

A Man to Till the Ground

“And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was* not a man to till the ground.” (Gen. 2:5)

I recently happened upon a book titled, “An Edible History of Humanity.” The author, Tom Standage, began his work by writing how that man took several centuries to move from the “hunter/gatherer” type of existence to the “farmer.” As I read his assumptions about how that process took place, I recalled how that in Genesis 2:5 the Bible had stated that in God’s process of creation there was a time before Adam when there was no cultivation of the land because “there was not a man to till the ground.” So with the forming of Adam and God giving him breath there came into the world a “farmer.” Mister Standage was incorrect – because the “farmer” came before the “hunter/gatherer.”

This fact, concerning Adam as a tiller of the soil, caused my mind to traipse across the ages and see God’s newly fashioned man plowing the earth from which he was created. This event is made clear in the ensuing verses of Genesis 2 where they tell us: “And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. . . And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”

The spiritual application of this situation presents an intriguing set of circumstances. First, the fact that Adam must “farm” (till) the very ground from which he owed his existence seems to shout the message of evangelization. Adam must seek to turn the ground into something productive – to not let it remain the grower of weeds but rather a source of productivity—through his labor and the “seeds” that God has supplied him with. The only method of turning the earth into

something profitable for God was to work with it in order to make it a place for the good seed. (The parable of the sower comes also to mind).

Also we might envision how that only through careful husbandry is it possible to produce a very different plant from its worldly counterpart. The nurturing of corn, for instance, changed it dramatically from the wild Mexican grass that it was derived from. The maize that grows into a full and large ear of corn was once only a small and wild grass with little "fruit." But God's farmer, Adam, tilled the ground and "dressed" it causing a transformation under God's radiant sun and rich earth.

Without further, elaboration, I think we can see how that God Who called us into the ministry desired a "man to till the ground."

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." (1 Cor. 3:6-9)

jlg