

## **Breath Of Life**

### **Genesis 2:7-17**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Come travel back with me to a time long ago. God is there, looking over what He has created so far – land, vegetation, the sun, the moon, all the stars, birds, and fish. God is walking the earth, looking at all that He, by the creative power of His Word going forth from His mouth had created. And then He speaks again, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.” The ground ripples and bubbles, and suddenly, springing forth and sending clods of dirt flying, are all sorts of animals: cows, horses, lions, tigers, brontosaurus, iguanas, deer, sheep, badgers, and all animals you can imagine.

Did you hear it? God spoke and all that exists came into existence. God spoke and the land spewed forth living creatures.

But then God reaches down and scoops out some earth. Very tenderly He shapes and forms the dirt, sort of like modeling clay. You can see that what He is fashioning looks something like a mud model of you, me, and other men. Then God takes a breath and covering what looks like the face, breathes into it. The dirt clog in his hands changes miraculously, it becomes flesh, blood, bone, sinew, hair – it becomes a living, breathing man – the first man – Adam.

Then God plants a special garden for the man. A garden unlike what we have come to know as gardens. Envision a lush place where fruit trees and vegetables grow up without being accompanied by weeds. Imagine a garden with paths through it upon which one could wander, picking and eating at your leisure – everything lush and green and beautiful (without weeds) beyond what we can imagine.

And then God places the man in this garden and tells him, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Why would God go through all the trouble of doing something so drastically different in the making of man? Why not speak man into existence as the other animals? Why the special treatment of breathing His own breath into him? Why plant a special garden for him?

Why? Because man is the crown of God’s creation! All that was created, was created for man to have dominion over – to nourish and care for it. And all of creation was made so that God could set man in the midst of it, to give it to him as God’s gift to man. Man was made in God’s image, perfect and holy. He was, unlike the other creatures God made, an immortal soul, having God’s breath of life in him.

After the events in our text, God gave Eve to Adam – flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. She was made by the very finger of God as He put Adam to sleep, took a rib from him, and formed Eve from that very rib. Then God brought her to Adam and gave him to her.

There is the scene. It is perfection and beauty that we cannot understand. They walked together with God in the cool of the evening. They knew God perfectly, intimately, and God spoke with them. That all changed with their sin. We do not understand all this, because our world is tainted, imperfect, fouled up by sin.

So, where is this garden?

We can look at the geographical setting of the four rivers that flowed out of the garden, and we can see how sin has changed the world. The picture in our text is from the time before Noah, when there was still one continent – before they divided with the bursting forth of the great deeps in the flood.

How do I know? The description of river that flows out of the garden splits into four rivers which flow to or around various “lands.” Dear friends those lands are not all on the same continent. I do not know where Havilah is, but the river called Pishon, which our text says flows around it, is today called the Ganges. The Ganges is a river in India. The Gihon flows around Cush, which is modern day Ethiopia, which means that the Gihon would be the Nile. But today, Nile does not flow around Ethiopia. The Tigris and the Euphrates are also known rivers today, except that the Tigris in Eden flows to the east of Assyria, and the Tigris we know today flows on the west side of Assyria. These rivers, originating in Eden, identify rivers and places that are on three continents today. AND, they definitely do not share a common source today, as they did in the times of Eden. Sin brought about Noah’s flood which changed the earth's geography significantly, and apparently washed the Garden of Eden off the face of the earth.

“If you love me, you will do as I command!”

How many parents have said words similar to that, if not that exactly? Only the rules were much more extensive.

Adam chose a different path, he doubted God. He wanted to do his own thing. He wanted to be like God. So he and his wife ate that which had been forbidden to eat. He had it so good, there were so many incredible things in this wonderful creation that God gave him to manage, but it was not enough, He disbelieved God!

Satan used that one tree to tempt man, and by man's unbelief of God's Word, man was cast out of the garden. The breath that gave Adam life was an eternal breath. It gave life, but now it was an eternity in a different state – a state of sinfulness. Sinfulness brought suffering, pain, death, weeds, and separation from God.

And it was not just Adam and Eve who would suffer under sinfulness, but their offspring right up until July of 2015 – and into the foreseeable future. Perfection no longer reigns, sinfulness does.

Come again with me, travel to another special place. It is dark, hard to see, but there appears to be a tree there, no garden, but a tree. No, as we peer harder into the darkness, we see three trees. It is a bleak scene, hard to see because of the dark. People are gathered, though. As we get closer we hear that some are weeping and some are shouting obscenities. As we get closer still, we see

men nailed to those trees. We note that it is the center tree garnering all the attention – a number of women beneath it weeping, and others, nicely dressed, mocking the Man nailed there.

With a loud voice, that One cries out, “Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.” And when He had said this, He breathed His last. (give heavy, breathy, sigh)

The Word of God which spoke all into existence was enfleshed in Jesus Christ, and all the sinfulness of all mankind was laid upon the Son of Man upon that cross. In breathing His last, He dies the death promised in the garden. In His burial Christ lays in the tomb all the sins, of all mankind, that had been gathered into His flesh. Three days later He rose from the grave, sin and death defeated and left buried.

It is this same Word of God enfleshed, this Jesus Christ, who is still breathing life into His people. After rising from the dead, Jesus came to His disciples and spoke to them. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.”

Just as at the beginning, He breathes life into lifeless clay, the cold hearts of sinners are made to breathe with new life as the breath of God breathes His forgiveness and His life into them.

You and I see the evidence of sinfulness – we see the very suffering and death that has come into the world, and into our own flesh because we are the descendants of Adam. We are descendants not only of the flesh, but of the sinfulness we share with him by nature in that flesh.

But as God breathed His own life into Adam and gave him life, so also He breathes His Spirit into us and give us life through His Word. Christ gives us not only His breath, but His very flesh and blood. We eat and we drink! We receive forgiveness of sins! We are blessed with holy and sinless food to nourish us in the dreary desert of this life. We are blessed with holy and sinless food which strengthens us unto life everlasting as Christ makes His dwelling within in us.

Yes, we are those who have inherited from Adam – sinfulness and death.

But we have died with the second Adam, buried with Christ, through baptism, into death. And, as He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too walk in newness of life. For if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, the old has passed away – it is buried with Christ – and the new has come.

This is the new man that you are already, in Christ. Amen.