

Genesis 2:4–7 — These Are the Generations of the Heavens and the Earth

Created and Made, the Breath of Life, the Immortal Soul, Two Adams, and Sin as Lawlessness

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:4–7

“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.

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

Created and Made: A Distinction Not to Be Collapsed

Verse 4 contains both words in a single sentence: the heavens and earth when they were created, and then the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. The order is also reversed: first heavens and earth, then earth and heavens. Both the words and the order are deliberate, and the distinction matters.

Created carries the sense of bringing something into being out of nothing. Something is there that was not there before, and only God can do this. Made is a matter of fashioning, reordering, or forming from what already exists. When a man takes a tree, carves it, burns some of the wood for fuel and shapes the rest into an idol — as Isaiah describes — he has made something. He has created nothing. The tree was there; the carved piece is still just a tree.

The work of the six days is predominantly making: God reordering the chaotic condition of the earth, bringing life upon it, placing the man and the woman. But within that making, there are creative acts. Man was formed of the dust of the ground — that is making, since the dust was already there. But the soul of man was created — it had not previously existed. The breath of life breathed into man's nostrils was not drawn from a pre-existing repository of souls. God created it. Similarly, on the fourth day God made two great lights — the word is made, not created, because the creative act of bringing light into existence had already occurred on day one. The fourth day was a reordering of what was already there so that the lights were established in their relationship to the earth in clarity.

The Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses understood this distinction instinctively. They could counterfeit many of the signs — they could call up frogs — but when it came to producing lice from the dust, they could not. That they called the finger of God. They could imitate what was within the realm of already-existing things; they could not create life. The Antichrist in Revelation 13 attempts to do precisely this: the image of the beast is given breath to speak. It is the ultimate counterfeit of God's creative act here — and it is false, the work of one through whom all things are false.

The Word Day in Verse 4

The word day appears in two different senses in verse 4. In the first half, these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created — this is a general epoch or period of time, the day meaning the time of. In the second half, in the day that the Lord God made — again a general expression, not a specific twenty-four-hour period. This is different from the usage in Genesis 1, where numbers qualify the word: the first day, the second day. The numbers in Genesis 1 are what make those days literal days. God was not constrained by time in doing his work; the separation of creation into six days was not because he grew tired or needed rest. He is infinite in power. The six-day structure is his own

ordering, his own pattern, not a necessity imposed on him.

No Rain, a Mist, and the Gentleness of the Beginning

Verse 5 states that the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. Verse 6 adds: there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. This description has a gentleness to it. There were no storms, no destructive floods, no driving rains. The water rose up from below and quietly watered the earth. The storms that are so common in the world today are a feature of a world under sin. At the beginning, before the fall, God's provision was quiet and sufficient.

The mention of rain before it had rained also bears on the tablet theory of Genesis — the proposal that the ten occurrences of the phrase these are the generations each marks a separate clay tablet carried through the godly line to Moses. If the first tablet was written before the flood, when rain was presumably unknown, why does the author use the word for rain? The vocabulary assumes rain. This is one of the observations that makes the tablet theory difficult. Regardless of sources used, however, the Lord himself put his stamp of absolute approval on Moses as the writer of these books, and what we have is inspired by the Spirit of God and is his word.

The Breath of Life: Man's Unique Relationship to God

Verse 7 records a unique act: the Lord God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. This phrase is found nowhere else in all of creation. God spoke the animals into existence; he breathed into man. This puts man into a special and unique relationship to the Creator. The animals have souls in the sense of living beings, but there is no indication that they have immortal souls. With man, the indication throughout Scripture is that his soul does not die. The reason is here: man stands in this unique relationship to God,

who breathed into him the breath of life.

This act looks forward to John 20, when the risen Lord breathed on his disciples and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. The connection is not accidental. J.N. Darby translated it breathed into them rather than breathed on them, which corresponds directly to the language here. When God breathes, life is communicated. The first breathing gave man a living soul; the second breathing, in resurrection, communicated resurrection life — the life of the new creation. The Lord Jesus is the life-giving Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45), and eternal life as Scripture presents it is not a quantum of life distributed from some reservoir. It is himself: I am the way, the truth, and the life; he that hath the Son hath life.

The immortality of the soul is established by this act. Those who deny it cite the phrase God only hath immortality — but that speaks of underived immortality. God possesses immortality intrinsically; man has it derivatively, by this act of creation. Scripture treats the soul of man as surviving death. The man without Christ will appear again in a body at the great white throne, cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet have already been for the thousand years of the millennium. They subsisted for a thousand years there. The weeping and gnashing of teeth require someone to be weeping and gnashing. Annihilationism is simply an escapist teaching. The mortal and corruptible that must be changed in 1 Corinthians 15 is the body, not the soul.

Two Adams: What the Word of God Is About

First Corinthians 15 presents the two poles of Scripture: the first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord out of heaven. The word of God is about two men — the first Adam and the last Adam. Everything in it unfolds from this line. The first man is formed here of the dust of the ground; the second man is the Lord whose moral origin is from heaven. The phrase the Lord out of heaven does not mean he brought humanity down out of heaven; it speaks of his

moral origin, not the material of his incarnation.

Sin as Lawlessness: Not the Transgression of the Law

The common definition — sin is the transgression of the law — is wrong, and J.N. Darby was strong in objecting to it. Sin was in the world before the law of Moses was given, and Romans 5 is explicit on this. Cain did not need a law to tell him not to murder. He knew it was wrong. He sinned. He was guilty. The knowledge of good and evil is not the same as the law, and a sense of moral responsibility is not the same as being under a code.

Adam had a covenant — Hosea 6:7 says as much, they like Adam have transgressed the covenant. He had one commandment: thou shalt not eat of it. His progeny were not parties to that covenant, but they had the knowledge of good and evil and a conscience. What sin essentially is, is self-will — acting without reference to the will of the Creator, choosing one's own way rather than God's. That is lawlessness in the deepest sense: not the breach of a written code, but the assertion of a will that has no right to assert itself. The root of all sin is self-will, and self-will is a fearsome thing — one whose depth we do not ordinarily feel in our own souls as we ought.

The LORD God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.