**Lesson 4**

**28, 29 June 2021**

**Genesis 1:24-31 – 2:4-25**

**Comments from Chapter 3: *Study with Purpose***

* Last week when we looked at the Symmetry of Scripture chart (Chart 2a), we said that the overarching theme of the Bible was the concept that God is calling people for His own who will reflect His holiness. In chapter 3 of *Women of the Word* Jen Wilkin says that the “Big Story” (or metanarrative) of the Bible is the creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of everything. **These two statements are complementary, making the same point but from slightly different perspectives.** For example, toward the end of the *Study with Purpose* chapter, Jen Wilkin shows how the account of Noah illustrates the concepts of the fall of man, redemption and re-creation. We can also view that account as God judging men who have totally rejected Him and His holiness, but choosing one man and his family to carry out His purpose of reflecting His holiness.
* Jen then showed how some of the various genres of Scripture illustrate the Big Story. For example, she said that the **Law** was given “so that we will understand our need for *redemption* through Christ…(It also calls us) to be conformed to His image, thereby beginning the process of *restoration* of the image of God that was lost at the *fall*. On the other hand, looking at the Law through the lens of Chart 2a, we can say that the Law was given to show us how to be *holy*. God’s Law reveals the utter holiness of God’s character and calls His people to live in a way that reflects His holiness to the world around them.
* In either case, whether we talk about the Big Story of creation-fall-redemption-restoration or the overarching principle of God’s people reflecting God’s holiness, we should always evaluate any particular passage of Scripture we may be studying to see how it fits into the overall purpose of the Bible.

**Jen Wilkin Video on Genesis 1:24-31; 2:4-25**

Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that man and woman were created in the *image of God*. This was something “strikingly new” in God’s creation, something that makes humans different from anything else. But what does it mean? **To be made in the image of God is to reflect who God is.** How do we do that? It doesn’t mean that we *physically* look like God, because God is spirit and does not have a body. Rather, it means that we interact with the rest of creation the way God would if He were here. We know that God did enter His creation in a physical body in the person of Christ, so when we speak of being image bearers, it means that we should look like Christ. We should interact with the world around us as He did.

**When God created Adam and Eve, He gave dominion to both of them,** i.e. to both the man and the woman. They were given *equal authority* and *equal responsibility* for the creation. They were also *equal image bearers.* That doesn’t mean that they exercise their authority or bear the image of God in identical or interchangeable ways, but that *both* man and woman are necessary to demonstrate the image of God to the world. And it means that both man and woman are necessary for dominion to occur. Not only that, but Genesis 1:28 tells us that God gave *equal blessing* to the man and to the woman.

As we come to verse 4 of Genesis chapter two, we see the phrase, “**These are the generations of the heavens and the earth** when they were created…” This is a formula that is used throughout the book of Genesis to introduce a new section of text. It is sort of like saying, “This is what happened to them next.” The phrase is a way of connecting what Moses has just talked about with the next section he wants to address. In order to understand what we read in Genesis 2, it is important that we understand what happened in chapter one, because Moses is building on it.

Notice that Moses is not repeating himself in chapter two when he relates the creation of Adam and Eve. He is adding more detail, sort of “zooming in,” so he can focus specifically on what happened to them and tell us their story. Notice how the rhythm and flow of the text change from chapter one to chapter two. Chapter two is less poetic and less repetitive.

**Genesis 2:4 introduces a new name for God**, or rather adds a name to the one given in 1:1. The English says “the Lord God”. The word Lord is “Yahweh”, His personal title. So as the focus shifts to humans bearing the image of God, God is seen, not just as the *transcendent* God of creation, but as a God who is *near and personal*. It is important that we keep both of these aspects in mind and that we keep them in balance. How did Jesus teach us to pray to God? We are to say, “Our Father (close and personal) who art in Heaven (high and transcendent)” If we lean too much toward the personal aspect of God, He will seem too small and too “snuggly,” as Jen put it. But if we lean too much toward the transcendent aspect of God, He will seem too far above us and rather frightening. Both aspects of His being are true, and we need to keep both in mind as we relate to Him.

In Genesis 2:5 **Moses introduces a time reference** that we might not have realized. When he says, “When no bush…and no small plant…had yet sprung up—for **the Lord God had not caused it to rain** **on the land**,” he is telling his original audience in essence, “back before there was any rain,” a reference to the pre-Flood era. This is important to remember, because it will underscore just what a shock it was when massive rains poured from the sky for the first time when the Flood occurred.

Next Moses describes **the particulars of how God created Adam**: “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” or *“living soul”*. Notice the contrast between Genesis one and two: in chapter one we are given the *exalted* view of man, created in the image of God Himself. But in chapter two we learn that he was created from the dust of the ground, something very *common*. So man is a combination of that which is sacred and that which is low. And we also see something of God’s love for playing on words in this account. The Hebrew word for dust is *adamah*, and for man is *adam*. Secondly, the Hebrew word for breath is *ruach* (roo-akh’), which is the very same word used in chapter one for the Holy Spirit! So the Holy Ruach is breathing the ruach of life into the man’s nostrils, a very personal gesture that has all the intimacy of a kiss.

Then Moses describes the setting, **the garden of Eden**. He tells us that God caused every tree that is “pleasant to the sight and good for food” to grow there, including two special trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Notice that the two special trees are in the very middle of the garden. The way that God refers to these two trees is highly significant: they demonstrate that **God, as the Creator, has the right to decide who has life and to decree what is right and what is wrong**. God determines morality, and God gives life to whom He chooses. The two trees are in the center of the garden because the concepts they represent should be the central consideration of its inhabitants. The name of the garden is also significant. The Hebrew word translated “garden” actually means “a protected area,” and Eden means *delight*. So the Lord God plants a protected area of delight. Not only does Moses provide a time reference (before the Flood), he also gives a geographical indicator that we today probably do not catch. He says that the garden of **Eden was planted “in the east”**. Where is that? Moses’ original audience would immediately have known that he meant “somewhere east of Mount Sinai”.

Think how this description would have hit his original audience. They were a nation of people who had spent the last forty years wandering in the desert wilderness: an arid, rainless, burning hot, treeless environment. The description of the garden of Eden that God gave them through Moses was intended to give them a picture of everything they would love to have, a place of safety and a beautiful place of provision. The garden of Eden is the environment that God had intended for them to enjoy, but it is not where they find themselves at all. So the garden of Eden is a place that centers on God’s will and God’s work with the two special trees planted in just the right place for us to understand it.

When we come to verses 10-14 of chapter two, which list the four rivers that flowed that flowed out of Eden, we are left at a loss. We may have heard of the Tigris and the Euphrates, but the Pishon and Gihon rivers are total mysteries to us. Moses’ original audience, however, *did* know these rivers. Moses’ intent in talking about them is to emphasize to his hearers that all these events really happened in a real place that they knew about. **Moses wants them—and us—to take everything he has told them as actual fact.**

Verse 15 tells us that Adam was given work to do in the garden. It was intended to be *joyful* work, the work of ruling and subduing the creatures God had entrusted to him. Adam’s work was filled with *enjoyable* tasks, to be accomplished in a *delightful* place. So verse 18 comes as a real shock when we read for the first time, “It is *NOT good* for the man to be alone.” It is not good . . . incomplete . . . imperfect. God goes on to say, “I will make him a helper fit for him.” The word translated *helper* means “a necessary ally,” i.e. an indispensableally. In other words, unless the woman is created to help the man, the mission of God does not go forward! Woman is absolutely crucial. In fact, the same word used here for “helper” is used elsewhere in Scripture to refer to God Himself coming to the aid of His people in their times of great need. What the woman is going to bring to the table is *essential* and *indispensable*.

But notice that even though God has said that it is not good for the man to be alone, He does not immediately create Eve. Instead He sets Adam to work naming the animals. It was a partnership in which God brought the animals to him, and Adam named their species. He was creating a taxonomy for them, categorizing them, i.e. bringing order out of chaos. He was exercising his dominion over the animals and taking responsibility for them. But as he did so, he was also realizing more and more that these animals were “not like me…not like me…not like me”. God used this task to bring home to Adam the fact that he was incomplete. He was preparing Adam to receive the helper God had in mind for him. Only after Adam was ready did God create a helper for him. And when Adam saw Eve, he immediately recognized that here at last was “someone *like me*”. And he used the same kind of word play that God did when He named the man (Adam) because He had created him from the dust (adamah). Adam says of Eve, “She shall be called Woman (isha) because she was taken out of Man (ish). In other words, when Adam named this particular brand new “species”, he gave the species a name that meant “just like me”. She is “same of my same”.

In our culture today we have become so concerned about the differences between men and women that we have often lost sight of what we share in common. The reality is that there is far more that unites us than there is that separates us. Man and woman share so many things in common. When Adam saw Eve, his first reaction was, “This one’s *like me!”*  He is overjoyed. But our culture would tell us, “Men are from Mars, and women are from Venus.” And out of that mindset, when we wholly separate men from women, comes this contempt that exists between us. It has resulted in stereotypes that are harmful. In every sitcom on TV, the husband is portrayed as a bumbling idiot, while the woman is either valued just for her physical attributes or she is portrayed as a nagging shrew. But the Scriptures teach us that both men *and* women are created in the image of God . . . by the same God . . . and placed in the same garden. **This is so important for us to understand because the first step in treating others with contempt is to look at them and think, “They are *not like me*.”** Conversely, when we look at the picture of a refugee family on television, see a mother holding a little child, and think, “She’s a mom, *just like me*,” and we are stirred to *compassion*. It is true that men and women have different responsibilities, different gifts, and different strengths and weaknesses. Men tend to have more physical strength; women are able to bear children. God has created men and women so that they function differently and interact differently with the world around them. But fundamentally we share more than divides us. Notice that when Adam classifies Eve (i.e. when he names her “species”), he puts her in the same category as himself.

**“They shall become one flesh.”** This is a passage that is often referred to in weddings, and God refers to the concept in Ephesians 5:28-30 when He says, “…husbands are to love their wives as *their own bodies*…For no one ever hates *his own flesh* but provides and cares for it…” Many times this is spiritualized to mean that men should sanctify their wives in some way, but we need to look at it in a more literal sense. In the world today, one in four women are physically abused by their partners, and sadly, the statistics are the same in our *churches*. Why is that? Because the husband does not regard his wife as his own flesh. In a “one flesh union”, the one with the greater physical dominance does not regard his partner as “not like me” but as his very own flesh.

**“The man and his wife were naked and were not ashamed.”** Little children do not associate shame with nakedness. That is a concept that they learn as they grow older. Adam and Eve did not experience shame until they sinned. After that, throughout Scripture, shame is *always* associated with nakedness. In Revelation, when we stand before God, we will not be naked but clothed with the “fine linen” of the righteousness of Christ. We have been given a covering for our shame. But in pre-Fall Eden, when the man and his wife were “naked and unashamed”, we see a picture of innocence and vulnerability. Much of the life of a believer is spent in trying to regain a vulnerability that we lost in the ravages of sin. We are tasked with the responsibility of “re-Edenizing” our world. When we pray, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” we shouldn’t just *pray* it, but actually *try to* *bring it about*. This means that all work done by a believer should be done seeking God’s glory. So no matter what our work involves, no matter what our part of the universe is where we are trying to bring order out of chaos and be “ruling and subduing” and fulfilling the cultural mandate, we are working as unto the Lord. Other image bearers around us who do not know the Lord may be hard at work, but they are doing it for their own glory, not the Lord’s. What other option do they have? But as a believer we should see ourselves as inviting Eden into our current experience. We should tell our fellow workers, “There was once a protected place of delight, and let me just give you a glimpse of what it might be like. Let me just give you a snapshot.” So whatever we do, we do it as unto the Lord. **All work is good work if it is done to the glory of God.**

**TAKE AWAYS:**

* I appreciated the point that Jen made when she explained that the “tree of life” and the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” are intended to demonstrate that God, as the Creator, has the right to decide who has life and to decree what is morally right or wrong. In other words, they are not magic trees with special powers of their own, but are *teaching tools*. They are *pictures* of the sovereignty of God in two very important areas, areas that are being challenged today. Isn’t the message of the world around us that we have the right to decide the fate of unborn babies? The world says that we can decide who lives and who dies: it is our *right*. And the world tells us that there is no absolute morality, but each of us can choose what is right and wrong for ourselves. Everyone has his “own truth,” so that what is right for you may not be right for me. God, however, right from the beginning established HIS authority and His right as the Creator both to give life and to determine morality. As we seek to reflect His holiness, we will find ourselves more and more in conflict with the mainstream. May God give us the courage to be holy, the grace to speak the truth in love, and the compassion to reach out to a hurting world without judging it.
* It isn’t just sitcoms that tend to portray men as “bumbling idiots”. It seems to me that the women’s rights movement doesn’t just advocate that women should *have* the same rights as men, but there also seems to be an underlying attitude that says, “Women *are* right, and men are wrong.” That kind of thinking appeals to our pride and tends to make us arrogantly assume that men are rather stupid if they don’t agree with us. And when I say “us”, I mean you and me here in the church. We are immersed in a culture that tends to despise men, and it is very easy for those attitudes to creep into our own thinking. So again, ladies, may God give us the courage to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any such attitudes within ourselves, the honesty to acknowledge any such lurking pride as sin to our Heavenly Father, and the humility and grace to value our fellow image bearers as “same of my same”. And as we do so, may we experience more and more of the joy that God intended for us to have as we serve Him together.