

Genesis 2:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

Analysis

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, a... This passage continues the detailed account of Eden, human creation, and God's design for human flourishing. Genesis 2 complements chapter 1 by providing intimate details about human origins, the garden setting, marriage institution, and humanity's vocation as priest-kings in God's sanctuary-garden.

The narrative emphasizes God's personal involvement, careful preparation of human habitation, clear communication of covenant requirements, and provision for human needs including work, rest, relationship, and worship. The garden of Eden represents perfect environment where heaven and earth intersect, God dwells with humanity, and everything needed for life and blessing exists.

Key theological themes include human dignity as divine image-bearers, work as divine calling (not curse), marriage as covenant partnership, moral freedom with accountability, and the necessity of obedience for blessing. The detailed geography and placement of Eden in historical space-time (rivers, lands) presents this as real history, not mythology. These foundational truths establish the pattern for understanding humanity's purpose, relationships, and destiny throughout Scripture.

Historical Context

Genesis 2 provides a detailed account of human creation and Eden's establishment, using different literary style than chapter 1. Ancient Near Eastern parallels include the Sumerian Paradise myth and the Gilgamesh Epic's plant of life, but Genesis transforms these motifs within strict monotheism. The garden sanctuary with its rivers, trees, and divine presence parallels ancient temple theology where gods dwelt in sacred spaces.

The geographical references (Pishon, Gihon, Hiddekel/Tigris, Euphrates) ground the narrative in historical space-time rather than mythological timelessness. While the exact location of Eden remains debated, the inclusion of identifiable rivers presents this as real geography, not allegory. The Mesopotamian setting connects to humanity's ancient origins in that region, confirmed by archaeology.

Ancient audiences would have recognized marriage's divine institution as countercultural, elevating women beyond their typical status as property. The intimate account of woman's creation from man's side presented revolutionary equality and partnership. The garden-temple imagery established patterns for Israel's tabernacle and temple, where God would again dwell with His people in sacred space requiring holiness and obedience.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What theological truths about Eden emerge from this passage?
2. What obstacles prevent us from living out the truths presented in this verse?
3. How does this passage point forward to Christ and the gospel of redemption?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּשָּׁן	וְהָיָה	אֱלֹהֵי יִם	תְּרִדָּתָהּ	עַל	הָאֶדְמָה	וַיִּשָּׁן
caused	And the LORD	God	a deep sleep	H5921	H120	and he slept
H5307	H3068	H430	H8639			H3462
וַיִּקַּח	אֶחָד	מִצֵּלְעָתָיו	וַיִּסְגֹּר	בָּשָׁר	תְּחַתָּנָהּ	
and he took	one	of his ribs	and closed up	the flesh	H8478	
H3947	H259	H6763	H5462	H1320		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 15:12 (Parallel theme): And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

Job 4:13 (Parallel theme): In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men,

1 Samuel 26:12 (References Lord): So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.