

Genesis 1-2

Portrayals of the beginning

Having previously examined Jesus' reading of Genesis 1-2 and concluded he handled these chapters as harmonised historical records¹, we moved on to evaluate the first of eight reasons theistic evolutionists commonly propose as reasons why we should not read Genesis 1 & 2 either as harmonised in meaning or as historical records². In this essay we shall examine the second of eight reasons commonly proposed to support the position on Genesis 1 & 2 adopted by *theistic evolutionists*.

This second reason is that Genesis 1 & 2 depict two different beginnings³. On the one hand, it is said Genesis 1 begins with pre-existent chaotic matter that is about to be "tamed" by God during the six-day sequence and that Genesis 1 shows how God makes habitable what is uninhabitable. On the other hand, it is claimed Genesis 2 depicts a similar transition from inhabitable to habitable, but does not describe the primordial state in the same way; rather, it is asserted, Genesis 2 deals with a *land* that is not yet habitable because of an absence of plant life due to there not having been rain or anyone to work the land.

Genesis 2:5

Plainly, this claim about Genesis 2 is based on the narrative in Genesis 2:5, which reads:

"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 ground⁴"

An inexplicit premise for this conclusion is that the chronology of Genesis 2 is co-extensive with the six days of creative work described in Genesis 1. But we have already seen that this is not an accurate reading of the text. Rather, Genesis 2:4 deals with the Lord God's completion of his creative work on *the sixth day*, a completion that awaited the creation of man⁵. That this conclusion has direct relevance to understanding the statements about *bushes*, *plants* and *rain* in Genesis 2:5 is seen from the fact these descriptions set the scene for scripture's revelation of the reason the Lord God's work was incomplete: "there was no man" (Ge 2:5; cf Ge 2:20). The *bushes* and *plants of the field* of Genesis 2:5 are clearly associated with the impact of there *being no man*: for these to *spring up* a man was needed "to work the ground" (Ge 2:5).

These considerations illustrate we need another perspective on Genesis 2:5 other than it being a disharmonised record of the same things portrayed in Genesis 1.

another perspective

That Genesis 2:5 most certainly has a different perspective from the creation of Genesis 1 is clearly marked by the introduction of language about created things that has not previously been employed. This new language is tabulated below:

Expression	Uses in Genesis 1-3
<i>bush</i> = <i>śyh</i>	Ge 2:5
<i>field</i> = <i>śdh</i>	Ge 2:5,19,20; 3:1,14,18

¹ Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: Jesus' reading* (www.globalorient.com/pdf/Ge-1-2-JesusReading.pdf).

² Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: the duration of creation* (www.globalorient.com/pdf/Ge-1-2-DurationOfCreation-v1.pdf).

³ For example, <https://biologos.org/blogs/archive/israels-two-creation-stories-part-1> [referenced Oct 12, 2015].

⁴ Scripture citations are from ESV unless stated otherwise.

⁵ Peter Heavyside, *Genesis 1-2: the duration of creation* (*ibid*).

Expression	Uses in Genesis 1-3
to spring up = <i>smh</i>	Ge 2:5,9; 3:18
to rain = <i>mtr</i>	Gen 2:5

That what the Lord God is doing in Genesis 2:5 is something new and distinct from the events of the first six days prior to man's creation is flagged by the introduction of this completely new language about plant life and the conditions within which it would flourish. This conclusion is further substantiated by observing how Genesis 2 develops our understanding of, introduced for the first time in Genesis 2:5, the *field* in which *bushes* and *plants* would *spring up*.

In Genesis 2:5, we are told that *bushes* and *plants* would only *spring up* in the *field* when there would be a *man* to "work (*'bd*, the common Hebrew expression for "serve") the ground". We next meet *man* in the position of *working* the ground in Genesis 2:15; this time the man is appointed by the Lord God "to work (*'bd*) [the garden⁶"]". The *field* of Genesis 2:5 has become "the garden" planted by the Lord God in the east (Ge 2:8).

The clear perspective in this part of Genesis 2 is of only a part of "the earth" in which, on the *third day*, God had caused *sprouting* of all manner of vegetation (Ge 1:11-13). In Genesis 2 on the *sixth day*, a part of this earth is now set aside as a *garden* in which *man* would *serve*.

servicing up a conclusion

Thus, to claim that Genesis 1 & 2 depict differing transitions from the inhabitable to habitable is to mis-read the text. And to claim further that this means Genesis 1-2 are disharmonised and cannot be historical records is false. From the rest of *the earth* which had been created and ordered in the first six days before man's creation, the Lord God separates out a *garden* in which he causes *bushes and plants of the field to spring up* specifically so that, being placed in this *garden* (Ge 2:8), *man* might learn *to serve*; the Lord God does this on *the sixth day*.

In explaining that *the heavens and the earth* were incomplete without man, Genesis 2:5 sets the scene for man to learn more of the Lord God's purpose in creation. These details add a layer of meaning to our understanding of the Lord God's purpose in creating man: *man* was to learn *service*. In the context of the majestic creative acts of God in Genesis 1, *man* was appointed to a position of *glory*: "dominion" over all that God had created (Ge 1:26,28). The Lord God, through the scripture of Genesis 2, now determines that such *dominion* entails that man must learn what it is *to serve*. Genesis 1 & 2 work together in a beautifully harmonised manner to teach us these things.

As the Lord Jesus Christ himself teaches us in a context where, illustrating the power of God's word in the scriptures, he declares scripture *determines* things that shall happen:

"let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Lk 22:26)

Issue 1	October 2015
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⁶ Some more new language marking the change of perspective in Genesis 2 from that in Genesis 1; "garden (*gn*)", first used in Genesis 2:8.