

# The Garden

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now one is evening to turn back to Genesis chapter 2. I'm sorry if you're just with us this evening and that you're kind of catching up on New Year's Day and then this morning in terms of looking at Genesis chapter 1 and 2 and then later on we're going to look at 3.

But I hope that it will stand alone as a sermon in its own right as a teaching from the passage that we have. And all I want to do tonight is ask just one or two questions that may arise in your minds or certainly arose in my mind when looking at this passage.

And one is kind of introductory and sets it in the context of redemption, in the context of Jesus because it doesn't matter where you are in the Bible, we'll always be able to go back to Jesus or we'll always, we should always be able to focus whatever power of scripture with a saving theme, with the theme of Jesus Christ at the core.

And the first question I'll say, why do we need to be saved? Why do we need to be redeemed? Why do we need to be bought back? Why do we need to be made right, reconciled with God?

Well in many ways Genesis is all about helping us to understand and know and appreciate that. If we never get to the stage where we see our need of salvation, if we never see what's gone wrong, beyond even the personal brokenness sometimes of our lives.

[ 1 : 33 ] If we never attach ourselves to a humanity of which we're apart, if it's only just about us we will lose a little bit of how much we are needing redemption.

You know sometimes maybe when there's been a tsunami or where there's been flood or problems you've got a picture of the devastation and you know everything's wiped out, horrible, kind of grey and grim.

And then often you'll find similarly the photograph of what it looked like before. There was lush, there was vegetation, there was buildings and there was people and there was life in the activity.

Well it's a little bit, it's a very little bit like that in Genesis. We're getting a picture of what it was like, what God made in the beginning. And what it was like before, the devastation and the brokenness of sin has come in. And we still, as we saw this morning, we still recognize and see there's much beauty.

But still there's tremendous brokenness and destruction and terror and misery in the world in which we live. And it shows us that and shows us what's gone wrong so that we will think more about not only our need for Jesus personally and universally but also what He has in store for us in the future.

[ 3 : 05 ] Because there's always that link, remember there's the link between God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1 and God will introduce a new heavens and a new earth in glory.

So there's that link from the very beginning to what God is doing at the end and Jesus is right there in the middle of that. So we need to, we are grounded again, I'm going back, I know, I will be repetitive a little bit tonight, I'll try not to be.

But we will be, we're grounding ourselves, it's a foundation of who we are and why we need a redeemer. So that's the first very simple question, well who is God? And we've seen a little bit about who God is already, we've pulled back and peeled back some pictures of who God is already.

And obviously we're only picking out little things about God here. But I want to pick out just three things here about who God is from the passage here.

And the first is interesting, just before I say that, if you'll notice, I don't know if anyone's noticed yet, but chapter 2 is kind of repeating a little bit of chapter 1.

[ 4 : 20 ] Chapter 1 is really a summary of what God has done in creating the world, the six days of creation and the creation of humanity at the end on that sixth day.

And then chapter 2, he goes right back and says, well I want to spend a little bit more time on humanity and a little more closely on what I was doing. So it's repeating the creation of man again, but it's doing it in more detail and it's doing it because he wants us to focus more on humanity.

Verse 4 says, this is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, and really it's all about us. It's all about God and us. It doesn't go on to speak about the plants and the rivers and the trees, very much here.

It's nearly all about where we have been placed and why we've been placed there. So God is here. And there's something interesting, there's a different name here, given for God that's used in the early chapters.

In chapter 1 it's, and God said, and God said, and God said, there's this repetitive, beautiful, kind of ongoing creative picture that's developing and God said.

[ 5 : 36 ] And then we notice a change when he makes humanity, then God said, let us make man in an image and there's this consultation beginning. And then here we've got a new name of God introduced already, when the Lord God had made the earth and the heavens.

Now that's very interesting. I hope you find that interesting, because that's a special name for God, isn't it? It's not God, the Creator God, it's not Elohim God, it's not God, the maker of the world.

The Lord God is the Yahweh God, the I am God, the God who revealed Himself at, where did He reveal Himself? At the burning bush, wasn't it?

When He was telling Moses that Moses would be the one who would go and be His representative and take the people, redeem the people out of slavery, because there was this relationship between the people. And the Lord God is always the covenant name of God, the intimate name of God, the close name of God that's associated with redemption.

It's associated with God as Savior, with God as Redeemer. And so here we have, even in Genesis chapter 2, before even the fall, we have God being described in this redemptive term.

[ 6 : 59 ] Why is that? Because this was written to the Old Testament people of God. Moses wrote this to God's people. And Moses is reminding the people, God's reminding the people, I'm your Savior.

And the salvation begins with the story of creation. So we have this personal, interested, loving, close God.

It's kind of, even already, it's different from chapter 1 where you've got, and God made. There's a magisterial language of a sovereign God just speaking the word and the world comes into being.

And here we have the personal God, the God of history, the God of His people. And He's speaking to them and reminding them of their beginnings, hugely significant and important to recognize that.

So He's the Lord God, He's the personal God. And He's that same God we take this evening as our God. My Redeemer, my Lord, my Savior, it's the same God.

[ 8 : 13 ] But He's also, as we see, and very importantly, the giver of life. Now we're all sitting here tonight, we all woke up this morning. We all woke up this morning alive, maybe some more than others.

But we're here, and we've given another 24 hours, another day. And men's pleasure and privilege is that we have that.

And that's because we are reminded here that God is the giver of life, and life derives from Him. It's gifted by Him.

Verse 7, we are, the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

It doesn't make the elephants that way, or the ostriches, or the birds. Humanity is dealt with entirely differently, and we have this picture, while God is the giver of all life, God making people.

[ 9 : 21 ] Our life is His gift, and this great sovereign God comes down, and He touches our cheeks, and He breathes life into us. There's this amazing move from a kind of detached God who speaks the word and the world is created to this creator who comes and forms humanity, and comes intimately close to them, and breathes his life into them.

That's the reality of being human, is that we have life breathed, and He's the source of our life, and He is the one from whom our life has been given.

He is as if He gives from Himself to breathe life into us. I don't know if you've ever seen a dead body.

There's no life there. There is no life. It is like marble, cold, and that's the difference.

God comes and He breathes life into us. He gives that gift. He's the giver of life. We'll pray for the quarter-mile, but let's also pray every morning when we get up for another day.

[ 10 : 45 ] It's not guaranteed, but it is another day, and it's another day that we're to live, recognising and knowing that every iota of our being has been given to us from Him.

He's the giver of our life, and within that is also the great provider. He provided very much. We saw maybe a little bit more about this this morning in our sermon in Versailles.

The Lord had planted a garden in the eastern Eden, and there He put the man-eat form. The Lord made all kinds of trees, growing the ground trees, or pleasing the eye, and good for food. There was a tree in the middle of the garden.

It's just this whole idea of an opulent, rich, lavish world that was given, provided for humanity, for people.

It was a real world, a world that has real rivers in it, rivers that sometimes still exist today, so that maybe probably Eden was somewhere around Iraq, somewhere.

[ 11 : 54 ] But a place of great abundance, a place of gold and resin and oxygen on it, just a paradise, a beautiful place, a fantastic place, a glorious place, a thrilling place, and a place that was made three-dimensionally wonderful and great because God was there, and God was in relationship and in fellowship with Adam and with Eve, and with the whole creation.

And again, even in our fallen and broken and bruised and selfish and greedy world that we live in, we still see glimpses, do we see shadows of it all?

We'll just look around tonight, look around at the beauty of the people beside you, the energy of the children, the loveliness of the different colors that we have, the taste, the abundance, the music, the song, all these creative things, beautiful and glorious things.

Sometimes we abuse them and we take them and we rip them up and we hoard them to ourselves and we fail to thank God for them and we fail to acknowledge Him in them. But of all people, Christians shouldn't be gray and dull and black, even though I'm kind of like that, in my dress.

I'm not saying we should all dress in yellow, but we should be people who appreciate and know and see and sense beauty and the glory of God and this creation that He's given us, even in its brokenness.

[ 13 : 30 ] We give thanks and rejoice in God as the great provider. That's why I don't think it's all fashioned and out of hat to say grace before a meal, because it's a recognition that we're giving thanks that God is the ultimate provider.

He's the source of provision and that we have because of His glory and His greatness and when others don't have it, it's because of our greed. We recognize that and we rejoice and give thanks and we appreciate that.

I hope we're not too embarrassed or too trendy or modern anymore to say grace before a meal, to give thanks to our heads. Important thing to do. Bless the food.

So, who is God? There's a few things there. But who are we? Well, obviously, that's what we've been looking at in this whole series, that we find ourselves, we find it about ourselves in Genesis, who we are.

Because this is a story of Adam. A lot of people don't believe in Adam anymore. They think it's just a story.

[ 14 : 37 ] They think it's just a kind of a fable, a religious fable about beginnings. I don't.

And by faith, we are able to believe that God created and He created in this way. Now, there's lots that don't know. There's lots we don't know. And there's lots that isn't said.

But it's important for us to recognize the story of Adam. He's the first human being. Because he wasn't only the first human being, he was also the head of humanity, representative of mankind in many ways.

Because remember this morning we saw him being an image bearer. And in being fruitful and productive, he would pass on the image bearing to his children in the way that God had passed on his image into Adam and his creation.

Therefore, what Adam did falls down to us also as his children. And therefore, his behavior in many ways becomes ours.

[ 15 : 38 ] And as in Adam all sin so and Christ all redeemed. And there's that link in Romans 5 between Adam and between Christ and between Christ people and between lost humanity.

And that's significant and that's important for us. Not only is our representative head and we bear his broken image, but we break it further ourselves in our sinful rebellion against God and His grace, until we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

But who are we? There's two things here very quickly that I want to say. One that we're made from dust. It's not very promising is it? The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his life, into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

So we were created from the dust. So there's an earthiness about humanity. We shouldn't really get above our station too much because we've been created from the dust.

We're not like God at that level. That's where the likeness ends. We're made in this image, likeness we saw a little bit about that this morning. But the likeness ends here because we're people who have a physicality that God doesn't have because we're mortal people at that level.

[ 17 : 03 ] We're not gods. We're not like God at that level. We can't take on the place of God and make the decisions of God in our lives.

We can't be sovereign in the way that God is, even though we try really hard so often. And humanity has right through history tried very hard to forget God and to be God. That's what we'll look at again.

But they do say by the second or third generation, most people have forgotten that we ever lived. So I was at a graveside this last week in Worrison.

And apart from being a sad place, well it's a sad place not just because it's a graveyard, but because Edinburgh Council and their wisdom knock over all the headstones so that no one gets damaged by them falling on people.

But it looks awful and you look at the names from the 1940s and the 50s. There's no flowers in the grave. No one's tending the graves. We knocked over. No one cares about the graves.

[ 18 : 08 ] We'll probably be quite hard pressed to find out anything about the people who were represented there, generations down the line. Thus we come and to thus we return.

Sometimes that's just a sobering thought about our self-importance. And the fact that we'll last forever.

It's sobering. But we were made from dust, but we were formed by God. That's a glorious reality and a glorious truth as well.

As we see, he formed the man. It's like taking a lump of clay. That's the kind of picture we get. Forming something absolutely beautiful from it.

It took God's special time and attention and interest. We've got great dignity, even though we're formed from the dust. Great dignity because we're inescapably God's property.

[ 19 : 12 ] Made uniquely fashioned by God. And so the reality is when we ignore God in our lives, we're absolutely devaluing who we are.

Because it's the image, it's the fact that God is intimately involved in our lives that makes us significant as people. We looked at that this morning. But I had an interesting fact.

That if you broke down all the chemicals of our body, they'd be worth about £7 on the open market. That's all we're worth. Physically, just £7.

But we're worth far, far more than that, aren't we? We know that. We all know that. Because of who we are and because of how we were created.

So we're formed by God and we were made from dust. Fourth question, why did He make us?

[ 20 : 13 ] Well, I think already you know that. He made us to be in relationship with Him, to bring Him glory by being His representatives.

To enjoy Him and the relationship with Him. And that's the glory of being made. We were made for God.

See, if you're not a Christian tonight, if you don't understand the importance of what Jesus has done in bringing back this broken relationship that was there in the beginning, then you're living at best one dimensionally, but spiritually dead, because you're made for God.

We are made for God. And until we are in relationship with God, we never will experience life as He intended it for us. We are made for relationship with Him.

That is one of the great lessons of these early chapters in Genesis, to enjoy God and to enjoy His creation. In verse 16 he says, Lord God, you're free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which we'll go on to see a bit briefly.

[ 21 : 30 ] But just to enjoy Him, God speaking in conversation with the people and saying, this is yours, go out and enjoy this creation and give glory to God as you enjoy this relationship of love and grace and goodness with me.

And that's what's been broken. And that's what we want to recapture in Christ. And that's what people who aren't Christians need to know about.

They need to know that we were made to enjoy God. It's not about rules and regulations. That's what everybody thinks.

And that's what the debate revolves around today. Oh, and the Christians, they've got these rules and regulations and God doesn't exist. We need to recapture while rules and regulations play their part in the parameters of relationship of love.

We need to recognize and try and show people and live in such a way and share the gospel in such a way that says, we were created to enjoy God and to be in relationship of love with Him and to serve Him through His creation.

[ 22 : 48 ] As we see in verse 15 here, as we saw this morning, they had work to do. In verse 15, the Lord God took the man, put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it. Not to be that life of wanting luxury and excess.

Adam was a regent. He was an estate manager. He had work to do. He had to... there's two ideas really that come out via to work the ground.

To it, serve it, respect it, cooperate with it, cultivate it, explore it, develop it, bless it. He did all that and it was great.

Before the thorns and the thistles, the curse came in. It's great. It's a really interesting bit about the fact that there was no rain, but I'm not going to go into that because I don't really understand it. There's no rain, but the water came up from below.

But he also had to take care of it, he had to protect it, he had to look after it. And again, can I just mention this again this evening very briefly, that there is a hint here that there was the potential of the garden being breached by evil that Adam must have known about.

[ 23 : 57 ] And there was that recognition even in perfection of his need to be alert, need to be dependent on God, need to be looking to God, and to be aware of a malevolent evil force that would take that away.

And that becomes more significant in the next chapter. And so even in Christ, as we find ourselves redeemed and bought back in Jesus Christ, we find that our pleasure and our joy isn't going to be in the same things that sometimes they might have been before, in sloth or inactivity or in the relentless pursuit of hedonistic pleasure, but our joy comes from a life of cooperative work and activity and service and vigilance and a recognition of who we are and of humbly coming under God and serving Him.

I just love the way that Paul says, the one who knew most about grace, and yet was the one who said, I've worked harder than any of you other disciples, worked harder, because it was a pleasure and a joy for him to do, not because he was earning anything from God, but it was a pleasure to him.

And as a church, it's a good thing, it's a good thing in Christ that we're able to work, it's nothing wrong with working hard, it's nothing wrong with being busy and working hard, recognizing our place and our responsibility and our privilege to do so, because one day we'll not be able to do it anymore, in that unique way that we've been given here.

So God made us to enjoy His creation and serve Him through that creation, and also, with this I finished, accept His boundaries within creation.

[ 25 : 55 ] We have this section about the two trees, and that was the one prohibition, the one prohibition that God gave Adam in this world of pleasure and joy and work and freedom and responsibility and protection.

These trees seemed at least to be symbolic of God's presence, God's character and God's authority, and it was a challenge to Adam to recognize the boundary and who God was, and that he could not step over that boundary because on the day that he ate, he would die, in that he would be separated from God and from His love and from His presence.

Eating, you shall eat, dying, you shall die. One prohibition to remind himself that he'd come from the ground, to remind himself that he was a regent, he was an ambassador, to remind him that he wasn't God, to remind him that there was something in this world that was too powerful and strong for him that he needed to resist.

There was a knowledge of good and evil that he could not know without being destroyed by it, and that is hugely significant. Man is not God, mankind is not God.

We can't be good and perfect if we seek the knowledge of evil in our lives. Only God is able to contain that knowledge of good and evil without losing His perfection.

[ 27 : 45 ] And evil is far too strong, and it destroys, and as we will go on to see, of course, it has destroyed us. And the reminder to us as Christians, if we look back with 21st century eyes, is the ongoing prohibitions He gives us.

He's given us His parameters under which to live, not to err in favour with Him, but simply. Because He knows our limitations, and He knows what will destroy us, and He knows what's bad for us, and He cares about us.

And so if we live and we stick our fingers up at God and ignore Him, then we bear the consequences of that. Because we simply are not big enough and strong enough to live outside of His will, and no blessing, and no life, and no goodness, and no hope, and no forgiveness.

So the life of faith is inevitably also a life of obedience. And the mark of our love is how much we serve and obey Him.

And that becomes a great challenge in our ongoing lives. It becomes a challenge within the church. Within the church? A great challenge. It becomes a great challenge in our workplace.

[ 29 : 01 ] It's a great challenge in your marriage, in your relationships, among your neighbours, and in your own heart, and in my own heart. What a challenge.

What a fight. What a battle. And the need for us to recognise our dependence on God as Christians, having lost what was there in the beginning because of sin, and reminding ourselves who God is.

It's a hard story to go on to, the next one. But I hope it places the glory and beauty of Jesus and redemption more clearly for us.

It contrasts it more powerfully, and will mean more to us as we study that. Let's bow our heads and pray together. Father God, we ask and pray that we would understand more clearly the beauty of Jesus, even as we look back on the amazing creation.

I know that that creation, which in its perfection and beauty, is despoiled and broken and lost, but will be found and renewed and improved in glory.

[ 30 : 17 ] May we live with that perspective, and may we not limit ourselves to being merely from dust, but remind ourselves that we have also been formed intimately and carefully and uniquely, and that we are here utterly and completely unique by the hand of God.

And give us a thankful heart tonight. We know there's nothing worse than thankless people, thankless children, thankless adults, thankless parents, and we hate it to see it in real life, in everyday life with each other.

But may it also not be something that we take for granted spiritually. May we not be thankless children, may we not live silently before God, only asking, asking, asking all the time.

May we also take time to stop and give thanks. Give thanks for today, give thanks for this life, give thanks for friends and family, for church, give thanks for health, give thanks for above all Jesus Christ and the amazing reality of the Gospel.

Give thanks for the past and for the future, give thanks for the Word, give thanks for worship. May we be able to do that, we pray in His name, Amen.