

Sermon Notes: October 3, 2021 **Focus:** the creation of us [Lectionary Readings](#)

I love the broad sweep how Genesis 1 places us in the creation of everything including Adam. Genesis 2 is good too, with God strolling around the garden talking to his peeps. This dueling story model is not a mistake that the ancients were too stupid to take out of the bible, but an intentional paradigm to make sense of the world around us.

Genesis 1 = cosmic (Elohim)

Genesis 2 = personal (Jehovah, more in a moment on these two words)

Genesis 1 describes the cosmic Elohim creator who makes us the capstone of the six “days” of creation.

Genesis 1:26-27 Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 2 describes an earthy Jehovah creator who makes the dirt talk.

Genesis 2:7;18;21-24 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being...The Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.”...So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. The man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman for out of Man this one was taken.”

Let’s get schooled There is a fancy theory called the documentary hypothesis. It is an idea about different names for God that are used in the first five books of the bible. Documentary aka JEDP theory stands for the four imagined authors that can be parsed in the text:

God’s name is written as **Jehovah** (YHWH)

God’s name is written as **Elohim**

God is understood through the lens of **Deuteronomy**

God is seen through a **Priestly** lens.

In my opinion, this framework is helpful to understand the different elements in Genesis, but it becomes less helpful, and the metaphor gets more tortured as you go through the other four books of the Pentateuch. With “JDEP” in mind, Genesis 1 uses **Elohim** while Genesis 2 uses **Jehovah**.

Maybe it is one author trying to give different perspectives. More realistically, I think different stories from different periods were pulled into Genesis and held up side-by-side as a way for us to think about the different ways we talk about and experience God.

Adam's Pun Puns were very common in the ancient near east. Puns are too easily missed when you don't know the context. "Adam" and "adamah" different word forms of earth and dirt. Adam made by Elohim (Genesis 1) was not male or female. By the time we get to Genesis 2, Adam is a walking pun on dirt.

I really like the words of Samuel Thomas on Adam in Genesis 2:

In the Garden of Eden story, the name "Adam" is originally not really a name at all. The Hebrew noun *adam* means "human," and throughout the Eden narrative it carries the definite article, "the human" (Hebrew, *ha-adam*). According to Gen 2:7, God fashioned this human out of the "dust" or "soil of the ground" (Hebrew, *afar min ha-adamah*). Thus, this first human is a dirt creature, made of the very stuff that in turn will sustain human life....

The use of language in the Garden of Eden story is elegantly playful. As the story begins, there is "no one" or "no human" (Hebrew, *adam ayin*) to "till the ground" (Hebrew, *la-avod et ha-adamah*), so God fashions one from the *adamah* itself (Gen 2:5-7). Out of the same ground, God causes fruit trees to sprout and grow, along with the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:8-9). Interestingly, God then places the human in the garden (really a typical ancient Near Eastern palatial park, containing only trees) to "till it and keep it"; that is, to watch over it (Gen 2:15).

By the end of the story, after the famous transgression by both the woman and the man, God admonishes the serpent, the woman, and the man, telling the latter, "Cursed is the *adamah* because of you" (Gen 3:17). This curse includes the hard labor of working the ground until the *adam*, now mortal, is returned to the *adamah* from which humanity was taken (Gen 3:18-19). Through this crafty wordplay, the author unfolds one of the story's central ideas, one that would have had special resonance in an arid, agrarian setting: humans' mortal existence is finite and toilsome, and the ground both gives us life and swallows us in death.

Samuel Thomas, "Adam/Adamah", n.p. [cited 17 Sep 2021]. Online: <https://www.bibleodyssey.org:443/en/people/related-articles/adam-adamah>

At the end of the day, I guess like both creation stories with all the complications. It looks like us.

Todd