

# FAMILY

## The Background

November 5, 2017

Matthew 19:4-6, Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:4-24

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He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

### Matthew 19:4-6

4. *Have you not read?* Christ does not indeed reply directly to what was asked, but he fully meets the question which was proposed; just as if a person now interrogated about the Mass were to explain faithfully the mystery of the Holy Supper, and at length to conclude, that they are guilty of sacrilege and forgery who venture either to add or to take away any thing from the pure institution of the Lord, he would plainly overturn the pretended sacrifice of the Mass. Now Christ assumes as an admitted principle, that at the beginning God *joined the male to the female*, so that the two made an entire man; and therefore he who *divorces his wife* tears from him, as it were, the half of himself. But nature does not allow any man to tear in pieces his own body.

He adds another argument drawn from the less to the greater. The bond of marriage is more sacred than that which binds children to their parents. But piety binds children to their parents by a link which cannot be broken. Much less then can the husband renounce his wife. Hence it follows, that a chain which God made is burst asunder, if the husband divorce his wife.

Now the meaning of the words is this: God, who created the human race, *made them male and female*, so that every man might be satisfied with his own wife, and might not desire more. For he insists on the number *two*, as the prophet Malachi, (2:15,) when he remonstrates against polygamy, employs the same argument, that God, whose *Spirit was so abundant* that He had it in His power to create more, yet *made but one man*, that is, such a man as Christ here describes. And thus from the order of creation is proved the inviolable union of one husband with one wife. If it be objected, that in this way it will not be lawful, after the first wife is dead, to take another, the reply is easy, that not only is the bond dissolved by death, but the second wife is substituted by God in the room of the first, as if

she had been one and the same woman.

5. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother.* It is uncertain whether Moses represents Adam or God as speaking these words; but it is of little consequence to the present passage which of these meanings you choose, for it was enough to quote the decision which God had pronounced, though it might have been uttered by the mouth of Adam. Now he who marries a wife is not commanded absolutely to *leave his father*; for God would contradict himself, if by marriage He set aside those duties which He enjoins on children towards their parents; but when a comparison is made between the claims, the *wife* is preferred to the *father and mother*. But if any man abandon his father, and shake off the yoke by which he is bound, no man will own such a monster; much less will he be at liberty to dissolve a marriage.

*And the two shall be one flesh.* This expression condemns polygamy not less than it condemns unrestrained liberty in divorcing wives; for, if the mutual union of two persons was consecrated by the Lord, the mixture of three or four persons is unauthorised. But Christ, as I stated a little ago, applies it in a different manner to his purpose; namely, to show that whoever divorces his wife tears himself in pieces, because such is the force of holy marriage, that the husband and wife become one man. For it was not the design of Christ to introduce the impure and filthy speculation of Plato, but he spoke with reverence of the order which God has established. Let the husband and wife, therefore, live together in such a manner, that each shall cherish the other in the same manner as if they were the half of themselves. Let the husband rule, so as to be the head, and not the tyrant, of his wife; and let the woman, on the other hand, yield modestly to his commands.

6. *What God therefore hath joined.* By this sentence Christ restrains the caprice of husbands, that they may not, by divorcing their wives, burst asunder the sacred knot. And as he declares that it is not in the power of the husband to dissolve the marriage, so likewise he forbids all others to confirm by their authority unlawful divorces; for the magistrate abuses his power when he grants permission to the husband to divorce his wife. But the object which Christ had directly in view was, that every man should sacredly observe the promise which he has given, and that those who are tempted, by wantonness or wicked dispositions, to divorce, may reflect thus with themselves: “Who art thou that allowest thyself to *burst asunder what God hath joined?*”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Vol. 2, pp. 378–380). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

27 So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

## Genesis 1:26-28

### The Creation of Man and Woman

4 These are the generations  
of the heavens and the earth when they were created,  
in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground— 7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. 11 The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. 14 And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat[d] of it you shall surely die.”

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of

the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam[g] there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2:2-24

## MAN'S UNIQUENESS

### Genesis 1:26-27; 2:4-7

The amount of space allocated to the second creative act of the sixth day clearly indicates that man is at the center of the plan of God. All that was created before him was created for him. Man is unique in several ways.

#### A. The Uniqueness of the Planning for Man

The uniqueness and superiority of man in the created order is underscored by the divine consultation which took place prior to his creation. “Let us make man in our image and in our likeness” (1:28). Who is this that takes counsel together? Certainly not angels. Man is never said to be created in the likeness of angels, and God is never said to take counsel with angels (cf. Isa 40:14). Is this a majestic plural such as sovereigns employ? Not likely, for this type of plural cannot be demonstrated in the court language of the Old Testament. So far in the narrative the only creative powers alluded have been God, the Spirit of God, and the word of God. In the light of John 1:1-3 the only satisfactory explanation of the plural can be that man is the product of the contemplation of the pluralistic godhead, i.e., the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### B. The Uniqueness of the Nature of Man

Man is different from and superior to the animals in that he alone is made in the image (*tselem*) and likeness (*damuth*) of God. This is the only place in the Old Testament where these two terms are used in conjunction with one another. The first Hebrew term comes from a root meaning “to carve, cut off.” The general significance is that man is closely patterned after his Maker. The second term is merely supplementary to or explanatory of the first term. The combination of terms refers to man’s intellectual, spiritual, volitional, and ethical capacity. In short the combination “image and likeness” refers to all that sets man apart from the animal kingdom. Neither term refers to man’s body. God is an incorporeal Spirit (John 1:18; 1 Tim 6:16). He does not have a body analogous to that of man. Yet it is logical to assume that the body which man possesses is a worthy tabernacle for that spirit which bears the image and likeness of God.

### **C. The Uniqueness of Man’s Sexuality**

On the fifth day God told the water creatures and birds to be fruitful and multiply (1:22). A reference to the procreative powers of these creatures is thus implied. But only in the case of man is sexuality specifically mentioned. “Male and female created he them” (1:27). The ancient pagan mind could conceive of no creative force other than sex. Sex existed before the cosmos. The gods themselves were creatures of sex. The universe was born as a result of a sexual act of gods. Not so in Genesis. The God of the Bible is sovereign over sex for he created it.

Genesis 1 clearly indicates that both male and female are created in the image of God. The inherent equality of the sexes is thus taught. God, of course, is not a sexual being. In this respect man is not made in God’s image. God most frequently is referred to by male terms in Scripture. This is appropriate because God is the initiator of life. But the fact that God is called, for example, Father should not be taken to mean that God is male. Again it must be stressed that both male and female are made in the image of God because the image of God has nothing to do with sexuality.

In the creation of the lower forms of life, multitudes were apparently created simultaneously. These creatures were told to reproduce “after their kind.” God, however, only created a single pair of humankind. Thus the foundation of marriage as the cohabitation of a single male and a single female is clearly set forth. Attempts to erase the distinction between male and female are against nature and are an affront to the wisdom of the Creator.

### **D. The Uniqueness of Man’s Creation (Gn 2:4–7)**

In Genesis 2 the transcendent and all powerful *'elohim* is identified as Yahweh, the God of redemption. The Lord God (*yahweh 'elohim*) is the Creator. This double name for God is used eleven times in Genesis 2. The name Yahweh means “he who is” or the Eternal. Yahweh is the covenant name for God in the Old Testament.

Conditions on earth just prior to the creation of the first man are spelled out in 2:4–6. The “field shrubs” and “field plants” had not yet appeared. This is not the same terminology used of the vegetation created on the third day of the previous chapter (1:11–12). Two reasons are stated for the lack of these kinds of plants: God had not sent rain on the earth, and (2) no man was present to work the ground. Prior to the first rain, the land was watered by a fountain (*'ed*) which went up from the ground. There is no indication that the rainless condition continued until the time of Noah as some have suggested. The kind of vegetation spoken of in 2:5 was the special vegetation which was put in the garden.

The crown of God’s creation is called *'adam* (man), a word closely related to *'adhamah* (ground) in 1:25. Just as the land creatures came from the earth (1:24), so also did man, at least in his physical aspect. Thus Genesis 2 points to the lowly origin of man, his essential frailty and final destiny. But man was fashioned by the hand of God (2:7). The verb “formed” (*yatsar*) describes the artistic genius of a potter. Man’s body is of divine origin.

The body of man was animated by the breath of God (2:7). The phrase “breath of life” (*nishmah chayyim*) is never used of animals. This breath of God in man is that which Christian theology designates as soul or spirit.

## MAN’S ABODE

### Genesis 2:8–17

God’s tender concern for man is indicated by the way he provided a habitation for the first man. Two observations about that garden are important.

#### A. The Nature of the Garden

The text does not indicate that the entire primeval earth was a paradise. The word garden (*gan*) signifies a place protected by a fence or wall. The garden was located “eastward” in respect to the writer and in a plain (*'eden*) at the confluence of four rivers (2:8, 10–14). Two of the rivers can be identified—the Hiddekel (Tigris) and the Perat (Euphrates). The Pishon and Gihon are likely two of the other Mesopotamian rivers which flow into the Tigris and Euphrates. These four rivers joined to flow through the garden as one river. The author seems to be describing the geography of ancient Sumer just north of the Persian Gulf in what is present-day Iraq. Ancient pagan legend remembered a paradise at the northern end of the Persian Gulf.

The garden was a scene of beauty and bounty prepared by the hand of Yahweh Elohim himself (2:8–9). This place was the perfect habitation for man in his perfection. The garden was adorned by beautiful vegetation (“every tree that is lovely to see”). The Garden trees were abundant in fruitfulness (“every tree ... good for food”). God may have created special animals to inhabit the garden (2:19). The garden was later used as the standard to measure

fruitfulness and beauty (Gn 13:10; Isa 51:3; Ezek 28:13; Joel 2:3).

## **B. The Purpose of the Garden**

God put (*sim*) man in the garden (2:8), caused man to rest (*nuach*) in the garden (2:15). Man thus knew the conditions outside the garden before he came to experience the blessings of that place. Yet the garden was no place of idleness. God assigned man work to do. He was to cultivate (*'abhad*) and to keep (*shamar*) it (2:15). The plants, flowers and trees of Eden stood in need of cultivation from the hand of man, and would speedily have degenerated without his attention.

Because the garden was an abode of innocence, it was suitable for sinless man. There man had access to the tree of life. But continued access to that tree was contingent upon man's faithfulness. Only the name of this special tree hints at its purpose. Partaking of the tree of life apparently imparted to the partaker the possibility of physical immortality.

The garden was a place of probation. A single prohibition provided man with an opportunity to function as a free moral agent, to choose for or against God. The prohibition was specific and emphatic. Of one designated tree God ordered: "You may not surely eat" (2:17). The prohibition was light, for concerning all the other trees in the garden God had said, "You may eat freely" (2:16). The prohibition was accompanied by a warning: In the day you eat of the forbidden tree you shall surely die!

## **MAN'S MATE**

### **Genesis 2:18-25**

The tender concern of God for man is indicated in the mate which he provided for the first man.

## **A. The Need for a Mate (Gn 2:18-20)**

God observed that it was not good for the man to be alone (2:18). This should not be taken to mean that God intends for every person to marry. Other Scriptures indicate that there are times when it would be better for a man or a woman to remain single. God's observation was that it was not good for Adam's personality for him to remain alone. He needed companionship. Furthermore, God's program demanded that Adam have a mate. From the beginning God looked forward to the propagation of the race, the generation of the chosen people, and the coming of the Promised Seed.

To help prepare man for the reception of his mate, God brought the garden animals before him "to see what he would name them" (2:19). This enabled man to (1) exercise the gifts of language and reason, (2) manifest his sovereignty over the inferior creatures, and (3) discover for himself his loneliness. Adam was absolutely correct in his assessment of

the nature of each animal: “Whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.” He marked each creature for what it was—inferior to himself. Adam saw clearly that for him there was no suitable helper among the animals (2:20).

The implication is that the woman about to be created would be man’s helper (*‘ezer*). The Hebrew word does not connote inferiority. She was not to be man’s servant. The animals are helpers to man; but none of them is a helper corresponding to him. Animals are inferior to man; the woman is not. She renders a kind of help which animals are not suitable to offer (2:20). This word *helper* is elsewhere used of God himself. He is man’s ultimate Helper. The word points to strength and wisdom. A woman who is truly fulfilling the role of helper to her mate is performing a God-like function to her husband.

### **B. The Provision of a Mate (Gn 2:21–22a)**

In the Mesopotamian creation myths no special attention is given to the creation of woman. The Bible, on the other hand, indicates the significance of the first woman in several ways.

1. The time of her creation. The summary account of Genesis 1 gives the impression that man and woman were created simultaneously. Genesis 2 makes clear that an interval separated the two events. Woman was the last of God’s creative works. She was the crown of the creation. She made her appearance only after everything was in the highest state of readiness for her reception: a home, provision for her maintenance, a husband who longed for her coming, who appreciated her worth.

2. The manner of her creation. God literally built (*banah*) the woman. This term is used nowhere else in the creation narrative. The verb is frequently used in the Old Testament for completing an unfinished structure. Man was incomplete without his mate.

3. The substance from which she was formed. She was formed from man’s rib (*tsela*). This indicates that woman was made of more precious material, dust doubled refined. Woman is one with man for she came from him. She had a claim upon man for protection and affection. Long ago Matthew Henry observed: “She was not made out of his head, to rule over him; nor out of his feet, to be trampled on 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.”

### **C. The Union with the Mate (Gen 2:22b–25)**

Woman was created to be the perfect supplement to Adam’s incompleteness physically, intellectually, and socially. In man’s need, and woman’s power to satisfy that need, is laid the foundation for the divine institution of marriage. Three basic ingredients of marriage are present in Genesis 2: (1) the Father’s consent—he brought her to Adam (2:22); (2) the woman’s consent—she willingly came to her husband; and (3) the man’s consent—Adam

received her as his bride.

1. The intimacy of the union. The excitement of Adam upon viewing his bride is clearly indicated in the Hebrew text. Adam did not need to be instructed by divine revelation regarding the true nature of his bride: “She is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh” (2:23). He thereby accepted her as an equal, as one to be loved and cherished. But this is more than an affirmation of kinship with the woman. A study of similar expressions in the Old Testament (e.g., Gn 29:14; Judg 9:2) suggests that this is also a declaration of loyalty. Adam thus composed the first marriage vows in which he declared his fidelity to this mate regardless of the circumstances.

The inspired lawgiver (Moses) reflects on the observation of Adam and sets forth three basic laws of marriage: the laws of (1) leaving, (2) cleaving, and (3) weaving. So strong is the marriage bond that it supersedes the ties between parents and children. He who would marry must leave (*‘azabh*) father and mother—physically, psychologically and economically. The Hebrew verb suggests the termination of a loyalty. He must thereafter cleave (*dabhaq*) to his wife. The word elsewhere is used to describe a covenantal commitment to God (cf. Dt 10:20). Thus by using this word the lawgiver is suggesting that marriage is a covenant between a man and woman. The lives of husband and wife are woven together in marriage—they become one flesh. Their union is celebrated and reaffirmed in sexual intercourse. Christ (Matt 19:5) explained this verse as teaching the indissoluble character of marriage.

The intimacy and innocence of the first marriage is beautifully set forth in the words, “The man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed” (2:25).

2. The structure of the union. Fundamentally, the man and his mate were equals. This is indicated in the following facts: (1) she was a “helper” corresponding to him (2:18); (2) she received the creation mandate as much as he (1:28–30); (3) Adam recognized her as “bone of my bone”—as fundamentally like him; (4) she was the special handiwork of God as much as he; and (5) both the man and the woman were made in the image of God. In that first marriage, however, the man was the first among equals, i.e., he was the leader in the relationship. He was created first and therefore had a certain priority for that reason (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3, 8, 12). Adam asserted (and Eve accepted) his leadership when he gave his bride a name (2:23): “She shall be called Woman (*‘ishshah*) because she was taken from man (*‘ish*). A woman who chooses to marry chooses to subordinate herself in some measure to the leadership of the man of her choice. Adam was the head; Eve was the helper.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, J. E. (1993). *The Pentateuch* (2nd ed., pp. 56–63). Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co.