

Genesis, Lecture 8: Genesis 2

Author: Dr. Robert Vannoy

Session: Lecture 8

Source: Biblecallearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Genesis 2, toledoth, creation account, garden of Eden, Robert Vannoy, documentary hypothesis, historical geography, Derek Kidner, Ephraim Speiser

Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Robert Vannoy examines whether Genesis 2 represents a separate and contradictory creation account to Genesis 1, concluding that it should instead be understood as a qualified historical progression focusing on humanity's role in preparation for the fall in Genesis 3. He analyzes the literary structure of Genesis, specifically the Hebrew term *toledoth*, to argue that chapter divisions should occur at the end of Genesis 2:3, thereby demonstrating that *toledoth* introduces subsequent events rather than summarizing prior ones. Furthermore, Vannoy resolves alleged chronological contradictions regarding vegetation and animal creation by examining the nuances of Hebrew verbal tenses and discusses three major geographic interpretations of the Garden of Eden and its rivers.

Outline

I. Is Genesis 2 Another Account of Creation?

A. Qualified Response: Yes, but only in a qualified sense.

1. Contains repetition and elaboration of Genesis 1, particularly the creation of man and woman.
2. Not primarily a creation account; the emphasis is on man's place and function in the created world.
3. Critical view (e.g., S.R. Driver) argues for a "double narrative of the origin of man," dividing the text at Genesis 2:4a (P account in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, J account in Genesis 2:4b-25).

B. Vannoy's Alternative Approach

1. Better understood as a progression preparing for the fall of man in Genesis 3.
2. The answer to whether it is simply another creation story is negative due to literary and theological progression.

C. The Hebrew Word Toledoth and Chapter Divisions

1. Genesis 2:4 use of "generations" (Hebrew: *toledoth*).

2. Textual division is best placed at the end of Genesis 2:3, with toledoth introducing Chapter 2 starting at verse 4.
3. Critical scholars split verse 4 in half on the basis of the Documentary Hypothesis (claiming 4a is P and 4b is J due to the name Yahweh Elohim).
4. The term toledoth occurs 10 times in Genesis, consistently introducing what follows (e.g., Terah in 11:27, Jacob in 37:2) rather than summarizing what precedes.
5. Linguistic origin: derived from yalad ("to bear" or "to beget"), meaning offspring or the product/result of historical development.
6. In Genesis 2:4, it signifies what comes forth in history from God's creative activity in Genesis 1, marking a new phase.
7. Comparison of translations: King James Version ("generations") vs. New International Version ("account of"), where the NIV loses the sense of historical progression and offspring.

II. Function of Genesis 2 in Relation to Genesis 3

A. Center Attention on Man in Preparation for the Fall

1. Extensive description of the garden's location (Genesis 2:8-14) setting the stage for Chapter 3.
2. The prohibition against eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:16-17) establishes the foundation of the test and the warning of death.
3. Detailed description of woman's creation (Genesis 2:18-24) due to Eve's crucial role in Chapter 3.
4. Description of state of innocence (Genesis 2:25: both naked and not ashamed) preparing for the post-fall realization of nakedness in Genesis 3:7.

III. Does Genesis 2 Contradict Genesis 1?

A. The Alleged Discrepancy of Order

1. Genesis 1 Order: Vegetation (v. 11), Animals (v. 24), Man (v. 26-27), Woman.
2. Genesis 2 Alleged Order: Man (v. 7), Vegetation (v. 8-9), Animals (v. 19), Woman (v. 22).

B. Resolving the Alleged Contradictions

1. Vegetation: Genesis 2 does not describe the initial creation of vegetation, but the planting of a specific garden (v. 8).
2. Temporal aspect of garden planting (v. 8): Hebrew verbal forms do not distinguish past from past perfect. NIV's "had planted" is grammatically and contextually superior to KJV's "planted," showing preparation before Adam was formed.
3. Animal creation (v. 19): The same verbal tense issue applies. NIV's translation "had formed" indicates animals were created prior to man (as in Genesis 1), and were brought to Adam to be named.

4. Man and woman: Genesis 1 does not state they were created close together in time, and Genesis 2 does not claim animals were created between them.
5. The structure of Genesis 2 is logical/thematic rather than chronological.
6. Logical inconsistency in critical theory: A compiler would not set down two completely contradictory accounts side by side without editing (citing Leupold and another scholar's quote about the author not being a "dunce").

C. Parallelism of Genesis 2:5-6 and Genesis 1:2

1. Suggestion of Derek Kidner ("Genesis 2:5-6, wet or dry", 1966): These verses represent the chaotic, saturated state of creation before the ordering process.
2. Lack of rain is a sign of saturation (preceding the dividing of waters) rather than drought.

IV. The Geographic Location of the Garden of Eden

A. River Systems in Genesis 2:8-14

1. A river rose in Eden, watered the garden, and divided into four branch beds (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates).
2. Translation of verse 10: Ephraim Speiser (Anchor Bible) argues that the river rises in Eden and forms four separate branch beds, aligning with normal river behavior.
3. Identification of rivers: Tigris and Euphrates are well-known Mesopotamian rivers; Pishon and Gihon remain unknown.

B. Three Basic Approaches to Location

1. Different Pre-Flood Geography: The four rivers came together in the Persian Gulf region, and the Garden may now be submerged under the northern Persian Gulf.
2. Post-Flood Commemoration: Names of pre-flood rivers were remembered and applied to post-flood rivers (e.g., Tigris, Euphrates), meaning the original location could be anywhere.
3. Non-Historical/Mythological Approach: J.C. Gibson (The Daily Study Bible, 1981) asserts the garden never existed historically; it is a "garden of the mind" or religious fantasy, with Adam as an illustrative archetype rather than a real person.