

Created for Pleasure

It pleases me very much to be back in Sydney after a week in Brisbane. Should I say, I'm glad to be home. Yes, it was good in Brisbane, but what I mean is that this too is part of my intention. This too is part of my design for my diary. Being in Sydney and with you here at Beth Messiah is part of God's plan for our lives. Pleasure is part of God's plan. And don't doubt for a minute that pleasure is in my itinerary as well. Pleasure is a funny commodity. We may not know how to get our minds around this. When we meet someone we say in whatever language, "Pleased to meet you." Or in reply "the pleasure is mine." The Latin languages use the reflexive to communicate how they like things, saying "This thing pleases me." When you sit at a dinner table, and you want something, you don't insist, you ask for it with a proper "please" or "if you please" attached. When they initiate and offer you the potatoes, you might reply with 'yes, please.' Couples that want to separate and divorce use the much touted line, "we just aren't happy anymore," which must certainly appeal to the negative use of pleasure. Teens are often seeking the latest thrill, which might better be understood as their seeking of pleasure.

Sigmund Freud brought modern psychiatry to the world's attention. His description of the id and the ego carries what he termed "the pleasure principle." Basically the idea is that our internal processes are governed by the gratification of needs. This is seen as the governing process of the id, whereas the reality principle is the governing process of the ego. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'pleasure' as an 'agreeable or enjoyable sensation or emotion,' as 'something that gives or affords enjoyment or delight,' or as 'amusement, recreation or enjoyment,' even as 'a person's preference or choice.' The definition of 'please' carries something stronger than things that happen to us. It involves my own choice. The dictionary says, "to be the will of or have the will to" as in 'if it pleases you,' or 'the court pleases'

I believe today's lesson from the Scriptures, Genesis chapter 2, is a useful herald of the identity of God's pleasure principle. This is where God makes it clear what His intention is with humanity. From

the beginning, God wanted to be in relationship with us as people. He formed us, He breathed into us, He afforded us the bounty and the beauty of the scrumptious Garden and gave us the keys. Here is the thesis of my current reading of the book of Genesis: *God wants to have pleasure with us.*

Let me read a few verses from the Bible about God first, then let's read the text.

וְאַהֲבָהּ שְׂשֻׁעִים יוֹם יוֹם מִשְׁחַקָּה לְפָנָיו בְּכָל־עֵת :

וְאַהֲבָהּ אֲצִלּוֹ אֱמוּנָה (Prov. 8:30)

וַתַּעֲשֵׂה הָרַע בְּעֵינַי וּבִאֲשֶׁר לֹא־הִפְצִיתִי בְּהַרְתָּם : (Isaiah 65:12)

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׂמוּאֵל הִתְפַּיֵן לַיהוָה בְּעֵלּוֹת וּזְבָחִים כְּשָׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה (1Sam. 15:22)

God delights in things, and we should be mindful of that as we continue this lesson.

Read Genesis 2

Remembering that the word "Eden" as in the Garden, is translatable to "delight," let us investigate this notion of God being pleased or delighting in the relationship He has with people. This is our outline today:

- I. God delights in our celebrations of Him
- II. God delights in our receiving from Him
- III. God delights in our obedience to Him
- IV. God delights in our relationships to each other

Many Bible passages are shown to have headers in modern Bibles. For instance, before chapter one, your Bible might read, "The Creation" or "The Beginning". Before chapter two mine says, "The creation of man and woman." Let's use verse one as a similar header. "thus the heavens and the earth were completed" It's as if God is marking this section out specifically. We'll see that often with the

phrase that is introduced in verse four "this is the account of..." I've heard it discussed in theological circles that this formula "this is the account of" would have been put atop a tablet, in a way similar to the header of our chapters. Those early public clay tablet recordings would have been what we have in headline news today on CNN or on the Seven Network.

God delights in our celebrations of Him

Now what does God say in this public record? Verse two/three says God created the world and finished, and His final thing to make was a day off. What a shocking principle to be enacted throughout Israel's history. Working seven days a week is still normative in third world countries. But Israel is called to take a day off each week and to observe it as a memorial of something God did. The Sabbath then is a weekly reminder here that God created the universe and even me. Sabbath is to remind us of God, the Covenant keeper, who extended Himself outside Himself and chose to be in relationship with people. Thursday was Anzac Day, and across Australia at dawn, tens of thousands of Australians, diggers and non-diggers, observed the day with memorial services. Most westerners observe holidays anymore that are not related to God, so much as they are related to our own roles in life or our own victories in wars of the past. Holidays generally celebrate us. The Bible tells us that holidays, weekly or annually are to celebrate God and what God has done. You know this month Jewish people had another holiday we noted on our diary and that's Yom Hashoah. Some Jewish people define us as people who are victims. That is, we welcome memorials of atrocity and atrocities against us. The Bible however makes it clear. Holidays are designed to teach us to memorialize God and His goodness and provision. No human enterprise either for good or for evil are to be celebrated as God holidays. But He is happy when we celebrate Him and delight His heart.

God delights in our receiving from Him

We continue in our series of anticipated linkages. We read, "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed."

God specifically did something explosive with man and woman. He breathed(vayipach) into them.

ויפח באפו ונשמת חיים נתתי האדם לגפוש תהיה He formed with his hands the outside, but breathed personally into their insides. He gave life to each person with his lips, very dramatically and individually. The same verb, by the way, is used for a clarinetist performing on her clarinet.

Man was made elsewhere, we don't know where, and placed into Eden. This is similar to our lives, as we were all born in many different venues, but are now placed together into a family, into a body, and in relationship with each other and with God, for His pleasure. God delights in our receiving from Him.

God delights in our obedience in Him

Verse 16 and 17 anticipates the Law of Moses, as it gives us God's first commandments. Honestly the book of Genesis is not only the book of the beginnings of the Jewish religion and Israel, it's about the beginnings of so many things. How are neighbors to relate to each other? How would you define sin? How are man and God to get along? What is pleasure and what stops our being pleasing to God and God being a pleasure to us? These are all answered in narrative form in this book. In verse 16 we read that God instructed our first parents to enjoy life, and to eat from almost every tree. The Hebrew is a repeated verb, teaching us of its special significance. "You may eatingly eat (אכל האכל)." It's a way of emphasizing the breadth of bounty. Sort of like going to a buffet lunch at the ParkRoyal hotel or Sizzler Restaurant. Wow, it just goes on and on. God is telling Adam and his wife to eat and keep eating.

Very connected to this is the flip side of the commandment. God says that if you eat from the wrong tree, you will die. Again the Hebrew is emphatic. It says "you will dyingly die. (מוֹת תָּמוּת)" I believe this relates to the body and to the soul and to the spirit of man and woman. When God predicts our death with such gravity, we would be well advised to discern His authority and His capacity to enact and judge. Next week we will begin to cover the Fall of Man and the most serious and significant failure in the history of man's struggle to survive. We cannot go too far from this verse to do so. God lays down the Law, but it's a law that is clear and defined. It's a law that is not too hard, and that

shouldn't bother the most contented of us. If Adam and Eve had been content with what they had, they would not have coveted more, would they?

We should comment on the use of God's name here. Earlier in chapter one we knew Him as Elohim (אלהים). But now we see a new name. Yahweh, Elohim (יהוה אלהים) and this is an added dimension of knowing God, a combined form to teach us more about Him. Yahweh or Jehovah is added. This word carries within it all three tenses of the verb "to be" (I was, I am, I will be) and thus might be translated "The Eternal One." God the Creator is quickly introduced to humanity, to Adam and Eve, in terms of His being bigger, longer, stronger, mightier. Lest our first parents think of God as belonging to them, God makes sure to underscore this reality... He is Lord, and He will because He always was. He is not a parochial God who is of recent vintage. Time didn't begin when man and woman stepped into it. We can only mark it from our movements. Time is a subset of the eternal one and there is a key understanding there.

Remember in chapter one how God esteemed His creation? After each day (with one exception) do you remember what adjective He used to describe His own work? Good, that's right. And after He made man and woman God called it 'very good.' But here in verse 18, God says something is 'not good.' (לא טוב) This ought to catch us by surprise. In other words, this is an insertion into the text from chapter one. If you will, it's a tighter zoom lens on creation, so that we can see further into the relationship that God always wanted to have with people. What I'm saying is that this verse and probably all of chapter 2 fits into chapter one and is not subsequent to it.

Some will say that the above references to God speaking and to God breathing etc are only in relation to the male of the species. Since they allege, woman wasn't formed until verse 21. This will also help us understand the roles of Adam and Eve specifically related to the punishment and deception verses of Paul's later comments to Timothy. Maybe. And maybe that's why Eve was formed later, to help Adam perform the duties of Paradise and to enjoy it with him forever.

Let's further comment on the command to man to guard and work the Garden. Some have alleged that Adam was in a quiet state of inactivity in Eden before the Fall. But the Scriptures tell us that Adam is charged to subdue the earth and inhabit it, and to work the place. It did not require of him to

work overtime by the sweat of his brow, so we will deal with that next week or two, but he was required to work. Also Adam is told to guard (shamar שמר) the Garden. (verse 15) From what will he be charged to guard the Garden anyway? Perhaps he should have kept the serpent out? Perhaps when the serpent came along, Adam should have tossed him out on his hind legs? Again Moses the author is laying the groundwork for further revelation which will be consistent with the beginnings.

The rabbis say quite a lot about creation as you might imagine. One is that Adam was formed from dust from the four corners of the earth, so that no one race could boast that they were made first. Good point. Studies by Gregor Mendel require the total races in Adam or the real question comes in... from where do the other nations come later? So Adam was probably a brown or black person with dominant pigmentation and recessive pigments that show up later in white or yellow or red people. The rabbis also say that Adam was created 20 years old. This helps us understand if he had a navel or not. It helps us understand the age of the earth in a way also. Think about this. How old was Adam when he was created? 0 or 20. He was chronologically zero, but he was made to look like he was 20. Similarly the wine that Jesus made at the Wedding in Cana in Galilee, remember this from John 2? Seems that a wedding was going on and the caterers had not counted on as many guests enjoying themselves for so long. So they ran out of wine. Miriam, Y'shua's mum, comes up the Lord and asks Him to help her. He complies making the best wine of the weekend. How old is 'best wine?' Aged, right? So how old was the wine, chronologically? Zero, right? But how old did it seem to be? This notion of Adam and the aged wine is called "apparent age." These and other examples help us calculate the age of the earth. Remember high school history and sciences and they taught you that the earth was millions or billions of years old? I doubt this. And I'm speaking as one trained in biology and sciences, who taught mathematics. The earth could be as young as 10,000 years old and have this 'apparent age' to it that makes it look old. Why... what possible good is it to confuse people? So that those who think they see, will be shown to not see. And so that those who are humble enough can see easily.

God delights in our relationships to each other

Finally I want to comment on the business of relationships. Adam and Eve had a good one. Although the rabbis say on the basis of one very small verse in Psalms that they would not lodge overnight in

dishonor, thus they were created and removed from Eden on the same day, I don't understand their urgency to remove them. God performed what we know today as a marriage ceremony there in Paradise. We read that God brought Eve to the man. (וַיְבָרֵךְ אֱלֹהִים) This is very similar language to the presentment by the father in walking his little girl down the aisle to give to the young fellow, her future husband, on the far end. I'm pondering what that will feel like one day with my little girls, and I'm not looking forward to such a day, but let's say that God was pleased to offer Eve to Adam straightaway. Moses even jumps ahead of himself in the story, as I am often found doing in retelling it here, to help the reader see the conclusion or the application for modern days. Thus chapter 2 ends with a commendation of the married couple to 'leave their parents and cling to each other.' God wants the new couple to be so attached to each other, that they depend on one another and to grow together as if they were, as we read, 'one flesh.' Abandoning one system is the only way to make it into the new. It doesn't mean that you never relate to your family again, but it does mean that the relationship will suddenly and unequivocally change as you take a husband or wife.

Those of you who are yet unmarried here (or reading online) should note this particularly. When you marry you will change your focus and change your sphere of activity. If you want it all to be the same, don't marry. However, if you want her friends to be yours, and his sports to be part of your world, you are understanding a bit more of the biblical pattern of marriage.

The couple was naked and not ashamed. This will form a clear contrast to what we see next week, when they are naked and ashamed. So the nakedness is not itself the problem, but more on that next week as we talk about Satan and the first sin and how to get out of our problems in these days. God is well pleased when we are in harmony with one another. God wants us to have pleasure together and thus characterize His being within Himself.

Final

So let me ask you... do you know God? Are you in relationship with Him? Have you ever been born again to a living hope by Y'shua the Messiah, the Saviour who died for you and rose again? If not, today is your day. You can know Him personally and be brought near, brought into delight with God. You have to admit how you have failed and disobeyed Him. You have to come back to the God

who loves you and wants you to be in great repair. Y'shua is God's answer for you, and we are going to pray just now, and if you want to receive His love and grace, His forgiveness of your sins, then join me now.

"Father I thank you that you created the universe. I thank you that you designed it as a place of pleasure for you and for us. I admit that I have failed you and sinned against you. I need your grace to overcome my errors, and I value learning more about you in these days. I repent of my sins and accept Y'shua as a once-and-for-all sacrifice for my sins. He wants to deliver me and make me born again. Thanks for that, Lord. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer, please send me an email (bobmendo@aol.com) straightaway, won't you?