Genesis 2:18–25 — It Is Not Good That the Man Should Be Alone

The Help Meet, Hierarchy Not Egalitarianism, Chronological vs. Topical Order, Leave and Cleave, and Ephesians 5

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:18–25; Ephesians 5:22–33

> *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*
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> *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."*

Pointing Forward to Christ: The Chapter's Pattern

One thing after another in this chapter is pointing forward to Christ, and that is who God has before him throughout. The four rivers pointed to the four Gospels. The two trees pointed to life and responsibility, both resolved in Christ on the cross. Now we come to the woman, and this too is pointing forward — to Christ and the assembly. The help meet is not merely for him but like him, his counterpart. We who are the assembly are his like, taken as it were from his side, his complement. Ephesians 1:23 speaks of the assembly as the fullness of him that filleth all in all. First Corinthians 12 speaks of the Christ in the sense that includes both the head and the body as members of him. These things are here in seed form, and we see them by looking back with New Testament light.

Chronological and Topical Order: No Contradiction Between Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 1 is in chronological order; Genesis 2 is in topical order. Those who claim a contradiction between the two chapters — as if Genesis 2 places man's creation before the animals when Genesis 1 has the opposite sequence — have misread what chapter 2 is doing. The animals are mentioned in verse 19 not to give a fresh account of their creation but to explain the purpose of bringing them before Adam: to show that among all that vast array of created kinds, there was not found a help meet for him. That is the point. The review of the animals demonstrates by negative evidence that nothing in the animal kingdom was man's like. This is topical, not chronological, and the multiple-document theory that attributes the supposed contradiction to careless editorial work is an insult to the human mind, to say nothing of the divine mind.

Adam reviewed these creatures and gave them names. This required remarkable intelligence — the ability to look at a creature, discern its nature, classify it, and assign it a name commensurate with what it was. Adam did not go to school to learn taxonomy. It was built in. He was created an adult with a mind furnished with all the intellectual capacity needed for his task. This is what is meant by creation with apparent age: Adam had no childhood, no developmental history, yet he came into existence fully equipped. The same principle applies to the wine at Cana — it appeared aged, having been created instantaneously, and would have deceived any chemist. No history was required; the power of the Creator produced the result directly. So also with Adam.

None Like Him: The Purpose of the Review

God knew in advance that the review of the animals would yield no help meet for Adam. He is omniscient and plans everything. The review was not for God's benefit but for man's. Adam had to see for himself that among all the kinds that God had made — however many those kinds encompassed, whether few or many relative to what we call species today — there was not one that was his like. Not

one that matched him in form, nature, intellect, speech, or moral character. This made the moment when God brought the woman to him all the more significant. This time it is, as J.N. Darby renders Adam's words — the exuberance of recognition after the long fruitless review.

Hierarchy, Not Egalitarianism

The egalitarian argument — that woman was taken from man's side and therefore stands as his equal, and that the he shall rule over thee of Genesis 3 introduced the headship that was absent before — fails on multiple counts. First, Adam named the woman. He had named all the animals, an exercise of his headship over the created order. He now names her too, which is consistent with his headship, not with equality of office. Second, 1 Timothy 2:12–13 explicitly grounds the ordering of man and woman not in Genesis 3 but in Genesis 1 and 2: Adam was first formed. That is a pre-fall reason.

The he shall rule over thee of Genesis 3 is a governmental consequence of the fall, a blight on the relationship. Down through history, women have in vast measure been treated harshly, ruled over rather than loved. That is what the phrase describes — the sinful distortion of a relationship that before the fall was one of loving headship and willing complementarity. Using the governmental curse to argue that there was no headship before it is like using the thorns and thistles to argue there was no gardening before the fall. Something was added, something distorted — not something introduced from nothing. Furthermore, if Eve's being taken from Adam's side means equality of office, then since the assembly is taken from Christ's side, is the assembly equal to Christ in office? The argument defeats itself. Two heads are a monstrosity in nature; they are no more God's design in the household.

Ephesians 5: What Was Missing Among the Animals Is Here

In Genesis 2, amid all these animals brought before Adam, what was absent was his like, his suitable counterpart. Ephesians 5:22–33 gives exactly that. The husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it; the wife submits to her husband as the church is subject to Christ. This is what the animals could never provide. The principle found in verse 23 — he is the saviour of the body — shows a special way the husband is to manifest love toward his wife, that before is put ahead of everything. He is the saviour, the preserver, the nourisher and cherisher of the body. No animal relationship reaches this.

Verse 30 of Ephesians 5 extends this: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones — words that echo Adam's bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. In the case of Adam and Eve, the union was physical in origin; in the case of Christ and the assembly, it is spiritual, formed by the indwelling Spirit who unites us to the risen head. The one flesh of marriage is a temporal union that death dissolves; the spiritual union of the believer with Christ is indissoluble and eternal. The marriage union is never to be confused with the spiritual union, though the former points to the latter as a great mystery (Ephesians 5:32).

Leave and Cleave: The New Household

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife. Two operative words: leave and cleave. Each is as forceful as the other. The leaving is the establishing of a new household before God, with a new head responsible to God. The cleaving is the total, unreserved, permanent commitment to the wife. Easy in, easy out — the modern approach to marriage — is the antithesis of cleaving. The Lord Jesus cited this verse in Matthew 19 as the foundation of marriage, going behind Moses' concession on divorce to what God had established at the beginning.

The leaving does not rupture the parent-child relationship, and there is nothing wrong with seeking parental counsel or even with living under the same roof in

certain circumstances. But it does mean that the center of responsibility before God has shifted. The new household is the new unit. The head of that household is responsible to God for it. The head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is man; the head of man is Christ; the head of Christ is God (1 Corinthians 11:3). That hierarchy stands, and the new household under its head is the expression of it.

Naked and Not Ashamed: Something Deeper Than Physical Nakedness

They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. A married man and woman have no grounds for shame before one another; that is the plain sense of the verse. But the subject of nakedness carries a deeper significance that unfolds in the next chapter. As soon as they sin, they discover they are naked and make themselves aprons of fig leaves. When they hear the voice of the Lord God, they hide. Who told thee that thou wast naked? the Lord asks. That question opens up the spiritual dimension: man is spiritually naked before God, and no covering of his own devising — no fig leaves, no religious performance — covers him. And in the eternal state, those who are lost will be naked in the lake of fire, without the house from heaven with which the redeemed are clothed (2 Corinthians 5:1–2). Nakedness and shame are not merely physical matters here; they are the seed of everything that God subsequently unfolds about man’s condition and his need of a covering that only God can provide.

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.