

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 2:18-25

“A Helper”

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Having answered the first question that the Book of Genesis asks, “Whose world is it anyway,” by affirming that we live in God’s world because God made it, Genesis addresses the process by which God created (see the introduction to Genesis which accompanies the Exegetical Notes for Genesis 1:1-2 for a fuller explanation of the three questions which Genesis asks).

Genesis 2:18-25

Having given an account of the full process of how God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:3-2:3, the Bible now gives a fuller account of the events which happened on day six of creation, and, in particular, the creation of human kind.

Verses 18

The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

- In chapter 1, the text says “Elohim,” “God,” spoke and it was so. In Chapter 2, “YHWH Elohim” speaks. While the Hebrew word “Elohim” is indefinite and would allow other gods to be the active voice in the process of creation, Chapter 2 makes it clear that the god (if there are other gods), that YHWH is the god who created the universe. He is now named. There can be no mistake. YHWH is the god who made the heavens and the earth.
- It is YHWH who declares that it is not good for the man to be alone. It is YHWH’s decision to make a helper who is “suitable” for the man.
- The word “suitable,” implies of like-kind. All of the other animals are created male and female. They are able to reproduce their own kind. But it is not so for man. He is one of a kind. Man is not able to reproduce his own kind. There is no other animal of like-kind for the man.

Verses 19-20

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

- Naming is an act of dominion and authority. Each of the animals is brought before the man and he gives each animal its name. This means that he has dominion and authority over all the other animals.
- The text restates the problem and broadens its scope. Among all the animals, there is no match for man. Of his kind, he is the only one.

Verses 21-23

²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

- YHWH solves the problem. He puts man to sleep. Takes a rib from man and uses it to create woman, a woman who is after the same “kind” as the man. He then closed up the wound he had caused in the man.

Verses 23-24

²³ The man said,

*“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”*

²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

- When the man saw the woman, his suitable “helper,” he proclaimed that she was “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.” He said that she was like him. They were of the same kind.
- Man called her “woman.” Man names her woman, thus he is given dominion and authority over her as he has previously been given dominion and authority over all the other animals (see Ephesians 5:22-33).
- This relationship becomes a picture for all that follows. A man and a woman form a special relationship like that which was formed by the first man and

woman. In marriage, a man and a women become one flesh. Marriage is between a man and a woman. They are monogamous. The bond between them is to be unbroken. Together, they become a family unit. The man leaves his father's family and authority and establishes the same kind of relationship that his father had with his mother with his own wife. This relationship becomes sacred in the New Testament, for the Apostle Paul declares it to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church (see Ephesians 5:22-33).

Verse 25

²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

- For the first time, the Hebrew word for man, “adam” is used as a name. The woman now finds her identity through him. She is now the wife, the suitable helper found for man.
- Since neither have rebelled against the rule of God, the effects of sin are not known between them. Shame is the result of sin. It is an attempt to hide our true sinful nature.
- The word, “helper” used throughout these verses is applied to YHWH himself in various Psalms. “God is our helper.” It is a term which defines purpose, not order or rank. The purpose of the woman is to aid and assist the man. They are to work together as a team. She submits to him because YHWH declares that she should. The man has named her. But he cares for her and does not dominate her, nor does he dominate the other animals. Everything is held in perfect balance by submission to the word of YHWH. Only when sin enters the picture does dominion become a power struggle.

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