

Genesis 2-3 The Garden Narrative

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Overview

The creation narrative is a successive zooming in to the central theme:

- 1:1, (celestial) heavens and earth
- 1:2-2:3, zoom in on “earth” to see it furnished and populated
- 2:4-3:24, zoom in on second half of sixth day to see man created.

We now enter the first of the “generations” (*toledot*) sections into which Genesis is divided. These are named after the patriarch whose descendants are described. Thus they stitch together successive sections:

- “these are the generations” looks forward to the next section, while
- “of X” looks back to the culminating or dominant patriarch of the previous section. Here, there is no preceding patriarch, so Heaven and Earth are named, but with a clear emphasis that they are not primal gods, but themselves the creatures of the Lord God.

Within the first “generations” section (ch. 2-4), there are two major sections:

- 2:4-3:24, Adam and Eve
- 4:1-26, Their Sons

Here we concentrate on the Adam and Eve story. We need to pay attention to two thematic issues that pervade this section, as well as the overall structure, before moving into the detailed exposition.

Themes

Two pervasive themes: the change in references to God from “God” to “Lord God”, and sanctuary imagery.

The Names of God

Contrast

- throughout ch. 1, “God” *elohim*
- throughout ch. 2, “LORD God” *YHWH elohim*, a name used nowhere else in the Pentateuch except for Exod 9:30, and only 18 times elsewhere.

The distinction in divine names is the foundation of the “documentary hypothesis,” the notion that the Pentateuch was compiled from separate source documents, each using a different name. This hypothesis is only tenable if the names have no distinct meanings. But in fact they do. Which name is used is determined not because they are inherited from earlier sources, but because the name in question fits the context. The basic terms “LORD” *YHWH* and “God” *elohim* have different meanings.

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(NB: “LORD” spelled with large and small caps is *YHWH*, sometimes rendered in English “Jehovah,” the ineffable name of God, considered so holy by the Jews that they changed script when they wrote it and would not pronounce it. “Lord” with lower case is a different term, corresponding to our English word “master.”)

<i>elohim</i>	<i>YHWH</i>
Common noun (cf. “city”)	Proper name (cf. “Jerusalem”)
Used for pagan gods as well as Israel’s	Used only of Israel’s god
Pervasive in wisdom literature (a universal genre in the ANE)	Pervasive in prophetic literature (dealing with Israel’s relation to her own deity)
Emphasizes the common characteristics of “god-ness,” e.g., transcendence, power, creation.	Emphasizes God’s covenant relation with his people.
→ the God of nature and nations	→ the God who chooses and nurtures his people

Gen 1 is of universal import, and depicts God in his transcendent role as creator. Thus here he is “God” *elohim*.

Gen 2-3 focuses on God’s personal relation with his highest creature, man. Thus the name “LORD” *YHWH* is used. But he is also presented as the creator of nature, and Adam is the father of all nations, not just of Israel, so the name *elohim* is conjoined.

See Moses’ words to Pharaoh in Exod 9:30 for the import of this particular joint name: “But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.” That he is “God” is apparent from the miracles he works in Egypt, but Moses claims further that he is Israel’s personal deity, *YHWH*.

Application: Some gods are all-powerful but inaccessible, essentially fates before whom we are helpless. Others are glorified men, highly accessible, but ultimately limited in what they can do. Our God is both infinite and personal. Cf. Isa 57:15:

- it starts with an exposition of “God” (“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name [is] Holy; I dwell in the high and holy [place]”),
- and ends with an exposition of “LORD” (“with him also [that is] of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”).

Sanctuary Imagery

Numerous points of similarity between Eden and later sanctuaries suggest that Eden is to be seen as a sanctuary, a place of fellowship with God. (Equivalently, later sanctuaries are recreations of Man’s original ideal and ultimate destiny.) We will trace this in more detail as we work through the chapter, but here consider the highlights: (Ref: Kline’s *Kingdom Prologue* p. 31; Wenham, *9th World Congress of Jewish Studies* 19ff.)

Eden	Sanctuaries
2:9, tree of life in the midst of the garden	Ex 25:31-35, Menorah as stylized tree of life, with branches, leaves, and fruit.
2:10, the source of a river	Ezek 47, a river issues from the temple in Ezekiel’s vision
2:12, gold	Everything in the tabernacle was overlaid with gold
2:12, bdellium	Num 11:7, manna compared with it, and stored in the ark (Ex 16:33)

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2:12, onyx	Widely used in decorating tabernacle, temple, and priestly vestments (e.g., Ex 28:9-14)
2:15, Adam to dress (<i>bd</i> and keep <i>\$mr</i> the garden	These verbs are used together in the Torah only of priestly service, e.g., Num 3:7,8.
2:17, tree of knowledge of good and evil, described in 3:6	Compare description with the law of God in Ps 19:8,9, enshrined in the ark (Ex 25:16)
2:17, familiarity with this tree brings death	2 Sam 6:7, touching ark brings death.
3:8, God “walks” <i>hithallek</i> in the Garden	God does this in the tabernacle: Lev 26:12; 2 Sam 7:6
3:21, Adam clothed in a tunic to cover his nakedness	Priests wore tunics (Ex 28:41; 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13), and must not appear naked (Ex 20:23; 28:42). Focus on 28:41-42.
3:24, entrance at the east	Temple and tabernacle both faced east, Num 3:38
3:24, entrance guarded by cherubim	1 Ki 6:23, carved cherubim 15’ high guarded the holy of holies, and their images crowned the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:18-22) and the embroidery of the hangings (Ex 26:31; 1 Ki 6:29).

Application: Man was created to be a priest, having fellowship with God in a garden sanctuary. Satan works to expel us. Keep this in mind as you try to maintain spiritual disciplines:

- regular private prayer and Bible study,
- family devotions,
- regular participation in the meetings of God’s people.

The impulses you feel that pull you away from such things are fleshly, worldly, Satanic. They are foreign to what you really are as a creature of God. You will be most comfortable and most at home when you are engaged in worship, but you need to get over Satan’s propaganda to reach this point. Cultivate an attitude of asking, not how little of this activity do I require, but how much of my time can I devote to it.

Structure

Follow Walsh and Auffret: concentric, centered around the fall, reflecting movement into the garden and back out again. Work through the structural handout.

Narrative	Man and the Garden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what was once • what is now 	2:4b-15	3:23-24
Monolog	Constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal, if we will obey • structural, if we will not 	2:16-17	3:22
Monolog & Narrative	Divine Order: God > Man > Woman > Animals Nakedness: undiscerned problem, not ideal condition	2:18-25	3:14-21
Dialog	Blame <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the serpent blames God • Man blames the woman, and the woman blames the serpent 	3:1-5	3:8-13

Narrative	People now guided by 3-fold lust Must provide for themselves	3:6-7
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2:4, Transition

Where does 4b belong? Does it modify 4a, or is it introduction to 5ff? Both. Transitional.

- 2:4a is chiasmic with 1:1, reversing object and verb.
- 2:4b is chiasmic with 2:4a, reversing all three terms: “heavens → earth → created” becomes “made → earth → heavens”
- 2:4b *beyom* is common introduction to a series of circumstantial clauses before main text—see Steve Kempf’s paper.

(Excursus on syntax of *beyom*.)

Question: does *bywm* go with preceding (as in Num 3:1), or following (Kempt)?

In general, when it precedes the clause it modifies, the following verb lacks *waw*. But this is not the case if there are intervening circumstantial clauses: Intervening clauses may lead to need for following *waw* clauses:

- Num 28:26,27
- Num 10:10
- Dan 10:4

Num 3:1 might be read this way as well, if the main clause is taken as v.4.

1:1 In the beginning God **created** the **heaven[s]** and the **earth**.

2:1 Thus were **finished** the **heavens** and the **earth**, and all the host of them.

2:4 These [are] the generations of the **heavens** and of the **earth** when they were **created**, in the day that the LORD God **made** the **earth** and the **heavens**.

The point is to remind everyone that the heavens and earth are not independent deities, but themselves the creatures of God.

2:4-15, Man Created and Placed in the Garden

Discourse Overview

Exemplifies three important principles of discourse grammar:

- Scene changes: change in character, place, or time. Often marked by circumstantial clauses at the introduction. In Hebrew, these are typically prepositional phrases or non-*waw*-consecutive verbal clauses. This is the function here of 4b-6.
- Paragraph changes: Often marked by repeating the name of the subject of the verb, even when the subject is unchanged. Note repetition of “Lord God” at start of v.8 and v.9.
- Summaries that are later expounded: v.8 is summary of planting and populating the garden, amplified in 9-14 and 15, respectively.

4b-6, When the Lord God made earth and heaven, various conditions then maintaining,

7, He created and gave life to man. (cf. 3:24b, exclusion from tree of life)

8, He made a garden and put man in it. (cf. 3:24a, exclusion from the garden)

9-14, More about the Garden.

15, More about putting man in it.

4b-6, Setting

Plants in general had already been created, but we are told that two specific types were not yet present, and the reasons for this lack.

The Missing Plants, 5a

The point is not that there were no plants, but that two specific types were lacking.

Plant of the field.—Lit. “shrub,” cf. Gen 21:15, the woody desert plants. These are inedible plants, and must be cleared from the land before one can cultivate it.

Herb of the field.—These are edible plants from cultivated ground, including the grains.

These two categories anticipate the judgment in 3:18, in which “thorns and thistles” (corresponding to the “shrub of the field”) appear in judgment for man’s sin, and he must eat plants that require deliberate cultivation, the “herb of the field.” Before the fall, people did not have to work for their food, but ate fruit that grew of its own accord on trees. Afterward, they had to contend with weeds and rely on plants that require diligent cultivation.

The Reason, 5b-6

Three statements.

for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth.—This explains the lack of “shrub of the field.” There was no general watering of the whole surface of the earth, so the ground could not bear weeds and thorns.

and [there was] not a man to till the ground.—This explains the lack of “herb of the field.” Without a cultivator, plants that required cultivation could not grow.

but there went up a spring from the earth.—Still, the reader knows that there are plants, since the third day. This verse explains how they could grow without rain.

- First, we need to understand that the source of water here is not mist or dew, but a spring from the subterranean waters.
- Then the point of the verse is that the first plants grew only along the banks of the rivers that flowed from springs, which is exactly the structure described in v.10. Compare also Gen 13:10, which compares “the garden of the Lord” to two locations in antiquity, both arid lands devoid of rain but enjoying plentiful river or spring water: the plain of Jordan, and Egypt with the Nile.

Thus the narrator piques the reader’s interest in the account about to be related, by describing two ways in which the prelapsarian world differed from the world known by his agricultural

contemporaries. There were no wide-ranging fields of thorns and thistles, because there was no rain to water them. And there were no cultivated grains, because there was no cultivator. How did the world come into the state that requires the peasant to labor from dawn to dusk in order to obtain his daily bread? This is the subsequent burden of our narrative.

7, *Creation of Man*

Three statements. The first two, with the LORD God as subject, tell what God did, and the third gives the result. The third emphasizes man's identity with the animals, so the question we have to consider is what makes us distinct? Unbelievers want to say that we are "just another animal," with no special rights or privileges over the rest of the animal kingdom. Some Christians have reacted by insisting that man is not an animal at all. This verse is critical for understanding the issue. Begin by considering the outcome, then the process that led to it.

and man became a living soul.—*nepeš xayah* occurs 9x in the OT, and all other cases are with reference to animals [1:20 "moving creature that hath life," 1:24; 2:19; 9:12,15,16 "living creature," 1:30 "life," Ezek 47:9 "thing that liveth"]. Moses here makes no special point distinguishing man from the animals; rather, he identifies them as both alive, in contrast with the plants.

the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground.—There is a pun throughout this chapter between "man" *adam* and "ground" *adamah*. Alter: "human from the humus." Man is always to remember his origins in the dust of the earth, lest he become proud. Calvin:

[Man] was formed after the image of God. This is incomparably the highest nobility; and, lest men should use it as an occasion of pride, their first origin is placed immediately before them... Let foolish men now go and boast of the excellency of their nature!

The description highlights two things about man: the *manner* in which he is formed, and the *substance* from which he is formed.

Manner: God "formed man." The verb describes the work of a potter. This event is thus the root of the picture throughout scripture of God as a sovereign potter, forming people and their histories according to his will.

- Isaiah: God protests that he has the right of a potter over his people, 29:16; 45:9; and ultimately they confess it to be so, 64:8
- Jer 18:1-10, his right to punish or to withdraw punishment
- Rom 9:20-24, of God's sovereign election of people and nations.

Substance: When God created man, he delivered him from the dust of the ground. Thus it is significant that in the fall, man is returned to it:

- he must till the ground 3:23
- and when he dies, he returns to ground and dust 3:19.

At least some animals were "formed from the ground" (2:19). Other references to animals being "formed" include Ps 104:26 (the sea monster) and Amos 7:1 (grasshoppers). However, the verb is much more common with reference to people.

So man is an animal, but he and the animals are the direct creation of God, who is a potter with a purpose for his creation. Our role is not defined by some weak sense of equality with the other animals, but by the revelation our Creator has given us. That revelation makes clear that we and the other animals have distinct privileges and responsibilities. In particular, ch. 1 already indicated that man is to have dominion over the rest of creation, including the other animals.

and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.—Breath *nešamah* is nowhere clearly used of animal life other than man; the closest possibility is 7:22, but this is at the apex of a chiasm (vv. 21-23) with man at the inside. Sometimes it explicitly excludes animals (Josh 11:14). It is much more common to describe animal breath using *ruax* “spirit” and *nefeš* “soul.” The situation is somewhat analogous to *yatsar* in the previous clause, used predominantly for man.

We gain additional understanding into the implication of this event from Elihu in the book of Job. He is God’s spokesman, and prepares the way for God’s self-proclamation in terms of the creation.

- 33:4 says that the breath of God gives men life, which is a direct echo of our text.
- 32:8 makes this breath (AV “inspiration”) the source of human understanding.

Note the context of 32:8, dealing with man’s capacity for wisdom and understanding. This, says Elihu, comes from the fact that he is animated by God’s own breath, something that is not true of the animals.

Again, we only understand man’s animal-hood correctly when we understand it as the product of God’s deliberate activity. As the divine potter, he assigns us a different task than he does the animals. As the divine breather, he gives us not only life (which we share with animals), but also understanding (which is uniquely ours). Later in this chapter, as the divine matchmaker, he establishes the one flesh relationship that makes us uniquely the image of God.

The Bottom Line.—Man is an animal. The only thing that exalts him above the brutes is the purpose and breath of his creator, but that is enough. Like a beautiful piece of porcelain, we are nothing but clay, whose beauty and value comes entirely from the skill and workmanship of our creator. If we assert our sovereignty and deny him, we deserve nothing better than the beasts. If we acknowledge him, we are the pinnacle of his creation, but must then submit to his will in all things. (*adam definite throughout 2-3 except 2:5, 20b, 3:21; clearly PN in 4:25; 5:1-3*)

8-15, Establishment of the Garden

Structurally, this is an exposition paragraph, with an initial summary that is then amplified. The first verse has two clauses, which are expounded in turn.

The Hebrew verbs suggest that planting the garden followed the creation of man.

- Its correspondent in ch. 1 is not the creation of the plants (1:11-12), but provision of food for man (1:29).
- God makes man, and then makes a home for him. On this point, compare our observations about Eden as a sanctuary. Man was not made in order to serve a previously existing sanctuary. He himself was the summit of creation, and the sanctuary was then provided to serve him.

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- Cf. the Lord's words in Mark 2:27, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

"Eden" is the Hebrew word for "delight, pleasure" (2 Sam 1:24; Jer 51:34; Ps 36:9). The garden was formed as an environment for joy, a place for the Lord and his special creature Man to enjoy happy fellowship together. All was designed for blessing and pleasure. Imagine Adam looking on as the Lord plants this garden and arranges its details, and then brings Adam into it.

The garden is described as being *miqqedem*, which has two possible meanings:

- "in the east." Two constructions here:
 - Absolute: Gen 11:2; 13:11 (direction of travel); Isa 2:6 ("from the east," source); 9:11 ("in front"); Zech 14:4.
 - More commonly, *miqqedem le-* "to the east of": Gen 3:24; 12:8; Num 34:11; Josh 7:12; Judg 8:11; Ezek 11:23; Jon 4:5. This is the conventional understanding of Gen 2:8, but there is no *le-*.
- The absolute usage is much more common in the sense of "from of old." Neh 12:46; Ps 74:12; 77:6, 12; 78:2; 143:5; Prov 8:23; Isa 45:21; 46:10; Mic 5:1; Hab 1:12;

Take the construction in the sense "facing east," which the AV fits nicely. The point is not that the Garden is located east of where the writer is, but that its entrance was toward the east, conformable with 3:24.

9-14, *Details on the Garden*

2:4-6 tells us that certain plants were not yet in the earth, and there was yet no rain.

Corresponding to these two defects, we are now told what the garden did have in terms of plants and water supply.

made ... to grow.—This is not a contradiction in the order of creation from ch. 1 (where plants preceded man), but a special arrangement of a particular garden. The trees appealed to four needs of humans:

- "pleasant to the sight": People need beauty in their environment. Engineers sometimes need to be reminded that there is value in graceful, attractive design.
- "good for food": They also need nourishment.
- "tree of life": The fruit of this particular tree goes beyond day-to-day nourishment, and can extend life indefinitely; cf. 3:22, and Rev 22:1, where its "leaves are for the healing of the nations." Even in eternity, the human body is not intrinsically immortal, but needs the continual sustenance of the tree of life. The "tree of life" is a common motif in ANE literature and art, probably reflected in the menorah in the tabernacle and temple. It is also a common metaphor in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4.).
- "tree of knowledge": forms the focus of the following narrative. As the experience of our first parents shows, eating it produces knowledge, but in an unexpected and indirect way—the experience of obedience or disobedience (cf. 3:22).

and a river went out.—Apparently, this river issues from the spring in 2:6. We recognize the names of three of its four branches, and the location of two.

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- “Hiddekel” = Tigris, which with Euphrates defines Mesopotamia (“the land between the rivers”). These originate in the highlands of Armenia.
- “Gihon” = “gusher,” the name for the spring of Mount Zion. But it is difficult to relate this spring to the picture here.
- “Pishon” = “leaper.”

Where are these latter two? We don’t know. The flood might have changed things around (but we still have the Tigris and Euphrates). Various solutions:

- Because of reference to Ethiopia (“Cush”), they might be two branches of the Nile (Blue and White). But then they are remote from the other two.
- Keil and others: Tigris and Euphrates have their sources close together in the highlands of Armenia, whence other rivers descend to the Caspian and Black seas, so perhaps there.
- Calvin: T. and E. come together near Babylon. He proposes that G. and P. are their names downstream, and that Babylon is the region of Eden.

So what is the point of this description?

- The garden is well watered. Cf. Zech 14:16-19. The presence of a continual river makes rain unnecessary, and life much more certain.
- The references to gold, bdellium, and precious stones reminds us of the tabernacle, and emphasizes the role of Eden as a sanctuary.

15, Details on Man’s Role in the Garden

v. 15 expounds v.8, “there he put the man.”

took the man.—Throughout this section, “taking” is God’s prerogative. He plans, directs, disposes. Only in the rebellion at the center of the chiasm does the human (specifically, the woman) “take” something.

This first use of the term brings together God’s absolute authority to take, and his unimpeachable kindness in putting man in “the garden of delight,” “the garden of bliss.” Our world seeks the bliss without acknowledging the authority, but they are inseparable.

to dress it and to keep it.—“Dress” is agricultural, but the verb is more generic, “to serve.” These verbs are used together in the Torah only of priestly service, e.g., Num 3:7,8. Better, “to serve it and to keep it,” the objects referring to the garden as a sanctuary. Man’s initial role is not agricultural, but priestly.

2:16-17, Man Constrained by God

Here we have the very first word heard by the human, the first communicative act in which our race is involved. Corresponds to God’s commands in ch 1. Note:

1. It is a word from God. Like a parent with a child, here God teaches the man to speak. Language is intrinsic to God. It existed before the world, for God used it in creation (ch. 1). With him it is causative, true by fiat. Our use of language must conform to this standard.

2. God's first utterance to the man is a command. The Hebrew idiom indicates that it is a charge, not just a point order but a general principle under which the man is to live. The human is not autonomous, but lives under the authority of his creator.
3. The charge is twofold: a gift and a prohibition. The gift comes first. God has the authority to prohibit, but also the love to give. Compare "took ... and put ..." in 2:15.
4. The gift is emphatic (infinitive absolute), "you may freely eat" (AV), "you shall indeed eat." This is not just permission, but encouragement. "Go ahead! Enjoy it!" (This is the first instance of this Hebrew emphatic construction in the Bible.) This permission extends even to the tree of life. Everything was open to the human, with one exception.
5. The prohibition is restricted to one tree, the one that confers knowledge of good and evil. (See discussion of 3:22.) There was nothing intrinsically wrong with this tree; the purpose of the prohibition is to emphasize that the human is under God's authority. Why did God select this particular tree to make this point? Two possibilities:
 - a. Man is to gain his wisdom through the mediation of God, not aspire to possess it immediately. Man's desire for the tree thus expresses his *desire for independence*.
 - b. Compare Heb. 5:14. The knowledge of good and evil is to come through experience, "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to know good and evil." Man's desire for the tree thus expresses his *impatience*. Note that in fact eating the tree does not convey the knowledge of good and evil abstractly, but it only the knowledge of nakedness. The abstract knowledge would come as Hebrews indicates, through practical obedience; cf. Heb. 5:8.
6. The penalty is to be death, separation from the presence of God. This is the second occurrence of the emphatic construction we saw in v.16, and there appears to be a contrast. As long as he lives in God's favor, the man shall indeed eat of every delightful tree. If he rejects God's authority, he shall indeed die.

Thus in this paragraph, God establishes the central link of the divine order: God > Man. In the next paragraph, he will establish Man > Animals, Man > Woman, and Woman > Animals.

2:18-25, Establishment of the Divine Order.

Comparison of this panel with its partner shows that each has three parts:

1. The Lord's speech establishing the divine order;
2. Adam's naming of his wife, reflecting the Lord's speech;
3. Description of their nakedness.

18-22, Establishment of the Divine Order

The point in this paragraph is to show the divine order God > man > woman > animals. We already know God > man. Note the repetition of "Lord God" as subject in 18, 19, 21, dividing the paragraph into three parts. First the Lord makes a resolve. Second, he prepares the man for his action. Third, he carries out the resolve.

18, The Divine Resolve.—After the 7x repetition of “it was good” in ch. 1, now we read for the first time that something is “not good.” We are here in the midst of the sixth day. So far God has made man as his image, but man is not yet in God’s likeness, for he is alone, not a plurality like the godhead. Only when this discrepancy has been reconciled, when man has “a help meet for him,” will the creation achieve the state of “very good.”

This episode illustrates how God intends for man to learn “good and evil”: by incremental instruction, with God at his hand to remedy shortfalls.

“Help meet” is not a single noun, but a noun with a modifying phrase.

- “Help” is a strong word, used elsewhere in the Pentateuch only of God’s help for his people (cf. Exod 18:4), and mostly this way elsewhere in the OT. It does not mean “assistant.” Cf. Ps 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11; 121:1,2.
 - The man must realize that by himself he is incapable of succeeding in his task. He requires help from God.
 - God has provided this help in the first instance by giving him the woman.
- “Meet” is a complex prepositional phrase, “like one who is before him.” Cf. Ps 46:1, “a very present help” (related noun). She is not to be an occasional assistant, but one daily before him (cf. Wisdom’s relation to God in Prov 8:30). Drawing from our analysis of the likeness of God in ch. 1, we now understand that her relation to him is to be like that of the HS to God, inseparable, working together. The preposition *ngd* is often stronger than its near synonyms:
 - (*im* “with” is general association.
 -)*cl* “beside”
 - *lpny* “before” is same physical location, but without the emphasis on cognition.

It is often used in confrontational contexts, where the idea of judging or discerning is involved:

- Gen 31:32, 37, Jacob invites Laban to display putative stolen property “before our brethren.”
- Exod 19:2, Israel encamps before the mount, in confrontation with God. Cf. 3:1, where Moses simply comes *el* the mount, not knowing of its significance; this latter meeting is in keeping with the appointment made in 3:12.
- Exod 34:9, God promises to do miracles *neged* all the people, for their observation and learning.
- Deut 31:11, Moses to read the law *neged* all the people.

Thus “meet for him” has the idea that the woman will be a discerning, engaging partner in his life, one against whom to bounce ideas, one who will listen, discern, evaluate with him, and whom he must hear, discern, and evaluate.

This is God’s ideal for the man and the woman, and it is “not good” for a man not to have such a partner.

19-20, The Preparation.—God does not just dump the woman on man, but first shows Adam that he is alone among the “living souls” on the earth.

- God is said to form only the beasts of the field (game animals) and fowl of the air, but Adam also names the cattle. Why isn't their creation named also? Cassuto: because the domestic animals were already associated with him. The creation here is not that of 1:14, but rather the formation of individual specimens for the specific purpose of presenting them to Adam.
- He brings them to the human to see what the human will call them. The image is of a father playing on the rug with his child, drawing pictures or making models for the child's amusement, and delighting in the child's insight and creativity in naming them.
- Recall also that naming is an act of authority, as we saw in ch. 1. There God named the products of the first three days, but holds off on the animals, so that the human as his representative can exercise that authority. Thus the naming establishes man's superiority over the animals; we now have God > man > animals.
- The main point of the exercise is to show the man that he is alone. There is none among the animals that corresponds to him, able to serve as his ever-present helper.

21-22, The Execution.—Now God carries out the creation of woman. Note:

- The man's sleep. Literally, it is the first case of anesthesia. Figuratively, it teaches an important lesson, that of God's active grace. Adam had nothing to do with gaining a wife. He fell asleep, and God brought her to him when she was ready. God not only discerns the man's need, but takes the initiative in providing for it.
- Woman's origin: in man's rib, part of him.
 - Calvin: “something was taken from Adam, in order that he might embrace, with greater benevolence, a part of himself.”
 - Matthew Henry: “Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet 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.”
- This is reflected in the unusual verb for woman's creation. Elsewhere in these chapters God is said to
 - Create *br*)
 - Make (*&h*
 - Form *ycr*

Now we read that he builds or fashions *bnh* the rib into *l*- a woman. The double complement *bnh x le-y* is an idiom for fashioning *x* into *y*. The point is that, unlike the other created beings, she is not a new thing, but a product of the man, an extension and revision of his being. (*Technical note: elsewhere, the notion of fashioning is expressed with double direct object, 1 K 18:32, Ezk 27:5, and the construction with object plus lamedh expresses forming something for the sake of someone else. How can this fit in here? Build up the rib for the woman, to provide her a being?*)

These details show that woman shares with man his position under God, and his position over the animals.

23-24, Naming

The fact that Adam names her establishes the order man > woman. Thus we have the complete sequence: God > man > woman > animals.

“Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh,” reflecting the rib (bone with flesh on it, not just bone) from which she was built. This becomes a standard expression for kinship in the OT:

- Judg 9:2, in Abimelech’s plea with the people of Shechem to recognize him above his half-brothers
- 2 Sam 5:1, Israel recognizing David at Hebron
- 2 Sam 19:12,13, David to the elders of Judah asking them to receive him back after Absalom
- Notably, Luke 24:39, explains why the Lord Jesus described himself as “flesh and bones” when he rose from the dead. Not because he was bloodless, having poured out his blood for our redemption, but because he is our kin. Cf. Eph. 5:30.

The name is a pun, which in this case is reflected in the English words “man-woman.” This name emphasizes that the first woman comes out of the man. The later naming in the corresponding panel, 3:20, reflects the corresponding truth that all men come from women.

Moses’ comment (v.24):

- The bond between man and wife is to be stronger than that between parents and children. This is not to belittle the latter bond, but rather to strengthen the first. If you allow divorce, you have discarded all ties of nature. (Contrast the modern view, which sometimes seeks to justify divorce “for the sake of the children.”)
- “They shall be one flesh” is literally “they shall become one flesh.” Having originated in one body, their goal is to grow back into one person. The “becoming” language indicates that it is a life-long process.

25, Nakedness

Does this reflect their primitive innocence, implying that physical love is somehow impure? I rather see it as indicating their need for knowledge. The tree (God’s tree of knowledge, intrinsically good) conveys to them the knowledge that they are naked. Their ignorance is a childlike limitation that God would in his time remove. (But see 3:22)

Lesson: spiritual growth is not instantaneous. God does not remedy all our shortcomings at the new birth immediately, and we should be cautious of approaches to spirituality that advertise such instant results. Even the original creation wasn’t done this way, but designed to support growth “by reason of use.”

3:1-5, The Temptation

This is the first dialog in the Bible, and it is worth observing that Satan initiates it. God speaks in commands that cause things to happen. Adam speaks declarative sentences that observe and explain what God has done. Satan raises questions. This dialog paragraph has a margin and three statements.

Margin, 1a

The serpent is now introduced, and characterized as the most subtil or clever of the wild animals, an assessment consistent with Matt 10:16, “be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Two points to be observed here.

Why the Snake?—Later scriptures identify the serpent with Satan (Rev 12:9; 20:2; compare Wisdom 2:24), and as the prototypical murderer and liar (John 8:44), he is clearly at the root of this event. Ezekiel’s vision of the fallen cherub in the garden of God (28:14) makes the identification clear. Satan has appropriated the body of the serpent for his purposes. Why then does Moses not ascribe the temptation to him directly? The answer is at two levels.

1. The concept of Satan is introduced rather late in the OT. The name itself only appears in Chronicles, Job, and Zechariah, all probably post-exilic. (The events in Job fit the patriarchal era, but part of the key to the book is that Job has no concept of an angelic adversary standing against him.) God’s revelation is developed over time, not dumped on humanity all at once. The existence of spiritual opposition to God’s program is part of the upper-class curriculum.
2. Introducing Satan here would reduce the responsibility of our first parents, which is just the point that Moses is trying to make. The order instituted by God, God > man > woman > animals, is here reversed. Introducing Satan would just confuse things. God has placed the animals under their rule. When one of their subjects questions God, they should have punished him, not submitted to him.

Calvin: “The baseness of human ingratitude is more clearly hence perceived, that when Adam and Eve knew that all animals were given, by the hand of God, into subjection to them, they yet suffered themselves to be led away by one of their own slaves into rebellion against God. . . . When they saw the serpent an apostate from his Creator, not only did they neglect to punish it, but, in violation of all lawful order, they subjected and devoted themselves to it, as participants in the same apostasy.”

Why the emphasis on subtlety?—“Subtle” is in Hebrew a strong pun with “naked” in 2:25. (Compare “human/humus” and “man/woman”.) Wenham suggests the translational pair “nude” and “shrewd.” In Hebrew the similarity is much stronger, and the words are virtual homonyms. There is an important point behind this pun.

1. The nudeness of the man and woman reflects their ignorance, their childlikeness, the fact that they have not yet been given access to the tree.
2. They envy the snake’s shrewdness, his apparent ability to discern God’s hidden motives (3:5).
3. They think themselves shrewd in following his advice, but in fact discover in the end that their shrewdness is only nudeness, and that the true beginning of wisdom would have been in the fear of God.

Lesson: We shall fail utterly if we attempt to deal with God on the basis of human cunning and shrewdness.

Serpent, 1b

A subtle charge from which we may learn much about Satan's methods. "Yea, hath God said?" has the sense "Did God really say ...?" Notice two grammatical features of this sentence.

1. He refers to the creator as "God," in striking contrast to the name used elsewhere throughout the chapter, "LORD God." Thus he implicitly denies the personal relationship between man and God, and urges her to consider God simply as an abstract, impersonal, uncaring power.
2. He questions God's revelation, urging her to set her own reason against the word of God. This in itself is always dangerous. His question raises three doubts, which are still a critical part of his methods. We should be clear about the answer to each, if we wish to understand the Scriptures correctly.

Questioning the Origin.—"Hath *God* said...?" Was it really God who said this? How do you know it was God, rather than an angel or another of the animals, who said this? In modern criticism this challenge takes the form of denying the divine origin of Scripture. "Is that really the word of God, or just human writings? Pious writings, yes, with much to teach us, but human none the less."

Answer: The Scriptures declare themselves to be the Word of God. If they are nothing more than human writings, they are the writings of lying, deceptive humans, and deserve to be rejected energetically. There is no consistent middle ground between submitting to the commands of God and rejecting them as deceitful and malicious. The first key to correct interpretation is to understand what it is that we are handling.

Questioning the Interpretation.—"Hath God *said*...?" Was this really what he said, or did you misunderstand him? Would he make such a prohibition? Often the temptation comes cloaked with false piety, urging us that any God worthy of our worship would never say such a thing. "A loving God would never require you to do such a thing. You must have misunderstood him."

Answer: Interpretation is extremely important, but we need to be sure it rests on a firm foundation. If my standard for what God has said is what I think he should say, then it is impossible for him ever to say anything new to me. I am shut up to my own wisdom. My approach is to treat the Bible as a coherent text and seek to interpret it in a self-consistent way. Interpretation always involves the construction of a consistent system.

- Satan's approach is to assume that I am right, and interpret God's word in a way that is consistent with my thoughts and conduct, even if that does violence to the coherence of the text.
- Our approach is to assume that God's word is true, and interpret it in a self-consistent way, whatever that may end up saying about us.

Thus the second key to correct interpretation is to be sure of the standard; not our own thoughts, but the rest of the Word of God.

Questioning the Intent.—Satan's words are almost a direct reversal of 2:16. Four of the five words are the same.

- God said, “From every tree of the garden you shall surely eat.”
- Satan misquotes him, “You shall not eat from every tree of the garden.” He replaces “surely” with “not,” turning a gracious gift into a harsh prohibition.

There is a subtle ambiguity in his phrasing.

- The most natural reading of the Hebrew is completely false: in a negative construction, indefinite “every” usually means “any” (GKC 152b), “You may not eat from any tree.”
- But there is enough variability in the idiom (Jouon 160k) that if pressed to the wall, he could equivocate, “What I really meant is, You may not eat from every tree, just from some of them.” This is technically a true summary of 2:16-17, but completely misses the emphasis of the original on God’s gracious provision for his people.

The point of this aspect of the question is to reinforce the use of “God” instead of “LORD God.” Satan’s version of the text purges it of any evidence of God’s covenant love for his people. Unbelievers often have an exaggerated view of the requirements that God places on his people. “He won’t let you have any fun.” They do not understand that when he constrains us, it is to protect us from harm and to enable us to enjoy deeper fellowship with himself.

Answer: The third key to correct interpretation is to be rightly related to the author of the text, so that we may be sympathetic with his intention. If you do not know the author, you are greatly disadvantaged. Cf. 1 Cor 2:14, “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.”

Woman, 2-3

The woman answers the serpent by recalling the instructions of 2:16-17, which is appropriate. It is the right approach, to respond with the words of God. However, she alters those words in subtle ways, showing that she is adopting the serpent’s definition of the creator as “God” rather than “the Lord God.”

1. In stating the trees that they may eat, she omits the terms that emphasize God’s generosity. God had said, “Of **every** tree of the garden thou shalt **surely** eat.” She omits “every” and “surely,” only acknowledging that some of the trees are available to them. So her view of the goodness of God is attenuated.
2. She defines the forbidden tree as “the tree which is in the midst of the garden.” In fact, 2:9 uses this expression to describe first of all the tree of life, which was *not* forbidden. Her attention is so focused on the one tree that is excluded, that she ignores the ones to which she is granted access.
3. She adds to the prohibition, “neither shall ye touch it.” On the one hand, this is a prudent safeguard. If God had said “do not eat,” surely it would not have been appropriate for them to fondle the fruit and think about how lovely it was. On the other hand, it was not part of what God had literally said to her, and it was inappropriate for her to add to the divine command. She does not distinguish between the law of God itself and appropriate safeguards.
4. She weakens the threatened consequence. Instead of “you shall surely die,” she has the Lord say, “lest ye die,” implying that death is a risk, but not an absolute threat.

As her ascription of the words to “God” rather than “the Lord God” shows, she is treating God as an impersonal creator, not the covenant God who deals graciously with his people but demands their obedience.

Serpent, 4-5

Now the serpent directly contradicts the Lord’s warning in 2:17. God had said, “Ye shall surely die.” The serpent insists, “Ye shall not surely die.” V.5 explains this claim. Note three points.

1. The effect of eating the fruit: they will attain to the knowledge of good and evil, which has been withheld from them.
2. The result of this knowledge: “ye shall be as gods.” Perhaps better, “as God,” which is the only sense in which the term has been used thus far. And if they are as God, how can they possibly die? They will have risen above the level where his threat can touch them.
3. Finally, “God doth know.” This clause offers an explanation for the original prohibition. God’s motives, the serpent argues, were malicious and selfish. Unwilling to share his exalted position, he has tried to frighten them into submission.

3:6-7, The Fall

“When” is not in Hebrew; we have simply a stark sequence of events, without any commentary or explanation, like the suspension of the soundtrack at the climax of a film. The first event is prolonged (13 words), as the woman considers the tree and reaches her decision. In the first action of the series, she is teetering on the brink. Then the sin and its consequences unfold in rapid succession ($2 + 1 + 4 + 1 = 8 < 13$ for the sin, 3,4,3,3 for consequences)

Application: Where is the sin? Strictly speaking, in the commission, but the contemplation is where the woman’s loyalty to the Lord breaks down. Legalistically, one may be tempted to see sin only in the action, but the Scriptures teach that our duty is to guard our thoughts so that we do not fall into the action. Evidence:

- Matt 5:17ff (cf. vv. 21, 27, 31, 33, 3, 43—the emphasis throughout is a contrast between the outward standards of the scribes and Pharisees, and the inward ones commanded by the Lord. Cf. 23:27-28.)
- Mark 7:20-23, wicked conduct comes from within.
- Prov 4:20-27 describes the key to godly living in terms of input/processing/output
 - Input: 20-22, focused on godly teaching.
 - Processing: 23, “keep thy heart with all diligence”
 - Output: 24-27, speech, attention, conduct

The bottom line: watch what you watch. Do you spend more time with magazines, TV, and motion pictures than with the Scriptures? Guard your heart with all diligence. Once it gets distracted, disaster follows quickly.

The Contemplation

The woman considers the tree. Compare her assessment of it with that in 2:9.

Genesis 2-3 The Garden Narrative

Good for food.—Several observations:

- Many other trees met this same qualification, according to 2:9. So she hardly needed this one as a food tree. The issue is not meeting a legitimate physical need, but rather, satisfying a desire to taste that which is forbidden.
- How can you “see that a tree is good for food” without either tasting it or hearing from a reliable witness that it is so? This is the sophist’s conceit that the world can be known analytically and solipsistically. Apparently, because it bore fruit, she concluded that it should be eaten.
- In fact, she does have a reliable witness that the tree is not “good for food.” The Lord God has said that it will bring death.

Pleasant to the eyes.—“Pleasant” is distinct from the word in 2:9. The word here is a noun meaning “lust, strong desire.” The tree was a magnet to the eyes. She couldn’t take her attention off it. It’s not just that she found it pleasant to consider, but that she longed to possess it.

Desired to make wise.—This is the real point of the serpent’s temptation: it would make her wise, as wise as this subtle serpent, as wise as God himself. He succeeded in getting her to envy God.

These three fit a pattern that recurs later. John summarizes “all that is in the world” as “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life” (1 John 2:16). The woman’s failure is paradigmatic of all three. Note also that our Lord, in his temptation, successfully resisted in all three, one of many ways in which he stands as the second Adam.

1 John 2:16	Gen 3:6, Woman	Luke 4:1-13, Satan to our Lord
Lust of the Flesh	the tree [was] good for food,	3 command this stone that it be made bread.
Lust of the Eyes	and that it [was] pleasant to the eyes,	6 All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. {worship me: or, fall down before me}
Pride of Life	and a tree to be desired to make [one] wise,	9 If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. <<public display>>

Research note: Why the asymmetry in the three dependent clauses of 3:6?

	<i>Introduced by kiy</i>	<i>Repeats ha`ec</i>
1	X	X
2	X	
3		X

The Commission

Here in eight short words we read of the disobedience of our first parents

she took of the fruit thereof.—Throughout this chapter, save only here, it is God who takes. The use of this verb for the woman illustrates dramatically how her action is tantamount to assuming divine prerogatives to herself.

[she] gave also unto her husband with her.—She had erred by heeding the serpent, who should have been under her. Now Adam errs by heeding his wife, who should have been under him, and by ignoring the command of God, who should have been over them.

NT commentary on this episode: Rom 5:14, 1 Cor 15:22, all died in Adam. Though the woman went first, he is the one who bears the responsibility, since she was under his authority. We shall see why when we consider the excuses each gives, and God's verdict on them, in 3:8-13, 14-17.

The Consequences

Satan had promised that their eyes would be opened (3:5), and indeed this happened, but the outcome was not as desirable as he had intimated. What they have come to know is not marvelous mystical truths, but their own nakedness. They now know themselves to be immature, children, humble and weak. To remedy this, they take the largest leaves they can find, which are fig leaves, and make belts of them.

Application: Satan's lies are often half-truths like this. There is just enough truth to lead us astray, if we let down our guard. But be sure that the outcome will be bitter disappointment and disaster if we follow him.

3:8-13, The Inquiry

In the earlier parallel panel (1-5), the serpent had cast blame on God. Now under the Lord's piercing scrutiny, the creatures cast blame on each other.

God interrogates the man and the woman, but not the serpent, reflecting the elevated position that man, even fallen man, holds. Man is given the chance to answer for himself. The serpent is not.

Note the chiasmic order with the subsequent monologue in 3:14-19, man → woman → serpent → woman → man.

Margin, 8

Cool of the day.—lit. "wind of the day." The daily weather pattern in the levant is strikingly regular (Baly, *Geography of the Bible*, p. 46). When the sun rises, the temperature immediately increases to within 5 degrees of its daily maximum. As the land warms, it creates an updraft that sucks in cool, moist air from the sea, and this sea breeze moves progressively across the country, cresting the Judean peaks about noon and reaching transjordan about 3 PM. It moderates and relieves the heat of the day, and thus marks the most pleasant part of the day.

Walking.—lit. "walking to and fro." Not a directed march, but a stroll. We may take this as his habitual custom, walking about in his garden to enjoy the beauty and share it with his creatures.

They heard the voice.—We are not told what God is saying at this point. He does not call to Adam until v.9. Perhaps he is humming to himself or admiring the trees. Yet even this undirected, non-accusational word from God is threatening to them. Thus unbelievers will do all they can to blunt and reject the word of God, even those portions that do not directly describe their sin. They cannot abide even the recognition that there is a God to whom they owe allegiance.

Strictly, one could translate “voice” here as “sound,” referring to the sound of his footsteps, but this would have to modify the entire prepositional phrase, “the Lord God walking,” while Adam’s reference to this detail in v.9 refers solely to “your voice,” not “the sound of your walking.”

Hid themselves.—Terrified by the realization of their sin, they flee from the Lord. They had hoped to become more like God by eating of the tree; now they realize that they are deprived of the intimacy with him that was originally their portion.

Amongst the trees of the garden.—How they pervert the creation of God! The trees, intended to bring pleasure and delight, they now press into service as a screen, a shield.

Application.—Under the new creation, Christ has restored us to the position of intimacy that our first parents left. We now have the privilege of communing with the Lord. This passage both gives us guidance on the nature of this communion, and also warns us of danger signs when it is interrupted. God’s presence should be precious to us, and if it is not, we must beware and correct the situation.

- Our Lord intends for us to have an interaction with himself that goes beyond service. Service is important, but too often we let it press out the enjoyment of God’s presence. There are times when we must march with him to the battle, but it is also important that we stroll about with him in the garden, in a time of pleasant relaxation. Sometimes we see even our “daily devotions” as a duty rather than a refreshing joy. Many of us have not yet discovered what the song writer meant in the words, “There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God.” “Be still, and know that I am God.” Take check of your interactions with the Lord. Do you enjoy the quiet restful times as well as the vigor of service?
- Do you recognize “the voice of the Lord God strolling in the garden”? Cultivate an alertness to the evidences of his presence. Regular seasons of worship, such as daily quiet time and the breaking of bread, are crucial. But there will be other times as well, when we know his presence if we are alert to the sound of it. “In the rustling grass I hear him pass. He speaks to me everywhere.” Just look at the beautiful morning the Lord has made for you, and pause to thank him for it. The man and his wife fled from the least evidence of the Lord’s presence. We ought to treasure and approach it.
- If we are shunning these times of intimacy, as Adam and his wife did, we should examine our motives. Disobedience turned them away from this intimacy, and it has the same result for us. You will not want a time of complete openness with the Lord if you are holding onto unconfessed sin. This is why regularity at the Lord’s table is so important—not only because the Lord commands us to be there, but also because reluctance to spend this time before him may be a clue to sin in our lives that we do not want to confront.
- Let us be warned by the abuse of the trees. Intended to be the objects of joyful sharings between the Lord and his creatures, they are pressed into service as a shield, a barrier. So we, if

we are careful, may turn God's gracious gifts to us (the scriptures, times with his people, opportunities for testimony) into excuses for not spending time with him.

Two things to note throughout the interrogation:

- Sin has the effect of throwing up barriers, of dividing those who should have been united.
- God's purpose is to bring his human creatures to confess their sin, which is the first step in forgiveness. Rom 2:4, "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." He offers no such opportunity to the serpent. The piercing interrogation to which he submits our parents is in fact the evidence of his deep grace, the beginning of his redemptive work.

Interrogation of Adam, 9-12

Two interrogatory cycles, leading to the man's confession, "I did eat."

9-10, Where art thou?.—The straightforward response to the Lord's question would have been, "Over here." But under the pressure of his guilty conscience, the man "protesteth overmuch."

- "I am hiding" (*Nifal*, in contrast with the *Hithpa'el* of v.8). "Over here" would be an invitation to come together. "I am hiding" indicates an unwillingness to be with the Lord.
- The motive for the hiding is fear of the Lord, whose voice he has heard. This is a true statement. He is overwhelmed by terror of his creator.
- But he misstates the basis for his fear.
 - In fact, he is afraid because he has spurned the law of God and is now liable to judgment. His fear is the result of his action.
 - The basis he gives is that he is naked (a natural consequence of the way God made him), and that modesty requires him to conceal himself. He pretends that his fear is the result of God's action.

This misstatement teaches us two lessons about the natural man's response to sin.

1. He seeks to shift the blame from himself to God.
2. He is more preoccupied with the effect of sin than with the sin itself.

This is *the first instance of division caused by sin*: division between the human and his creator. Cf. Isa 59:1-2. Sinful man flees from the presence of his creator.

11-12, Who told thee? Hast thou eaten?.—The two questions form a single interrogation. They present the man with a contrast. The man claims that he is hiding because he is ashamed of his nakedness. God's interrogation addresses this at two levels. God forces his attention to the deeper issue, how he has dealt with revelation.

- You claim that you are hiding because you are naked. Did I ever complain about your nakedness, or give you reason to think it was unacceptable? There is no reason that your nakedness should shut you away from me. The excuse you give is invalid, because I never made nakedness an issue.
- But of course, I have spoken to you about something else—not your nakedness, but a particular tree. Now that would be a reason for you to fear me. That is not the reason you have given, but it is the real reason for your fear.

In addition to making this contrast, these two statements explain how the man has really admitted what he was trying to conceal. There was no way for him to know of his nakedness without violating the command about the tree.

Application.—The point here is critical in our modern culture, which seeks to divorce morality from divine revelation. Adam is claiming that it is right to be ashamed before God because of something about which God has never spoken to him. God insists that the real moral issue must be traced to God’s command.

Faced with this direct question, the man must confess, “I did eat.” But to evade responsibility, he offers two excuses:

1. “The woman ... gave me.” He blames his wife, although under God’s terms, she should have followed his lead, not the other way around. This is *the second example of how sin causes division*: it breaks fellowship between humans.
2. “...whom thou gavest to be with me.” He blames God for introducing her into the picture.

These two excuses are commonly used today. People blame one another for their own failings, and when that fails, they complain that it is a consequence of the way that God has configured the world. This passage shows us that such attempts carry no weight in the court of divine judgment.

Interrogation of the Woman, 13

What [is] this [that] thou hast done?—It is important to distinguish this expression from two others that occur in confrontations over sin.

1. God does not say, “What hast thou done,” as though he did not know. Sometimes an accuser must ask this question (like Joshua of Achan in Josh 7:19), but God knows full well what the human has done, as his question goes on to show. The inclusion of the word “this” in this expression always calls attention to an obvious deed.
2. Neither does he ask, “Why hast thou done this?” Hebrew has a separate particle to express “why.” God does NOT ask for the excuse; that will come of its own accord.

The phrase is more like our expression, “What is the meaning of this?” God is outraged, and calls the woman to account. There is really no satisfactory answer to such a question. The woman is left trembling before her justly enraged creator.

Technical note: compare mah (asita with mah zo’t (asita.

- *mah asita includes some cases where the questioner does not know the answer (1 Sam 13:11; Josh 7:19) as well as others where the deed is evident and the perpetrator is being called to account (Gen 4:10; 20:9).*
- *mah zo’t`asita seems to mark specifically for the latter case, calling to account for a known crime, to which the zo’t specifically points.*

Thus the latter is frequently translated “Why” rather than “How”. However, it is straightforward for Heb. to say “why” lamah, and sometimes this is explicitly used with mah zo’t`asita (Gen 12:18). It seems better to understand the phrase in the sense, “What is the meaning of this thing that you have done?” Cf. Calvin, “How hast thou done this,” “How could you bring yourself to do this?”

The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.—Like her husband, the woman must confess, “I did eat.” Also like him, she seeks to pass the responsibility to someone else: the serpent, who should have been under her authority.

This is *the third example of how sin causes division*. It alienates us from the lower creation, and causes a situation in which the creation is a threat to us, rather than being subject to us. Cf. Rom. 8:18-22.

In an attempt to further mitigate her responsibility, the woman confesses to being beguiled, lit. “deceived.” This is a very coy move on her part, very feminine, something that would never have occurred to the macho man. Paul picks up her confession in 1 Tim 2:14, in explaining the relative role of man and woman in the church: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”

3:14-21, Verdict (note 3 parts, corresponding to 2:18-25)

Now God visits the perpetrators in reverse order to the inquisition, but in the same order as the temptation and fall, and declares his judgment on them.

Each of these three aspects of the verdict is a central theme in the rest of Genesis. From this perspective, the rest of the book is an illustration of the consequences of the fall.

14-15, the Serpent

Though the Lord has elicited confessions from the man and the woman, he does not elicit one from the serpent, because he has no intention of redeeming it.

The verdict on the Serpent has two parts. The first concerns the serpent’s place in the animal kingdom (v.14); the second, its relation to the human race (v.15).

14, among the animals

thou [art] cursed.—Theologians speak about man being cursed in the fall, but in fact, in the record in Genesis, only the serpent (here) and the earth (v.17) meet this fate. The NT attaches a curse, not to the sin of the man and his wife, but to disobedience to the Law of Moses (Gal 3:10). Even at the fall, the curse of the serpent is distinct from that of the man. The earth is cursed “for [man’s] sake,” because of man’s sin, but the serpent is cursed “because thou [the serpent] hast done this.”

This verse echoes 3:1. There it was said that the serpent was “more subtle *arum* than any beast of the field.” Here we read that the serpent is “more cursed *arur* than any ... beast of the field.” Not only is the syntax the same, but there is a pun between “subtle” and “cursed.”

upon thy belly shalt thou go.—This is a characteristic of the unclean animals (Lev 11:42).

dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.—Eating dust is elsewhere in the OT the place of a defeated enemy: Mic 7:17; Isa 49:23. Note that even when the earth is returned to its edenic state, the effect of this curse will remain (Isa 65:25). This reflects the distinction between the curses of the earth and of the serpent, above. Man’s sin is forgiven, and the curse resulting from it is removed, but the serpent’s sin is not forgiven.

15, among humans

This part of the verdict is called the “protoevangelium,” the first promise of the Messiah to be contained in Scripture.

Two themes develop as the verse progresses through three stages.

- There is an interplay between individuals and groups.
- The existence of a spiritual force behind the serpent becomes clearer.

enmity between thee and the woman.—First we have the direct enmity between this particular serpent and this particular woman. This is hardly surprising, given the way in which the serpent has deceived her. She who was attracted to his subtlety, is now repelled by him.

This expression suggests that the serpent is something more than just an animal. Elsewhere in scripture, animals do not love or hate. They may destroy, or kill, or bereave people, but they do not hold them in enmity. This expression points to the spiritual force behind the serpent.

thy seed and her seed.—Now the focus moves from singular (the serpent and the woman) to plural (their respective offspring). The extension of the enmity to subsequent generations can be understood on multiple levels.

1. Psychologically, people have always had a certain morbid fascination with, and fear of, serpents, a primordial recollection of how a serpent led our first parents astray.
 2. Spiritually, this enmity extends beyond the physical serpent to the spiritual power behind him in Satan.
- Unbelievers are described as a “generation of vipers” (John the Baptist in Matt 3:7; confirmed by our Lord in 12:34; 23:33). “Generation” here is *gennhmata* “that which has been begotten, offspring,” not “cohort,” which would be *genea* as in “faithless generation.” As the gospel to the Jews, Matthew as usual hews closest to the OT imagery, but John, for a gentile audience, emphasizes utterances that interpret the serpent as Satan: John 8:44; 1 John 3:10, 12; cf. Paul to a Gentile in Acts 13:10.
 - Who are then the “seed of the woman”? We have to understand this at two levels.
 - Classically, this is understood as a prophecy of the Messiah. It is highly unusual to identify offspring with the woman rather than with the man. We read of the seed of Aaron (Lev 21:21), David (1 Kings 11:39), Abraham (Ps 105:6), Israel (2 Kings 17:20), Jacob (Isa 45:25), Ephraim (Jer 7:15), or Zadok (Ezek 43:19), but it is rare to identify the seed with the woman. (Even in 1 Sam 1:20, the seed is the man’s, identified only by which wife produces it.) Thus it has long been understood that this passage alludes to the virgin birth of the final seed, which is Christ (cf. Paul’s emphasis on the singular/plural ambiguity in Gal 3:16).
 - In general opposition to the seed of Satan/the serpent, it represents believers in conflict with unbelievers down through the ages. Cf. Nehemiah’s struggle with unbelievers in Neh 13, and the conflict of the church with the antichrists in 1 John 4:1-4 (cf. our struggle with the world in 1 John 5:4). Rev 12 leans heavily on our text in describing the coming time of great tribulation of unbelievers against believers. The chapter begins by introducing a woman, whom we studied in Revelation and decided represented Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all (Gal 4:25, 26). Satan, cast out of heaven after the

conflict of this present age, is identified as “the great dragon, that old serpent” (12:9). He makes war against the believers, who are described in 12:17 as the woman’s seed.

- Reconciling the two: we are the body of Christ. The seed (plural) is effective only through its identity with the seed (singular). Compare the “servant of the Lord” in Isaiah, who is sometimes explicitly identified with Israel, and at other times clearly prophetic of Christ (e.g., Isa 53).

Application: We must never be surprised at the tension that exists between the believers and the world. It is part of the fundamental order of things springing from God’s curse on the serpent. We are not to go around with a chip on our shoulder, but we must remember the words of our Savior, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before [it hated] you” (John 15:18).

it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.—Once again, we change number, from plural back to singular. The conflict is between “it” and “thou.” We need to inquire into the identity of the combatants and the nature of the conflict.

- The combatants: In the first clause, the conflict was between “the woman” and “thou.” Perhaps influenced by this, the Vulgate translates “it” as “she,” referring to the woman again. But the Hebrew is unambiguously masculine, “he,” referring to the seed. Rom 16:20 picks up this reference explicitly. The believers are in conflict with Satan, and are promised victory.
- Compare the outcome. The serpent, relegated to his belly, can only reach the man’s heel, but the man, striding upright, can tread upon the serpent’s head. This is our great hope in the conflict set before us—not that we shall be spared the battle, but that we shall enjoy the victory.

Echoes Later in Genesis

This struggle between God’s people and the world is prominent through the rest of Genesis. The book repeatedly indicates how God chooses out his people, “the seed of the woman,” and how they strive with those who are not chosen, “the seed of the serpent.” The Lord chooses out first Seth (vs. Cain), then Noah (vs. everyone else), Abraham (vs. all of his contemporaries), Isaac (vs. Ishmael), and Jacob (vs. Esau). In the latter three cases, the enmity between the two groups thus defined is palpable.

Noteworthy in this series of chosen people is the role of the wife and the promise to her:

- Sarah’s supernatural conception in old age
- Rebecca was also barren initially, and received a promise concerning her sons, 25:20-23.

16, the Woman

The verdict on the woman has two parts, one concerning her relation with her children, the other her relation with her husband.

Relation to Children

These two clauses both speak of the woman’s “sorrow,” particularly in childbearing. Hebrew has a number of words that are commonly used for labor pangs, but Moses chooses here two derivatives of another term, *ʿecēb*. Once again he shows his penchant for puns, for the first two

consonants of this term are the same as those of the word for “tree,” *’ec*. She was fascinated with the tree, so now she is doomed to remember it in the pain she must endure.

thy sorrow and thy conception.—thy sorrow, especially with regard to conception. Woman’s lot is a hard one. The pain of childbirth is only the capstone, and most accentuated in primitive cultures, but a woman’s complex body chemistry makes her much more sensitive to environmental pollution and leads to emotional distress and mood swings, especially in our modern culture.

I will greatly multiply.—If the man and his wife had not sinned and had been permitted to live forever, there would not have been as much of a need for numerous offspring. Perhaps they would have reproduced up to a fixed population, and then stopped. Now, because they must die, conception and its attendant pain is multiplied.

Relation to Husband

There are two main puzzles in this half-verse:

1. What is the meaning of the word “desire”? (The word occurs only 3x in Scripture: here, 4:7, and Cant 7:10.)
2. What is the relation between the two clauses?

The Traditional Understanding

1. The occurrence of the word “desire” in Canticles suggests that it refers to affection, and it is usually understood in that sense here as well.
2. Both clauses are predictive; the second gives a result of the first. “Your affection for your husband will cause you to submit to his authority, and he will rule over you.”

Unfortunately, in many homes, such a prediction would be completely wrong. In fact, the submission of the wife to the husband is commanded of believing wives in the NT, those who ought to be most free from the punishment that originated in the fall.

An Alternative Reading

The language has an extremely close parallel in 4:7, which suggests another understanding.

In 4:1-5,

- Cain and Abel are born,
- And take up their respective work as tiller of the soil and shepherd.
- Each makes an offering to God of his produce.
- God accepts Abel and his offering, but not Cain. When we get to ch. 4, we will consider the reason for this.
- Cain is upset. Subsequently, this upset is so severe that it leads him to murder Abel (v.8).

In vv.6-7, the Lord expostulates with Cain over his disappointment. He places a choice before Cain. Note the double contrast:

If you do well,	You shall be accepted (lit. <i>rise up</i>)
If you do not do well,	Sin <i>lies down</i> (like a lion in its lair) at your door.

The verb used to describe sin’s posture at Cain’s door is characteristic of a wild beast in its lair (Gen 49:9; Ps 104:22). The point is to picture his position as precarious. Every time he sets foot out of his house, he must walk past the den of Sin, which may snare him at any moment (and in fact, does, when he rises up and slays his brother).

Concerning sin in this figure of a lion in its lair, God continues in terms nearly identical to 3:16: “Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.” Two things are clear here:

1. Sin’s desire for Cain is not affection, but a desire to overpower him and control him.
2. The statement about Cain’s rule over sin is not a prediction, but an exhortation that Cain unfortunately does not heed. It is Cain’s duty to resist sin’s ambition to overtake him, and remain in control.

The same understanding fits perfectly in 3:16.

1. “thy desire shall be to thy husband.” This is a prediction of the battle of the sexes, the origin of feminism. Instead of being the channel for God’s help to him, you will be wish to dominate him, to assert your agenda rather than his. Just as the judgment on the serpent instituted enmity between believers and unbelievers, the judgment on the woman institutes enmity between male and female. Note that the woman here is confirmed in her sinful behavior, according to God’s harvest law (Gal 6:7). She has sowed rebellion against the man’s authority, and now reaps it as her steady portion.
2. Nevertheless, it remains the husband’s responsibility to control the rebellious wife. “He shall rule over you” is normative, not declarative; a statement of his responsibility, not a prediction. This was always his responsibility. Adam failed to exercise it when his wife offered him the forbidden fruit. Now it is still his responsibility, but made more difficult because of the woman’s propensity to rebel.

This also fits Cant 7:10, where the woman, truly overcome with love for her husband, cedes to him the right to direct the relation by accepting his desire over her. Note the progression from 2:16 (possession) and 6:3 (putting him first) to surrender (7:10).

NT Consequences

We now have the pieces we need to understand 1 Tim 2:12-14. Woman is not to teach in the church, for two reasons:

1. The order of creation. She is to be a helper to the man, not his replacement.
2. The circumstances of the fall. By her own confession, she was deceived in the sin (“the serpent beguiled me”), and the judgment pronounced on her emphasized her tendency to usurp authority over the man, and his responsibility to maintain control over her.

Feminist propaganda suggests that women tend to be abused by their husbands, and that dictatorial husbands are the rule rather than the exception. Certainly, there are such husbands, but this understanding suggests that another situation is far more common: strong-willed women, and men who find it easier to let them have their way than to give godly leadership. (Given the

male ego, it is not surprising if this situation is underreported.) The responsibility of believers in light of this judgment:

1. The husband is responsible to lead his wife, even if she resists his leadership. This responsibility does not excuse tyranny or abuse; the standard is Eph. 5:25, “as Christ loved the church.” Still, he must lead. If unfallen Eve could divert her husband from godliness, so can even a regenerate wife, if the flesh slips into the picture. The situation is analogous to the responsibility of parents to keep their children under control. Do not confuse love with permissiveness.
2. The wife is to recognize her fleshly tendency to rebel, and submit herself to the husband in every thing as the church does to Christ. Only thus can she be his helper as originally intended.

Echoes Later in Genesis

The efforts of women to control their men, often with devastating effects, are common throughout the book.

- 16:3, Sarah urges her handmaid on Abraham, leading to the birth of Ishmael and later bitterness in the family.
- 27, Rebekah conspires with Jacob to deceive her husband Isaac and obtain the blessing that belonged to Esau.
- 29-30, Rachel and Leah seek to manipulate their husband in their competition with one another.
- 38, Tamar manipulates her father-in-law when he does not provide her a husband
- 39, Potiphar’s wife has Joseph imprisoned when she cannot bend him to her will.

17-19, the Man

God reserves man for the last, and man’s judgment is the longest.

17a, The Charge

The charge against the serpent was simply, “because thou hast done this,” and nothing at all was cited explicitly against the woman. To the man, God declares his failure explicitly.

To see the point of the charge, note the chiasmic arrangement of two references to speaking around the central statement of action. You ate of the tree

- hearkening unto the voice of your wife
- disregarding my command.

There is a twofold contrast between these references to speaking, emphasizing in both cases the irrationality and culpability that falls on the man in acting as he did and eating of the tree.

1. The source is different: the woman vs. God. One would naturally suppose that the man would prefer the word of God, his creator, to that of the woman, his helper.

2. The intensity is different. “Hearken to” is an idiom meaning, “take a suggestion.” God’s word is expressly called a command. One would naturally suppose that the man would prefer the more intense and definitive word to the lesser.

In spite of this, he ate of the tree, and now is punished for it.

Application.—Let us learn from this charge two critical principles of godly living: God is the ultimate source of wisdom, and his commands are the ultimate authority.

1. Prefer God’s word above any other counsel or advise that we may receive, from any source.
2. Take his commandments as absolute, and do not discount them for lesser utterances.

17b-19, The Judgment

The judgment takes the form of a three-point summary followed by amplification.

“Cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life.” Note

- the curse on the ground,
- man’s resulting sorrow, and
- the limitation on his life.

Cursed is the ground

The land is said to be blessed when it is well watered and fruitful, Deut 33:13ff, and free from the devourer, Mal 3:11,12. But now v.18 shows what man must expect:

Thorns also and thistles.—Weeds that encumber the ground, making it difficult to produce useful crops.

thou shalt eat the herb of the field.—The phrase here has the specific meaning of grain, which requires cultivation, as opposed to the fruit trees with which the garden abounded.

These two categories of plants recall the introduction, 2:5a, which explained that they were originally not there because there was no man yet.

In sorrow shalt thou eat of it

“Sorrow” is *‘icabon*, one of the puns to *‘ec* “tree” that was used for the woman. 19a is the amplification: the requirement to exert hard labor in order to win a living from the soil.

Limitation of life

19b recalls the human’s identity with the humus. It was only God’s creative power that raised him from the dust. Now that he has rejected that authority, he must return to his lowly origins.

Here is the fulfillment of the Lord’s promise of death in 2:17. Man, created with the potential to live forever, is now condemned to mortality.

Echoes Later in Genesis

Famines (in all cases, leading God's people out of the land of promise and into conflict with the seed of the serpent):

- 12:10, forcing Abraham into Egypt
- 26:1, forcing Isaac to associate with Abimelech king of the Philistines
- 41:56, the famine that Joseph foresaw, which brought Jacob to Egypt

20, The Second Naming

Up to this point, the woman's name has been properly only *'ishah* "woman," assigned in 2:23-24. Now Adam gives her a new name, "Eve," derived from the root for "life."

Both names are based on the divine actions that led to that point.

- "Woman" is based on God's action in creating her from man's rib.
- "Eve" is based on God's promise that she shall bear seed.

Though each individual is condemned to die through her sin, yet through the bearing of children, the race will continue. Thus by giving her this name, Adam is reflecting a degree of faith, however slight, in the promise of God that goes beyond the judgment.

One hopes that this is not simply the selfish faith of Hezekiah in Isa 39:8.

21, Dealing with Nakedness

At creation God had left them naked, like children (2:25), and the one piece of wisdom they gained by eating of the forbidden fruit was to realize their nakedness (3:7). Their own remedy was a loincloth of fig leaves, inadequate in two respects:

- The fig leaf, though large, has deep indentations, and is not suited for a garment.
- They made only loincloths, not full garments.

The Lord remedies both of these.

- He uses animal skins, which are large enough to make a good covering.
- He forms a complete tunic, not just loincloths, necessary for both modesty and protection.

What is the significance of this act?

- It is commonly thought to introduce the principle of animal sacrifice as a covering for sin, though that is nowhere stated here, and furthermore, the skin of the sin offerings (which this must certainly have been) is not retained for the use of the priests, but burned outside of the camp (Lev 4:11-12; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27). The priest could retain the skin of the burnt offering for his perquisite (Lev 7:8), but such an offering would hardly be appropriate here.
- Calvin: a mark of their shame, because crude clothing, unlike wool or linen. "And, truly, it was a sad and horrid spectacle; that he, in whom recently the glory of the Divine image was shining, should lie hidden under fetid skins to cover his own disgrace, and that there should be more comeliness in a dead animal than in a living man!" (Unsubstantiated)

- Certainly, it is an act of grace by which God remedies the problem that made them ashamed.
- The tunic is distinctively a priestly garment, and the verb “to clothe” (hiphil) is used of the vesting of priests. Cf. Exod 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13. Exod 28:40-41 has both verbs “make” and “clothe.” The purpose of the priestly clothing is explicitly to cover their nakedness, Exod 20:26; 28:42. Given so much further sanctuary symbolism in these chapters, it is likely that we are to see here a hint of the sacral role that God intends the man to fulfill, and thus a further mark of grace.

3:22, Man Constrained by God

Here we must consider the speaker, the diagnosis, and the prescription.

Speaker: “Us”

Instances when God speaks in the plural: Gen 1:26, Gen 3:22, Gen 11:7, Isa 6:8. He cannot be taking counsel with the angels in these places, for no one can counsel him, Isa 40:13,14, cf. Rom 11:34. We must take the plural here along the lines more strongly suggested by the structure of 1:22, as indicative of a plurality within the godhead, reflected in the male/female nature of man.

Diagnosis: “as one of us, to know good and evil”

What does it mean that the man now “is as [God], to know good and evil”? Several possibilities. Each ascribes a different emotion to God.

1. This is exactly what the serpent said would happen (3:5). Is God here admitting that the serpent was right, and now out of *jealousy* he must exclude man from the tree of life? Superficially, this appears to be the case. The author probably intends us to ask this question, in order to egg us on. Yet it runs so contrary to God’s omnipotence and love, both permeating these chapters, that we must look further.
2. Calvin felt the Lord’s statement was *ironical*: “What have we here, Man, who has become like us!” Much as a father might tease a son whom he discovers trying on his suspenders. There certainly is irony in the Bible, cf. Elijah’s mockery of the prophets of Baal. But in the context, there is no reason to ascribe such a vindictive attitude on the part of God toward the man.
3. I prefer another option. “To know” in Hebrew commonly has the sense of “to experience.” Consider Eccl 8:5, “Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel *yeda`* no evil thing.”
 - a. As created, Adam and Eve knew only good, no evil. God knows all things, contingent as well as actual. Past, and future are all present before him who is the great “I AM.” So he knows good, and evil. By their disobedience, Adam and Eve have come into the experience of evil as well as good.
 - b. This knowledge is not burdensome to him, because as the sovereign creator he controls the outcome of the struggle between the two. Unlike God, Adam and Eve are powerless to do anything about this conflict. It can only cause them sorrow.
 - c. In excluding them from this knowledge, God is like a wise parent who does not burden his children with the knowledge of problems they cannot carry. But Adam and Eve have taken this knowledge on themselves. Thus God’s emotion here is neither

jealousy nor irony, but profound sadness that his creature has unnecessarily taken on such a burden.

Instances of the idiom in the OT are actually extremely rare; only Deut 1:39 is an exact parallel. In all three, our meaning (experience of good and bad things) rather than the more abstract idea of making moral choices may well be intended.

- *Children do not know good and evil, Deut 1:39. The context is experiencing battle, not making moral choices.*
- *But they can learn to refuse evil and choose good, Isa 7:15,16. The context is eating butter and honey—again, easily related to experience of pleasant and unpleasant circumstances, not making moral choices.*
- *A very old man cannot discern between the two, 2 Sam 19:35 (though Barzillai certainly is not disowning moral knowledge here; this is probably a summary introductory statement, elaborated in the following clauses about food, drink, and music).*

Prescription: Avoid the Tree of Life

As in the corresponding member on the other side (2:16-17), the human is now excluded from a tree, this time the tree of life.

Given our understanding of the diagnosis, the exclusion from the tree of life is (like the elicitation of a confession, and the promise of the seed) an act of mercy. The exclusion from the tree of life spares them from living forever with the consequences of their sin.

The first exclusion (in 2:16-17) was by a command. They have demonstrated that they cannot be trusted with a command, so he must remove them physically from the danger (and along with it, from the attendant blessings of the garden).

3:23-24, Man Banished from the Garden

This section closes up the issues raised in 2:4-15.

- There, man was elevated from the soil, and God was the gardener. Now he must labor in intimate contact with the soil.
- There, man was placed in the garden. Here, he is excluded from it.
- There, it was his place to serve and guard the garden (2:15). Now, his only service is to the ground, and the cherubim are assigned the job of guarding the garden.

NB: no one is now in the position of serving in the garden-sanctuary. Not only is man deprived of his place in paradise, but paradise is deprived of its priest. The rest of the Bible is the story of how God brings these two together once again.