

The Generations of Heaven and Earth

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**.

Genesis 2:4-7

The World Before the Fall

BEFORE THE FALL, how would you describe the situation on the earth? The Bible describes it in a series as being good, good, good, good, good, good, and very good. Each “good” is, in some way, better than the previous one, because God is adding to his creation more and more things. The pronouncement “very good” comes at the end of the creation week, after God makes man in his image. So it says, “**Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them**” (Gen 2:1). Then, at the end of this creative week, God takes his **kingly rest** on the Sabbath Day and becomes **enthroned** over heaven and earth.

One would think that this would be enough by way of telling us about creation, because it has now told us about all the things God wanted to make, and has even gone out of its way to tell us certain things about them, especially mankind, that we were given dominion to rule, permission to multiply, and a divine image to represent the Creator to the rest of creation. But there is more to the story that we need to know—much more.

Suddenly, **Genesis 2:4** confronts us with things that took place sometime during that creative week. It introduces what some have called **a second creation** story, though in reality, it seems to me that it is **the same creation** story focusing in on different, yet related themes. This is an old view found in the early Rabbis who

said, “The listener may think that this is another narrative, whereas it is only the elaboration of the first.”¹

In some ways, **Genesis 1:1-2:3** are like a preface to a book. I say this because the book of Genesis is **properly divided** by ten repeating formulas that have the word “**generations**” in them. They are kind of like chapter breaks. “Generations” refer to the beginnings, usually of a family or line within a family (Adam, Noah, Shem, Abraham, etc). The first of these formulas appears is not in **Genesis 1:1**, but in **Genesis 2:4**. The family (families) it has in mind might surprise you. The second “generation” formula is found in **Genesis 5:1** and those are “**the generations of Adam**.” So, it can’t be the same generations exactly in both places.

If you think of the story and the main characters in Genesis 2-3, besides God, there are three other main characters as well as several supporting actors. Can you name them? The three are **Adam** and **Eve** ... and **Satan**. The supporting cast includes **beasts**, **birds**, **two cherubim**, and if we add Ezekiel 28’s comments about a guardian cherub walking amidst the “**stones of fire**”² and his comments in chapter 31 about the “**trees of Eden**” being jealous and sent down to Sheol,³ and we read those through a symbolic ANE lens, we may very well have **other heavenly beings** here as well.

The point is important for establishing who the generations are that are being discussed here. It literally tells us, “**These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.**” **Satan and cherubim belong in heaven. Humans and beasts belong on earth.** And so while the section does give us the origins of Adam and Eve, but not Satan, it does describe the first interactions that the two realms had

¹ *The Mishnah of R. Eliezer b. R. José the Galilean* found in U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, From Adam to Noah (Genesis I–VI 8)*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1998), 92.

² “**You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked ... I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire**” (Ezek 28:14, 16). Commenting, **Gregory the Great** (c. 540–604) wrote, “**He gave the names of nine stones, since there are nine ranks of angels. The first angel was adorned and covered with these nine since when it was set ahead of the whole multitude of angels, it was more illustrious in comparison with them.**” Gregory the Great, “**Forty Gospel Homilies 34**,” cited in Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Gluerup, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 13 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 95. I have a full section on this in my unpublished book *Michael vs. the Dragon*, available upon request.

³ “**All the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous**” of the king’s greatness (Ezek 31:9). God destroys the king, called the great tree, “**in order that all the trees by the waters may not be exalted in their stature, nor set their top among the clouds, nor their well-watered mighty ones stand erect in their height. For they have all been given over to death, to the earth beneath, among the sons of men, with those who go down to the pit**” (vs. 14). But “**They also went down with it to Sheol to those who were slain by the sword**” (vs. 17). I likewise have a section on this fascinating topic available in the *Michael vs. the Dragon* book.

prior to the fall in a meeting place, a nexus⁴ called The Garden of Eden, which we will look at next time.

Interesting though, isn't it? Most people completely miss this supernatural point, this interaction of two very different worlds, because we don't see things like this today (except when we aren't supposed to), and perhaps because we really don't even believe it in the first place. Yet, that is what the text says. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. Not only does this idea set up the reason for why heavenly beings will be in our story, it gives **profound meaning to the task that Adam will be given later on**. It provides even more fuel to the already hot fires that burn on the earth because of Adam's sin. And finally, it provides some interesting applications for what I plan on looking at this morning.

Originally, I was going to preach from **Genesis 2:4-14**, putting all of that material into one sermon on the Garden of Eden. Then I started thinking about the first four verses which serve as the background setting to the Garden, and I decided that there is so much here that it would be better to break it up into two sermons. So today, we will be looking at **Gen 2:4-7**.

As we have seen, **vs. 4** is an **introductory verse**, much like **Genesis 1:1-3** is in the previous chapter. In fact, they may even have some interesting parallels to one another. **Vv. 5-7** give the **context** and the situation that existed that leads to the rest of the story as it continues all the way to the end of ch. 3. Let's look just a bit more at the introductory verse.

Introductory Verse

Gen 2:4b repeats the themes from the first part of the verse, in reverse order, creating a chiasm. "... **in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.**"

2:4a	The heavens and the earth	When they were <u>created</u>
2:4b	The LORD God <u>made</u>	The earth and the heavens

⁴ The technical phrase is an "*axis mundi*" which is sometimes called a cosmic axis, world axis, world pillar, naval of the world, center of the world, and is usually pictured through images such as a world tree (Gen 2; Ezek 31) or a cosmic mountain (Gen 2; Ezek 28).

Yahweh

This second part of the verse has a couple of notable things. First, it introduces us for the first time to the name *Yahweh*. Prior to this, God is called *Elohim*. This is just a generic word for God. *Yahweh* is a curious word. Its original pronunciation was lost millennia ago, because Jews refused to say the word. Since original Hebrew had no vowels, people forgot how to say the name. Over the course of time, YHWH became Yahovah (or Jahovah,⁵ as Indiana Jones remembered almost too late in the Last Crusade), through a strange morphing of the consonants YHWH (the “w” becomes a “v”) with the vowels of Adonay (lord):

YHWH		Y	H	W	H
Adonay	=	a	o	a	
		J	a	h	o
		v	a	v	a

“Yahweh” tells us a few things about this God of creation. First, the name tells us something about God’s nature. *Yahweh* most likely means something like “The Self-Existent One,” or possibly “He causes to be.” This is a mind-blowing thing, for what non-self-existent thing can possibly understand what it means to never be born or created, to always exist? Thus, the name alone teaches us that God must be worshiped, for he is not like us. He has always been.

The word may be a wordplay on the Hebrew verb “to be” (YHWH vs. HYH, which itself has another word play on the name Eve—CHVVH; see [Gen 3:20](#)). “To be” is a form of “I AM” and you remember that God called himself “I AM” to Moses, when he first came to him in covenant friendship ([Ex 3:15](#)). *Yahweh* is thus the covenant name of God. This signals to us that somewhere in this story there is going to be a covenant that will be made between God and Adam. In fact, I believe there are two.

Until we get to that in a couple of weeks, what it means for us now is that God is a personal being. The self-existent, omnipotent Creator is also personal. He enters into relationships with people. This is not the God of Deism or classical Islam, a God so far away he can’t possibly care about us. For God to be personal with us, it must mean that he is also personal with himself. I don’t mean that before he created anything that he was just sitting there talking to himself like a crazy person. Rather, I’m talking about God being Triune. The personal God (singular) exists in Three Persons (plural). His relating to us personally flows from his own

⁵ Its English spelling is Jehovah.

nature, and if God did not relate personally (person to person) with himself, then being personal with us would be nonsense. Many people do not stop to think about these kinds of implications from a single name, but they are there, and we have seen that God is in fact like this already in **Genesis 1:1-3**: God, Spirit, and Word.

A last point about the name Yahweh is simply that he is **not some other God**. No Muslim would ever call Allah Yahweh. They are very different gods. The same would be true of other gods, like those you see in the Bible such as **Molech** or **Asherah** (a goddess) or **Baal**. However, Yahweh is the name that will be given to *two* persons in the book of Genesis (for example **Gen 19:24**), and it is also the name given to Jesus (Jesus means, “Yah Saves”). **We will look more at this and Baal later**, but before we can do that properly, we need to continue talking about our passage.

In The Day

A second point of interest in **Gen 2:4b** is the phrase “**in the day**.” It says “... **in the day that Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens**.” Some have made a big deal of this phrase as somehow contradicting the seven days of creation in Genesis 1. Clearly, the term does not refer to a 24 hour day. The word *yom* doesn’t have to mean 24 hours. Lots of people point this out when trying to talk about the science of the Genesis creation story. To me, it misses the point. This is simply a **figure of speech**. It is used, for example, of Moses when it says, “... **in the day of Jehovah's speaking with Moses in mount Sinai**” (**Num 3:1** YLT). In fact, God spoke to Moses for forty days (which itself is a symbolic number). Whatever your view of the length of the creation, I think this phrase is probably irrelevant to that discussion. Instead, it is here to focus our attention on what is coming next. It switches the order from “**heavens and earth**” (found in Genesis 1:1) to “**earth and the heavens**.” The focus now turns squarely to this earth.⁶

Setting: A Two-Fold Problem

Genesis 2:5-7 provide the context and backdrop to the rest of these two chapters. **Vs. 5** acts very similarly to **Gen 1:2** in that **both present a problem that needs correcting**. You will remember that **Gen 1:2** presents the problem as being that the earth was *tohu wabohu* (a formless waste and empty). The rest of the chapter fixes the problem by seeing God form the formless and fill the empty.

⁶ Westermann points out that the verse also “**corresponds exactly to the opening words of Enuma Elish**: ‘**When on high the heaven had not been named**.’” Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 198.

What is the problem in **Genesis 2:5**? It is two-fold. It tells us that there was “no bush of the field ... yet in the land” and “no small plant of the field had yet sprung up.” You say, “That doesn’t sound like much of a problem, much less two.” Bear with me. You keep reading that God is going to plant a Garden, so the Garden is directly related to this verse. Gardens have vegetation.

But the main problem isn’t that there is no garden. There are two problems more immediate than this. God is going to correct the two problems in two different ways. So we read next *why* there was no bush and *why* there was no small plant. It says, “For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.” Rather than spend our precious time focusing on what people want to say are scientific contradictions between this and Genesis 1, which many of you are probably aware of, I simply want to explain what I believe the verse is saying and why it is saying it. Perhaps in doing this, I might even address some of the questions you might wish I would tackle regarding the so-called contradictions, which I do not believe exist.⁷

Bush vs. Plant

To understand the solution properly, you have to understand the problem properly, and some people do neither. We understand the problem by understanding what the “bush of the field” and the “small plant of the field” are. There have been several studies on this. The best I’ve seen look to the other places in the Bible that use the terms “bush” (*siah*), “plant” (*‘eseb*), and “field” (*sadeh*).⁸

The first word (“bush”) occurs only four times in the Bible (**Gen 2:5, 21:15; Job 30:4, 7**). In the other three verses, it clearly refers to **uncultivated vegetation** that grows spontaneously as a result of fall rains. In those stories it has those bushes

⁷ The main supposed contradiction involves the order of creation that is supposedly being given in Genesis 1 and 2. Genesis 1 has plants coming before the sun, as well as before the creation of man. But Genesis 2 seems to imply that there were no plants because man had not yet been created, implying that man is created before plants. I do not believe these are contradictory, even if they can be shown to be accurate, because I don’t believe either is trying to give a scientific accounting of the order of creation. It is a modern rationalist imposition on an ancient text concerned with very different things. But still, for those interested, a technical paper trying to show the contradiction and still harmonize the text is Meredith G. Kline, “Because It Had Not Rained,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 20 (1958) 146-57.

http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/01-genesis/text/articles-books/kline_notrained_wtj.pdf. A paper trying to say there is no contradiction to be harmonized is James Patrick Holding, “Are There Two Creation Accounts,” and can be found here, <http://www.tektonics.org/jedp/creationtwo.html#contra>. These are fair representative samples of different approaches to the problem.

⁸ See especially, Mark D. Futato, “Because It Had Rained: A Study of Gen 2:5-7 With Implications for Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 1:1-2:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998) 1-21.

growing in “**parched lands**” and “**desolate wastelands**” (See **Job 30:3-4**), which has an interesting conceptual relationship to the *tohu wabohu*, the desolate waste of **Genesis 1:2**. Basically, these are the **wild shrubs of the steppe**.⁹ In western Colorado, you might think of **sage brush** growing in the high waste lands. The verse says there were none of those yet.

The second word (“**plant**”) is quite different. It is found mainly in contexts which have **cultivation** in mind. For example, **Exodus 9:22, 25**, “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every **plant of the field**, in the land of Egypt’ ... The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every **plant of the field** and broke every tree of the field.” The concern here isn’t for the destruction of sage brush; Egypt would probably have been happy with that. Rather, their food was being destroyed. So the plants here are **cultivated, planted food plants** like banana trees or tomato plants.

Finally, **the word field** is important, because it can refer to open, uncultivated fields out in the wilderness, land fit only for animals to graze upon, if that. Or, it can refer to dusty land where agriculture is possible with irrigation and human effort.¹⁰ In other words, the meaning of field is of no help in determining the problem. That’s what the study of the words of the plants does.

Shrubs vs. Plants (Gen 2:5)



Halophytic shrub *Salsola imbricata*.
Israel. Negev Desert near Be'er Sheva.



Banana trees, Israel

All of this matters mostly in trying to figure out the solution to the problems. The first problem is that there are **no wild plants** of the steppe. The second problem is that there are **no cultivated plants**. This is explained in more detail in the last half

⁹ Westermann, 199. Curiously, “Eden” may come from a word meaning “steppe.”

¹⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 58.

of the verse. “... for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land” corresponds with “no bush of the field.” “... and there was no man to work the ground” corresponds with “no small plant of the field.” If we correctly identify the problem as we have now done, then the solution given in vv. 6-7 will make sense.

The Problem of Rain

The first solution involves water, and I’ll give you a good reason why at the end of this explanation. We come to vs. 6 now, which I have a feeling might stretch some of you a bit. The ESV says that there was a “mist rising from the land.” This mist is then said to be “watering the whole face of the ground.” The ESV has the verse begin with the word “and.” This is acceptable to me, so long as the next verse begins with the same English word, which the ESV does not do. I would prefer to translate them both with a word like “so.”

The idea many of you are undoubtedly familiar with is that until the time of the Flood, it had never rained on the earth. It didn’t need to, because of this “mist.” The ESV translation here reflects this idea, because of how it translates the *vuv* here as “and” but in the next verse as “then.” It gives the impression that it didn’t need to rain because there was already this mist, but that God did need to create man, because there was no man. Do you see the subtle difference? We need consistency in translating “vuv” to match the two problems.

The translation of the word “mist” is also problematic. What most people do not stop and think about is how, if there is a mist already there watering the ground, why then are there no wild plants? And what does God not causing it to rain even matter, if there is this mist that’s been there all along watering the land? The problem is this word “mist.” The Hebrew word is ‘*ed*. But it only appears one other time in all of ancient Hebrew. What does it mean?

Some propose something like a “spring.” Others propose something like a “stream.” Those solutions end up with the same problem as a mist. It makes the problem of rain pointless. Who cares if it hadn’t rained if there is a stream watering the whole land? If this translation is correct, then there was clearly ample water for the plants. Each of these words make “because it had not rained” irrelevant and illogical.¹¹ Genesis 2:5 does not say that the problem was there was no water. It says the problem was that *it had not rained*. Rain is a specific kind of water.

In the only other place that ‘*ed* appears, it most likely means something like a raincloud. Job 36:27 in the ESV reads, “For he draws up the drops of water; they

¹¹ Futato, 6.

distill his mist (*'ed*) in rain (*matar*, the word for “rain” in Gen 2:5). The ESV is being consistent at least. But notice that here, “mist” and “rain” are related. The ancients knew perfectly well that rain came from clouds. “If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth” (Ecc 11:3). For this reason, it is possible to translate *'ed* as a “raincloud.” “When he draws up drops from the sea, they distill as rain (*matar*) from his rain cloud (*'ed*).¹²

This translation makes sense of the next verse in Job which says, “which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly” (Job 36:28). It also explains why all of the Targums translate the word *'ed* as a cloud. Pseudo-Jonathan is especially interesting, “But a cloud of glory descended from the throne of glory, and was filled with waters from the ocean, and afterward went up from the earth, and gave rain to come down and water all the face of the ground” (Gen 2:6 PJE). It connects this verse to the cloud descending upon the tabernacle and temple later on. It sees the earth here as a temple. And this image is also similar to the spirit hovering over the waters.

But someone will say, “Rainclouds don't rise up from the ground.” Sure they do, if we are talking about the perspective of the observer. Psalm 135:7, “He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth.” 1 Kings 18:44, “And at the seventh time he said, ‘Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea.’” Clouds appear on the horizon, far off, giving the appearance of rising from the land or the water. It isn't scientific language, but phenomenological language, describing things as they appear.

All of this is to say, there is a very simple solution that uses the only other time the word is used in the Bible, and manages to make actual sense of the reason it says God has not caused it to rain. The idea is that the raincloud relates to the wild shrubs of the desert. So, simply put, there were no wild shrubs because God had not sent rain, so (the *vuv* that begins 2:5) God sent rain to water the whole earth. Problem discovered. Problem solved.

But doesn't it say that it had never rained until Noah's flood? No, it never says that. But doesn't it say there was never a rainbow in history until God set one in the sky after the flood? No, it doesn't say that either. All it says is that God set his bow in the sky and gave it a new meaning, a covenantal meaning, so that Noah and his descendants could always remember that from now on, God would never

¹² Mitchell Dahood, "Eblaite I-Du and Hebrew 'Ed, 'Ram-Cloud'," *CBQ* 43 (1981) 534-38.

completely destroy the whole earth as he did at that time.¹³ That doesn't mean it had never rained. Rather, our passage says that's exactly what happened.

So you say, “Who cares?” If the targum is correct, you can see the obvious relevance to the temple. However, there is a very practical reason why Moses might want the children of Israel to know about this. The reason concerns both the name Yahweh and the idea of rain. You see, the biggest threat a pre-exilic Israelite would ever face would come in the form of the subtle temptation to go and worship other gods, particularly the Canaanite god Baal.

Water was (and still is) exceedingly important to Israelites, because the place has almost none of it. The only real body of fresh water in the entire country comes from the Sea of Galilee. Most of the land is barren and desolate, except during the rainy season. So God warns them, “The land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for” (Deut 11:10-12). He is telling them that they must trust him and not themselves to bring the water.

The inhabitants of Canaan knew that the land was barren too. This is a main reason why they worshiped Baal. Baal is basically, the storm-god. He is the rider of the clouds. He is the god of Canaan. You have to understand that in those days, nations were each divided up according to gods that reigned over them. One writer puts it rather poetically saying, “As the Israelites settled in Canaan, they were tempted to ask their Canaanite neighbors, ‘How does your garden grow?’ Such inquiry was seen by later writers as having led to eventual apostasy and exile as Israel became idolatrous and eventually drowned in Baalism.”¹⁴ So in telling Israel that Yahweh is the one who sends the rains, right here at the beginning of creation, even before he plants a Garden, he is giving them strong encouragement not to trust in foreign gods. Rather, they must place their trust in him alone.

Today, we ask similar questions, sometimes even about rain. Look at this drought. Look at all this flooding. And we go running off to the same gods that they did. It is man's fault. Global warming. Mother Earth is angry. Old gods like Gaia or new gods like global warming replace Yahweh as the one in control of the rains. No, we are no different than them. We just have great technology to make

¹³ A good article from Answer in Genesis showing that it had rained is, Dr. Tommy Mitchell, “There Was No Rain Before the Flood: Arguments Christians Should Not Use,” Oct 19, 2010. <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2010/10/19/rain-before-flood>

¹⁴ Futato, 19.

environmentalist movies that make it seem like we are much more sophisticated. But instead, we are a fickle people prone to wander. This problem and solution of our passage drives you to your knees and forces you to rely upon God rather than the gods or the scientists or politicians or regulations.

The Problem of a Cultivator

The **second problem** is that there were no cultivated plants, because God had not yet created a man to cultivate them. As I said, I would prefer that the two verses begin with the same word, whatever it is we choose.¹⁵ That way, it would help us see that God is solving two problems rather than one. At any rate, Thus, **vs. 7** tells us how God solved this problem. It says, “**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.**” He needed a cultivator. He created a man. This is a fascinating and important passage, and we will finish our time this morning by looking at it.

Problem		Reason		Solution
No wild vegetation	→	No rain	→	God sent rain
No cultivated grain	→	No cultivator	→	God formed a cultivator

A King from the Dust of the Ground

We’ll start by looking at the famous “**dust from the ground.**” The image in other places is of God as a potter making man from a **lump of clay**. “**Remember that you have made me like clay; and will you return me to the dust?**” (**Job 10:9**). And of course there is **Romans 9**, “**Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use**” (**Rom 9:21**)? The figure here is one of God being **completely sovereign** over our creation. We had nothing to say in the matter. He made us exactly how he wanted.

The imagery also seems more literal though. If these are the generations of the earth, then it means that God fashioned us out of the stuff of the earth. In a strange sense, we belong to it and it belongs to us. “**For you are dust, and to dust you shall return**” (**Gen 3:19**) it says nearing the completion of our story. Curiously, other ancient cultures remember this too. The Mesopotamian creation story the **Atrahasis Epic** tells us that man was made of **clay** mixed with the blood of gods

¹⁵ Both begin literally with the Hebrew letter *vuv* (). Its technical term is the *vuv consecutive*, and it appears all over the Bible in both narrative and poetry.

(1.225-27). And **Egyptian** story tells us that Ptah created man out of a lump of clay.¹⁶ Another says that “**Man is clay and straw, and God is his potter.**”¹⁷

Extremely curiously, even across the ocean, the **Mayans** remember the creator gods creating man a second time. “**Then was the framing, the making of it. Of earth and mud was its flesh composed. But they saw that it was still not good. It merely came undone and crumbled. It merely became sodden and mushy.**”¹⁸ Like I said, ancient peoples pervert the truth, but they still know it; no matter where they are on earth, they seem to have faint echoes of the memories taught by our ancestors. Isn't it interesting that Mayans tell the same story as Babylonians?

But there is one more feature of this idea of being raised from the dust. Later on in the Bible, this becomes a metaphor for having **royal status** or **kingly** status conveyed upon a person. I think this is very significant for the meaning even here. The metaphor begins rather humbly, on the lips of Hannah. “**The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world**” (1Sa 2:6-8; cf. Ps 113:5-9). Later, it is full blown kingship. “**And the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, ‘Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat’**” (1 Kings 16:1-3).

Conversely, to return to the dust is not only to die, but to lose the status of an image bearer or of one highly exalted by God. This will happen to Adam (**Gen 3:19**), and it will also happen to Satan (**Gen 3:14**). So in saying that we come from the dust, we learn that man is more than a cultivator, he is a royal figure that will be

¹⁶ A. H. Sayce, *The Religions of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1903), 138.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35856/35856-pdf.pdf>

¹⁷ Instruction of Amenemope 24.10, in William Kelley Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (Yale University, 2003), 241.

<https://ia801604.us.archive.org/17/items/TheLiteratureOfAncientEgyptKellySimpsonBySamySalah/The%20Literature%20of%20Ancient%20Egypt%20-%20Kelly%20Simpson%20By%20Samy%20Salah.pdf>

¹⁸ Allen J. Christenson, *Popal Vuh: Sacred Book of the Quiché Maya People* (electronic ed., 2007, Mesoweb: www.mesoweb.com/publications/Christenson/PopalVuh.pdf), 67.

given charge over the creation.¹⁹ This fits well with the idea of an imager of God representing him and ruling and having dominion in wisdom, holiness, and knowledge.

A Living Being

Let's look at the second half of this verse, and then we will conclude. It says that the result of Adam being formed from the dust is that God breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**, and man became a living creature. Obviously, this refers to God making us as living human beings. But there is more to it than that.

It is true that animals have the "**breath of life**" (**Gen 1:30**) and that they are called "**living creatures**" (**Gen 1:20**). So is that all this is saying is that man came to life? It is that, but it is more. That's the point of being raised from the dust. He came to life to have dominion, relating back to the image of God. There is another way to see this, and it comes by turning to the NT, specifically **1 Cor 15:45**, "**Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.**" "**The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven**" (**1Co 15:47**). These comments are taken from **Genesis 2:7**.

Then it concludes, "**Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven**" (**1Co 15:49**). This alludes **Genesis 5:3**.²⁰ There are three brief things I want to mention by way of conclusion.²¹ **First**, notice how Paul links being raised from the dust and coming to life with the image of God in this passage. There are a lot of threads that are being linked back to chapter 1 in Genesis chapter 2. We've seen "heaven and earth," wastelands, the spirit-cloud hovering, water, and now the image of God. Don't give into the temptation to see these as completely separate stories. In the inspired mind of the Apostle, to be raised from the dust like this is to be linked to Adam and to his image. His image is our image. This is especially true when we see that Adam passes the image down to his son whom he begot (**Gen 5:3; 9:6**).

Second, the coming to life of Adam anticipates a greater life to come, in Christ. Now, Adam wouldn't have known this, *yet*. He would get a glimpse of it after the fall. But we know it, because thousands of years have passed, including the

¹⁹ See Bob Gonzales, "The Covenantal Context of the Fall: Did God Make a Primeval Covenant with Adam?", *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* 4.2 (July 2007): 4-32.

²⁰ "When Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his own likeness, after his **image**, and named him Seth."

²¹ For a study of these connections: Benjamin L. Gladd, "The Last Adam as the 'Life-Giving Spirit' Revisited: A Possible Old Testament Background of One of Paul's Most Perplexing Phrases," *WTJ* 71 (2009): 297-309. <http://files.wts.edu/uploads/images/files/71.2.Gladd.The%20Last%20Adam%20as%20the%20Life%20Giving%20Spirit.pdf>

all important coming of the son of man—Jesus, or the Second Adam. To speak of the first Adam without the second is to fail to understand the purpose of redemptive history. I should also point out that the one who bears the name Yahweh to the visible world is Jesus. So Jesus is very closely linked to our passage simply through the name.

Third, and finally, those who trust in Christ have not only image of Adam bequeathed to them, but the very image of Christ himself. Adam was born from the ground. The Hebrew word is *adamah*. This is why he is called Adam. All men bear his image. But the second Adam, who came in one sense from Adam, also and more importantly came from heaven. And when he died, he was raised to newness of life, to a body that is sown immortal and will never return again to the dust.

The hope of all people is to have immortality. But it only comes through the one who has gone before us into immortal life, having first conquered death and the grave. It only comes through repentance and faith in the son of God. When he imparts new life, then it gives us hope that we too will be raised immortal. It is not a fools hope, but a sure hope based upon his own resurrection from the dead. In the meantime, Christ did the work of Adam and in union with him, Christians are able to live here and now in power in the Holy Spirit who rains upon us the life of Christ and leads us through temptation and to the tree of life. This is our hope. We know it by understanding where we come from. We believe it by knowing the goodness of God in Christ. In Christ alone we find the fullness of the meanings that these are the generations of heaven and earth, earth and heaven.