

Genesis Ch2v4-17 - A Temple Garden

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 October 2021

Preacher: Jonny Grant

[0 : 00] Genesis chapter 2, and we're going to read from verse 4 down to verse 17.

Again, if you've missed any of the talks, you can catch up on them all on our church website. They're all there for you. Genesis chapter 2, starting in verse 4.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth, and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no one to work the ground.

But streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. Then 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. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden.

And there he put the man he had formed.

[1 : 19] The Lord God made all kinds of trees to grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden, and from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first was Pishon.

It winds through the entire land of the Havelah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. Aromatic resin and onyx are there.

The name of the second river is the Gihon. It winds through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris.

It runs along the east side of Eden. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it.

[2 : 20] And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.

Well, keep your Bibles open and we'll pray. Father, we're thankful for life today, for health and strength to be here, giving us minds that can understand and comprehend.

And yet, Father, we long that our hearts would respond to you as we should, as you created us to be. That as you speak, we would listen.

And as we listen, that we would delight in your ways. Teach us today. Breathe the breath of your Spirit upon us.

For your glory. Amen. Well, I wonder if you noticed the change.

[3 : 42] There's a significant difference between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. It's not a different creation, but it's creation from a different perspective.

Genesis 1 is all about the creation of the cosmos, the universe. Whereas Genesis 2 is all about the creation of mankind. Genesis 1 really informs us how God is separate and distinct from his creation. Genesis 2 is all about how God is intimate with mankind. We see this clearly when we compare and contrast chapter 1, verse 1 with chapter 2, verse 4.

So if you go back to chapter 1, verse 1, we read this. The first verse of the Bible, Now, God, the word there for God, or if you're into Hebrew, Elohim, is a very general name.

And it would be used by all the different nations to refer to the God of Israel. In the beginning, God. Now, compare that with chapter 2, verse 4.

[5 : 00] We get something very similar. Chapter 2, verse 4. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Lord, which appears there in capitals in our English Bibles, and you'll see it all the way through the Old Testament, simply means Yahweh. This is God's personal name given to his people. God's covenant name. The one who's entered into a relationship with his people. No longer is God just God of the nations. But he's saying to them, You can call me Yahweh. You see, God is not just distinct and separate and great and big. But he's intimate and involved with his people.

So as we move from Genesis 1 into Genesis 2, we move from transcendency, the greatness and the bigness of God, to the personal, the intimacy of God.

[6 : 09] From God speaking creation into existence. Where God is now speaking personally to his image bearers. You can call me Yahweh.

So what do we learn about this personal encounter with Yahweh? Well, here's the first. First, the Lord God gives life to mankind.

Look at verse 5. Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth, and no plant had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth.

And there was no one to work the ground. So we've got a picture here of a lifeless land. There's nothing growing. There's nothing producing. But, verse 6, streams come up from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground.

Life begins to flourish. Now this acts in some ways as a parable for the life that God gives to mankind.

[7 : 15] So look at verse 7. Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground. But there's no life in that form, in that shape.

It's a lifeless form. Something else must happen. So, rest of verse 7, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Just as the water flowed onto the land and gave life to the earth, so God's breath flows into man and gives him life.

But the life that God gives is so much more than just physical life. Remember, this is pre-form. So the life God gives is not just physical, moving and walking, but he's given him spiritual life.

Man is created to be a living being who can communicate with God and enjoy fellowship with God. It's a life given by the breath of God, or we might say by the spirit of God, because again, and I'm no Hebrew scholar, but the scholars tell me that the word for breath is the same word for spirit.

[8 : 33] You remember back in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 2, we read there at the end that the spirit of God, or the breath of God, was hovering over the waters.

The life-giving spirit was hovering over the waters. Now we read in chapter 2, verse 7, that the Lord God breathed into his nostrils literally the spirit of life.

This is what makes us different from the creatures and the animals. We have been given the spirit of life so that we can know God.

Now this spiritual life is an abundant life. Look at verse 8. Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden, and there he put the man he had formed.

Eden, well it can mean delight, but I think here the focus is on abundance. Eden is about a land of abundance.

[9 : 38] So literally the Lord God has placed man in a garden of abundance. Everything is provided. Look at verse 9. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground, trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food.

Everything is sustained in this garden. Verse 10. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden. In fact, go back to the end of verse 9.

In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Later we're told that they're not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but there's no such command saying, don't eat from the tree of life.

They can eat its fruit and live. Just as food nourishes our physical bodies, so the life that God gives is an abundant life.

It's no surprise then that the psalmist would say in Psalm 34, taste and see that the Lord is good.

[10 : 47] Blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. God is exceedingly good. He gives spiritual life that is abundant. Second, not only does he give life, the Lord God dwells together with mankind.

So as we read through the text, it becomes clear that God is not just distant and removed, but Yahweh, the personal God, is present and involved.

He is with the first man and woman. God's intention to be among his people is clear. Look at verse 8. The Lord God planted the garden and there he put the man he had informed.

And then what unfolds is God begins to speak to him with commands. And this becomes explicitly clear in chapter 3.

Just quickly have a look at chapter 3, verse 8. Well, we have a wonderful picture of God and man in relationship. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

[12:03] Yes, this is after the fall, but we get the picture of what's going on. The implication is that God was present with them in the garden, walking and talking and enjoying the beauty of creation, but above all, enjoying fellowship with one another.

There's no hiding in Genesis 2. There's no shame. It's full and free. This is God's good design, his purpose for mankind, that he would dwell amongst his people.

In fact, God's design is that the whole earth would be a dwelling place for God. The whole earth is to be a dwelling place.

Look at what's happening here. In Eden, God plants a garden. So there's a place called Eden and in the place in Eden, he plants a garden.

And it's right there that we find mankind. But again, remember what we've learned so far back in Genesis 1, verse 28. What did God say to them?

[13:11] Be fruitful, increase in number and fill the earth and subdue it. You see, it was never God's intention that man would just stay in the garden.

Man was to expand the borders of Eden. They were to multiply and grow and fill the whole earth. In other words, God's desire was that the whole earth would be his dwelling place where he would dwell with mankind.

Again, I think the rivers that are described here in verses 10 down to 14 act almost like as a parable of what's going on.

So look at verse 10. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden and from there it was separated into four headwaters, four different rivers.

So try and get this picture in your mind. We've got a river that starts in the garden of Eden and then begins to flow out. And this river branches into four rivers, each of which extend into different directions.

[14:23] They are nourishing the land as they flow out. This river is expanding, isn't it? And so God is saying to mankind, well, this is what I want to view.

This is what we're to do. I want you to extend the borders of the garden. Here we are in the garden, but we're to extend the borders out into Eden and beyond Eden to the ends of the earth.

Let the whole earth be a dwelling place for God. This becomes clearer for us down in verse 15.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it. Now commentators have pointed out that this task, if you look carefully at verse 15, of working and caring, it's specific, it's unique.

The only other time it's repeated in scripture is when it's referring to the priests who were serving at the temple. Their job was to work and to care.

[15:37] So what we're getting a picture here is that this garden is actually like a temple. It's a dwelling place for God.

And it's the place where man is to serve and care. But it's a temple that's not to stay as it is. It's a temple that's to grow and expand as mankind does his work of serving and caring.

Because it's God's longing and desire that the whole world would be his dwelling place. that the whole world would become a temple of his presence. God is to be known and experienced in every corner of the earth.

So God gives life, he dwells with his people and God demands obedience from mankind.

Now Yahweh may be present, the personal God is there with his people but there is a distinction. Yahweh is the creator. We are the created.

[16:46] We are living under God's rule. He's the one who speaks and we listen. So look at verse 16. And the Lord God commanded the man, you are free to eat from any tree in the garden.

no prohibition on eating the fruit from the tree of life. You can do that. But, verse 17, you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you'll die.

You see, there is such a thing as morality. People say there isn't but there is. There is a good and there is an evil and it's God who declares what is right and what is wrong.

It's not mankind who gets to decide. We don't get to make up the rules what is evil and what is good. That's the distinction here between Yahweh and mankind.

He speaks we listen. God commands we obey. This is God's world and he always knows what is best and what is right for us. He isn't being mean and stingy by saying you can't eat from this fruit because he's provided every other tree for food.

[18 : 07] His law is good and he knows that if we're to eat of it it's not going to be good and following his law leads to an abundant life.

This is good for you. You see, this tree in the garden is to remind man who is in charge. Who's the boss?

The tree reminds us that God demands undivided loyalty. You see, with this tree comes a test of loyalty.

Man is a living being capable of thinking and reasoning and showing love and the way mankind is to declare his love, the way he's to show his love to God is by obeying his commands.

God's God's God's God's God's God's God's God's God's God's word, not eating the fruit was a sign of submission.

[19 : 11] It's an expression of love. It's saying I trust God that when he says things it's for my best and all his ways are pure.

Even when I don't understand everything, what he says is always right and good. However, if they're to go and eat the fruit, it's completely the opposite, isn't it?

It's an expression of rejection. By eating the fruit, they'll be saying I don't want God telling me what is good and evil. I will decide what's good and evil.

It's saying I want to be like God. I want to rule the world. I want to fill the world with my presence and say what is good.

I want to be boss. In fact, to eat of it, end of verse 17, God says you'll die. Not just physical death, but a spiritual death.

[20 : 18] A life without God, without his dwelling with his people, without his presence. Instead of an abundant life, it would be filled with chaos and disorder.

So the tree was a way of showing your loyalty to God, a means of declaring your loving obedience. Now what a wonderful picture we have here in Genesis 2.

Isn't it an amazing picture? Here we have mankind living an abundant spiritual life, enjoying the presence of God, enjoying his dwelling, walking amongst them, talking with them.

Here they are to extend the borders of the garden so that the earth is filled with God's presence. How wonderful that is. Would you like to be there?

Is that something that kind of goes, yes, that's where I'd like to be? Would you? Maybe you're wondering, should I or should I not, what's coming next?

[21 : 36] Well, I think there's something better. There's something better than this. You see, this is much more than just a description of creation because we know, and we'll get to it in a couple of weeks, we know what?

They just had to obey. Don't eat it. And everything would be all right. But they didn't. Instead of leaving an aroma of the presence of God, mankind has left a trail of destruction behind them, a tornado of chaos, of broken relationships.

Now, this is much more than just a description of creation. This is a picture of the church. It's a picture of the church.

You see, creation is just a display model of the local church. What we're reading in Genesis 2 is a picture of you and me. Yes, it is.

Here in the garden, we have a blueprint for what the church should be. And it's better. Let me show you. I hope you've got your Bibles ready.

[22 : 49] We're going to look at a few things. First, God gives life by his Spirit. Let's remember, Genesis 2 may be pre-fall, but we're reading this post-fall, aren't we?

We've been given physical life, we're breathing, but the Bible says we've been born spiritually dead. We're not born into a relationship with God. We don't enjoy intimacy with God.

We need the Spirit to give us life. The prophet Ezekiel gives us a brilliant picture of this. God had promised Ezekiel a time when the Spirit was going to come who would be not just with, but in the

people.

When the Spirit would give life. I have a reference here. Ezekiel 36 verses 26 to 27. This is what God promised. He says, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you and I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

And to help us see what God has promised. Ezekiel has another vision. We're going to look this up together. Go to Ezekiel chapter 37 in your Bible.

[24 : 16] Ezekiel chapter 37. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations and then Ezekiel.

You may remember this picture. The vision of the valley of dry bones. And the picture we have in chapter 37 is this valley which is full of bones.

So it's lifeless, it's dead, it's a picture of the spiritual state of God's people. They are spiritually dead. Now listen to what God says to Ezekiel in verse 4.

Then God said to me, prophesy to these bones and say to them, dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. This is what the sovereign Lord says to these bones.

I will make breath, and again the word here is spirit, I will make breath enter you and you will come to life.

[25 : 31] I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin. I will put breath my spirit in you and you will come to life, then you will know that I am the Lord.

Verse 10, so I prophesied as he commanded me and breath entered them and they came to life and stood up on their feet, a vast army.

It is a picture of a spirit filled people, a vast army, much greater than just Adam and Eve, but a vast army of a spirit filled people, filled with a spirit enabling them to do and to follow God's law.

You see, without the spirit of God, without his spirit, we are dead. And we are now living in an age in a time when the spirit has come.

The coming of Jesus means the spirit is here, because Jesus came to give spiritual life to all who are dead. Listen to the words, you can see them on the screen here.

[26 : 42] The words of Jesus in John chapter 6. Jesus says, the spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you, they are full of the spirit and life.

You see, the words of God. The word about Jesus is life. And as we hear the word about Jesus, the spirit takes that word and applies it to our life.

It's like spiritual CPR. The breath of life, the breath of God is breathed into us. Our spiritual dead bodies are transformed and we become spiritually alive.

life. Where once we had no love for God, we now love him and obey him. This is the fullness of life.

This is true abundant life. But not only does he give life by his spirit, God is with us by his spirit.

[27 : 46] because when he gives us new life, he doesn't leave us in isolation, he joins us together with other believers so that he might dwell with us, not just amongst us, but in us.

Just like the garden was to be a temple, a dwelling place for God, so the church is a temple, isn't it? Listen to what Paul says to the church in Ephesians.

Jesus, in him, in Jesus, the whole building, so he's talking about the people as a building, in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord, and in him, you too, are being built together to become a dry throat, can somebody get me some water, please?

Sorry. I'm going to have to stop, sorry. I need some breath.

Thank you, Ralph.

[29 : 14] Thank you, Ralph. That's better.

So where were we? Let me just backtrack a little bit, shall I? So when God gives us spiritual life, he doesn't leave us in isolation, but he joins us together with other spirit-filled believers so that he might dwell with us, just like the garden in Genesis 2 was a temple and to be a dwelling place for God, so the church is a temple.

That's what we have here. In him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord, and in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit.

Look at us. We are much bigger and greater than the garden of Eden. God, once again, dwelling with his people, speaking to us through his life-giving words so that we might enjoy fellowship with him.

But there's something more. God doesn't just give us life. He's with us by his spirit and he's at work by his spirit in the church. The church, this temple, is to also grow and expand.

[30 : 43] God's presence is to be known everywhere. Just as the borders in Eden were to expand beyond them to the ends of the earth, that's what Adam and Eve were to do, but they failed.

And God has given his spirit to his church, and right now all across the world there are little garden churches, we might call them like that, where God is present in all the nations.

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, just as they were to move out of the garden to Eden, to the ends of the earth, so mankind is beginning to fulfil all that God had set out to do.

Can you see that life in the garden is just a picture of life in the church? A spirit filled people where God dwells amongst us by his spirit, never to leave us, but with us permanently, secured and sealed by the work of Christ.

A people empowered by his spirit so that we can now love and obey God's words and do what is right, reaching out with the good news of Christ so that the earth is filled with the presence of God.

[32 : 19] That's what we're doing tomorrow when you spend time with your children at home, you are expanding the borders as you share the gospel with your children so the presence of God might be known and experienced everywhere.

It's what happens as you disperse amongst your neighbourhood and go to work. That as you share the good news, it is expanding and growing and the presence of God is becoming known in your workplace and in your neighbourhood.

It happens as you get involved in Sunday school and the rock and rooted. The presence of God expanding and growing.

It's happening through the Cork-Carrie project. It's happening through our partners whether that's in Kashmir or in Kosovo to the ends of the earth. What we see in Genesis is just a glorious picture of the church today.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 35] Amen. Father, would you please fill us afresh with a vision for your church. Thank you that we are a spirit-filled people, given new life, that we can know you, we can talk to you, that you will never ever leave us.

Thank you, Father, that your spirit is at work through us in our homes, in our neighborhoods at work wherever we are may we by your power and your help extend the borders so that the presence and the knowledge of Christ is known everywhere help us we ask in Jesus name Amen we're going to sing together Holy Spirit living breath of God breathe new