giving commands go the way of death what will he do well there's much more to be said about man's mandate but we must press on to the third scene and it's this man married man married the Lord God provides the man with a wife someone who will help him fulfill his mandate that's what this scene is all about in these last few verses of the chapter in verse 18 notice we're told that the only thing that was not good about the Lord's creation was the fact that man was alone now what does it mean for man to be alone it's very common to take this alone to be oh poor Adam he was so alone he needed someone to keep

him company but I'm so sorry that's just not what that means at all

I know some men who are married and they rather like being alone there we go it's very common to take alone to mean lonely but that's not what it means in context the verse is saying it's not good for Adam to be alone because he needs a helper who's suitable for him to reproduce with in order to create more children create more little images of God who will join him in his task of spreading the garden yes and so in verses 19 to 20 we get this wonderful scene of the Lord parading all the other creatures that he has made before Adam in order to try and see if there's a suitable helper for Adam and no suitable helper was found in other words the hippopotamus wouldn't do the duck-billed platypus wouldn't do the highland cow wouldn't do either and so verse 21 having been through all the other creatures the Lord makes a helper suitable for Adam let me just say there is nothing demeaning here at all about the word helper elsewhere in the

Old Testament the Hebrew word for helper that's used here is used most frequently to describe the Lord God himself just think of later on in the Bible in Exodus 18 verse 4 you can look that up later it would be an example of how the word is used so to describe woman as a helper here is not demeaning at all it is a beautiful thing it's such a dignified position that she is in she's literally coming to the rescue of man in order to help him carry out his privileged calling verse 21 to 22 the Lord creates women out of Adam's rib and again this is not teaching that women are not equal to men no men and women are both equally precious to the Lord just remember back in 127 it required both sexes to image God so men and women are equals in God's sight but they have been made for different roles that complement one another listen to Matthew Henry on this point beautiful words

I think these were read at my wedding but I might be wrong I should probably listen to the recording just to make sure in case my wife pulls me up about it but here we go Matthew Henry says this the woman is not made out of his head to top him not out of his foot to be trampled upon by him but out of his side to be equal with him under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be beloved so in verse 22 the Lord God brings women to the man and having seen his wife he bursts out into this love poem of verse 23 what does he say this at last at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man these are the first human words recorded in the Bible and the husband is full of joy and praise his wife she is his equal and partner in the great mandate that God has given them and Moses in verse 24 gives us the interpretive word on this little event he basically says in verse 24 what you see in verse 22 and 23 is the first marriage ceremony the first marriage ceremony look at verse 24 therefore in other words because of what happens in 22 and 23 therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh notice marriage ceremony comes first they shall leave the father and mother and then have sex never the other way around yes now this verse has many implications but let me just give you three of them implication one marriage is not a human institution the Lord has created it and therefore we human beings have no right at all to try and redefine it implication two the Lord

God made marriage to be exclusively for one man and one woman only anything other than one man and one woman is not marriage at all it never will be recognized as marriage in the eyes of God and in the eyes of his true church implication three the Lord created sex to be enjoyed only in this proper place in marriage between one man and one woman only any sexual activity outside of this is sinful and evil in the eyes of the Lord the Lord did not make homosexuality friends there are many more implications there and if you want to come and chat about that afterwards then please do we don't have time to go through them this afternoon but the key thing the key thing that Moses wants us to be clear on here and to see is the great privilege and the dignity that the Lord has placed on both Adam and his wife they've been made together for this wonderful purpose of being fruitful and multiplying spreading the garden that was the temple all over the whole earth great dignity and great purpose and at the end of the chapter all relationships are as they should be the relationship between the

[25 : 31] Lord and humanity that way very good the relationship between the man and his wife very good symbolized in the fact they were both naked and felt no shame the relationship between humanity and the created order very good very good but again the question we're left asking as we finish this chapter is how long will it last how long will it last and again come back next week and find out but friends as I close and let's close on this thinking about the big applications for our lives today why has Moses written this Moses has written this so that you will know the truth about the

great dignity and the purpose that you have that the Lord has given you you are not a product of chance you have been wonderfully made and made for a wonderful reason to know the Lord and covenant relationship with him to live under his rule and to obey his life given word that's what you're for

I used to work in social care I used to look after a boy with autism and we used to play a game every shift he used to point at things and he would say Philip what's that for that's a chair that's for sitting on if he pointed at something going along the road he'd say what's that and I'd say well that's a bus that's for giving you a lift round town but if he pointed at you a human being I would say that's a human being that's for knowing God and for obeying him and serving him enjoying him and loving him and this is the key in what the Bible teaches about human flourishing and freedom true human freedom and flourishing is not having no master but it's having the right master the master who made you and gave you life and dignity here's a question how is it possible today to live in the Lord's presence and under his rule because where is Eden today well the answer is in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ he is Yahweh by the way isn't he he is the Lord of the Old Testament the Lord God of the Old Testament 2000 years ago came into this world as a man in the flesh and said here I am think of John's gospel again and again and again and again I am I am I am I am I am the God of the Old Testament if you want to know the joy of living under the rule of the Lord if you want to know the purpose that you were made for you must bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith only in him can we start to really fulfill the purpose that we were made for so Moses holds out to you the way of life and the way of death under the Lord's rule or reject the Lord's rule love his word and love his life giving commandments or spurn them the choice is yours

Moses says please choose life well let's be quiet for a moment and then I'll pray for us Almighty God we praise and thank you for the great dignity and purpose that you've created us for to live in special covenant relationship with you to rule over the earth that you've made always under your loving rule never instead of your rule we praise you for the glorious picture that Genesis 2 gives us of how good it is to live under your loving rule thank you so much that by surrendering our lives to you and coming under the rule of your son we can start to experience the great joy of Eden in our own hearts we pray that the same word of truth that we heard today will penetrate our hearts and minds please change us and correct us we need to be corrected so that we will be made more into the likeness of your son the second

Adam the perfect man we pray this in his precious name amen