

In God's garden

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your great glory our supreme concern.

! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.! And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

God, the great creator of chapter 1 in Genesis, becomes the Lord God, the great gardener of chapter 2. It was 31 times we read the word God in chapter 1, and 11 times in chapter 2 we read the Lord God.

The personal, specific, intimate name of the one great God of the Bible. In this chapter, surely we see our Lord God, our Father, relating to humanity in a more personal way, a more intimate way, than he did in chapter 1.

The Lord God creates and gives life to humanity. The Lord God creates and gives life to humanity. He creates a garden for his humans to inhabit.

[1 : 38] The human is named 16 times by the word Adam. God is the powerful presence in the chapter.

And the human, Adam, is his partner, his companion in the garden. All that the human is and becomes is from the Lord God alone.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

Chapter 2 really opens in verse 4 with this phrase, these are the generations. As we read through the book of Genesis, let me encourage you to read through the book of Genesis.

We notice this same phrase appearing five times. They're up there on the slide. Chapter 5, chapter 6, chapter 11, chapter 25 and 37.

[2 : 52] Not always at the first verse in a chapter, but always marking the beginning of a new section of the book of Genesis.

Introducing a cycle of narratives. Not about the person named in the phrase, but about their descendants. About that which is generated from them.

And as we go through up to chapter 11 in Genesis, we'll be able to look at chapter 5, chapter 6 and chapter 11 before we finish at this time.

And we'll see how that works. Now chapter 2, verse 4 is the only time the phrase is used without a human person as the object.

The generation of or the account of Noah or Terra or whoever it is. Here in verse 4 in chapter 2, the generation or the account of the heavens and the earth.

[4 : 02] This heading is telling us that what follows is not so much an account of the generation of the heaven and the earth, but an account of what follows the generation of the heaven and the earth.

Chapter 1 all the way to verse 3 in chapter 2 introduce us to the generation, the creation of all things. And the main characters in the world. And the main characters in this book.

God, the glorious creator. And humanity, the pinnacle of his creation. But then the next section begins.

A section which tells us the story of what is generated by the relationship of the great God and his created humanity.

what happens when God and humans begin to live together we're in one sense not reading a second creation account but an account of what it means to have been created as humans and to begin to live in God's story once again Genesis is not so much interested in how the Lord God made everything as in who made everything and how what he has made is part of his great story of

grace and mercy which begins here in Genesis 1 and 2 chapter 2 verse 9 out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food the tree of life was in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil

[6 : 04] I have sometimes commented that the amount of ink that has been spilled on verses of the Bible is considerable that is no less true when we turn to think of these two trees in the garden of Eden the books would fill libraries just on this theme God specifically places two trees in the garden now interestingly the tree of life does not feature in a huge way or even in a notable way in the rest of the story it reappears in Revelation 22 where the leaves of the trees are for the healings of the nations the tree of life surely is present in the garden to symbolise for the human there and for all the rest of us who read this account that the presence of the Lord God is there because the Lord God himself is life life is in the presence of God we read of Jesus the word that became flesh in him was life and that life was the light of man life was in him this life any life has as its source the Lord God there is no other source or beginning for life in this garden the Lord God is he is there and so life is there and the tree of life in some way symbolises the active living presence of the living God with him and in his creation without naming them as the tree of life or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil two trees appear in the temple of Solomon the temple which is a physical earthly representation of the presence of God and the desire of God to live in community with his people has two trees the garden which in many ways is designed to mirror a temple a place where God meets with and lives together with his people has two trees again in Revelation 11 there are two witnesses to the gospel who are described as two trees to be in the presence of the Lord God is to live to be expelled from the presence of the Lord God is death the tree of life is where the living God is the threat of death in verse 17 it turns out does not refer to an immediate physical death that will fall upon the transgressor but an expulsion from the life-giving presence of God which results in a terrible ultimate death the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is something different are we to imagine that before eating this tree the human knew nothing of what was good or evil surely it is absurd to think that only after eating the forbidden fruit only after being expelled from the paradise garden did the human become a moral being

able to choose between good and evil it seems to me that cannot be what this tree is about before eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the humans in the garden knew God they knew the Lord God and they lived closely together with him they knew that the Lord God was their origin in creation and their life everything they wear derived from him in this knowing of the Lord God humanity is at harmony with God at peace with God with themselves and with creation because what they know is God in this knowing of God who alone is truly good and the source of all goodness humanity knows what is good

God is good all the time and all the time God is good the human knows good and understands that anything that is not God and is not from God is therefore not good they already know that the knowledge of good and evil this tree is not about learning what is good and bad it's about demonstrating that the human is willing to submit to the goodness of God and to live together with him and have him as the source the only source of goodness and so in eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil against the command of the Lord God the human exchanges the knowledge of the Lord God for the knowledge of good and evil which they become the judge of as though we are able to judge what is good or bad but more of this next week if you like that's been wiggling on the tee preparing to hit the ball at chapter 2 some points of introduction now we get to the text of chapter 2 verse 7 the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the human became a living creature our English Bibles usually only use the name Adam one time going through Genesis 2 but the same Hebrew word which one time they translate Adam in other places they'll translate sometimes man or sometimes human Adam 16 times that word appears and the word Adam is used five times and represents the ground noticing the close connection in sound between these two words Adam Adam we recognise a close relation between the human and the ground the difference between the human and the ground is that the Lord God has breathed the breath of life into the human into all humans you today have the breath of life breathed into you the breath of life is the breath of God to animate to make alive that which it is breathed into we live only because the Lord God has breathed his life giving breath into us I think it is important to see that the breath of life in verse 7 is not the same word or the same idea as the spirit of God you will remember the famous chapter in Ezekiel 37 where the dead bones have the spirit of God prophesied upon them and the

bones join together and come alive that's the work of the spirit of God but here in Genesis 2 the breath of life transforms inanimate dust into animate humanity all human life is precious because it is created by God all human life is precious and valuable because the life giving breath of God is breathed upon it wherever we read in the

[15 : 22] Bible about the creation of humanity the Bible emphasises the preciousness of human life by intimately connecting all of us and all our living to the the purposes and the actions of God we need no other reason to value every human than recognising that we are all created by God and we only live because the same breath of life is at work in all of us down at verse 15 the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it the Lord God takes the human he has made and places him in the garden which he has planted yes in part this is for humanity to enjoy the beauty and the provision of the garden but also to work it and keep it that the garden might be tended and cared for by humanity it's interesting to see how some wrong ideas can creep in by using particular words the

Greek version which translates Genesis 2 used a Persian word which sounds like paradison from which the Latins got paradise and from which we get paradise paradise is a word in English which has a whole set of connotations about it almost none of which are appropriate to the garden of Eden paradise is our future but Eden is not our future we are not going back to the garden we are going forward to the city of God the idea of paradise has come to suggest a place of rest of inactivity of enjoyment but the garden is not a place of inactivity the garden is a place where humanity serves the mission of

God to work and to take care of all creation work did not commence after the sin of Adam and Eve we are humans we have been created to be active and to do things idleness is a denial of our being human we are working creatures the work of caring for creation is a human service in the mission of God the mission of God it turns out is not only one thing the mission of God it turns out is many things mission is making Jesus known to those who do not know him mission is encouraging and nurturing those who know

Jesus to grow in knowing him mission is caring for the poor mission is caring for creation mission is many things but all of them involve activity and service of our God making him and his grace known in all creation and before all humanity the Lord God did not create us as humans that we might sit back with our feet up in idleness in some paradise like state God made us to serve him in mission either you are a mission worker or you are a mission field there are only these two options as disciples of Jesus us we have been enrolled as those who work in

God's mission our new birth from above our recreation into genuine humanness calls us into mission service this is the purpose of our being living beings our mission is not to abuse and use others or abuse and use creation for our own selfish benefit our mission is to care for to nurture to bless others to care for to nurture to bless all creation our life is mission service there are things for you to do that God has created you to do that as he calls out to you follow me the Lord Jesus calls you into that as he brings you to new birth and fills you and empowers you with his

[21 : 01] Holy Spirit you are equipped to do there is work for God for you to do the question this chapter holds before us and which we must face is what are we doing are we doing anything at all are we consciously serving God in mission would that describe our lives and if it doesn't what are we going to do about it every breath of life we draw is given us that we might serve our father that we might serve one another that we might serve creation that's why God made us and then in verse 18 the Lord God said it is not good that the man should be alone

I will make him a helper fit for him you may well remember that John Dunn wrote no man is an island entire of itself we have learned many times over it is not good for us to be isolated we need one another we can't do this on our own the Lord God brings all the animals he is created before the human and the human gives names to all the animals this is creation care naming the animals gives each one dignity and individuality but the animals it turns out are not found to be fit helpers for the humans they may partner with the human to a certain extent but not to the whole extent of relationship and intimacy and companionship only another human will meet the need

Adam said this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man there is a very intimate relationship between the woman and the man they share bone they share flesh they share the word the word for woman is very close to the word for man is is is is is no indication in Genesis 2 of subordination of woman to man we are made together for one another humanity is not male or female humanity is male and female I think in 2025

we need to say this clearly and loudly and often

God created humanity male and female all the way through Genesis 1 and 2 the Lord God has taken great care in his creation work to make separations and divisions within this work of creation humans are made male and female the Lord God has clearly distinguished between just these two therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh and the man and his wife were both naked and they were not ashamed needing intimate relationships with other humans humans are intended to live together in family groups our parents our fathers and mothers form our first family group if we wish to live together in new family groups these are male and female a man with his wife humans are created as sexual creatures we share a great intimacy between husband and wife as we declare at every wedding service in Christian marriage wife and husband are called to live faithfully together to love each other with respect tenderness and delight the companionship and comfort of marriage enable the full expression of physical love between a husband and a wife a gift of God to be enjoyed only within the relationship of marriage between one man and one woman it turns out human community and human intimate relationships are very fragile they are easily broken from within the relationship by our selfishness or our greed or our laziness or our anger it doesn't take much to break it our human relationships are very easily broken from outside the relationship by jealousy sexual infidelity treating others in the way that we should only treat a husband and a wife when we abuse human community when we overstep the proper bounds of intimacy it isn't just ourselves we harm but every other human and all of creation because we are all called to display

[27 : 13] God's purposes of grace before creation and as we damage ourselves and one another we damage everything and yet the good news remains we all humans are wonderfully made the Lord God loves us and has made us human life is part of the goodness of creation the Lord God loves us he has put the breath of his own life within us all human life is valuable and precious to God and it should be to us the Lord God loves us he has set us within creation to serve his mission of grace and mercy we are to go to the lost and the least to the hills and the rivers to the poor and the needy to all of creation to make known the grace and love of

God that all creation might live in the presence of this one God who has made all things the Lord God loves us he has made us to be people in community in fellowship with him with creation and with one another we are to celebrate our human dependence upon one another to enjoy our human relationships with one another recognizing how God has made us to enjoy and depend upon one another Jesus the Lord of creation has come to us sharing our human form and our human life to renew and restore us to the creation purposes of God we will follow Jesus into that purpose as we know more clearly what the purposes of God are in creation this is why

Genesis 2 is so vital and life giving for us this is where Jesus will lead us to be the humans that God has created us to be the Holy Spirit of God is poured out upon us that we may increasingly be his people life with the Lord God is good so let's live the life our Lord God has given us in his presence for his glory let's pray together Almighty God it's good for us to be humbled before your word to recognise that often times we've had our own ideas of what it means to be human and how we should live together and that often times these ideas are very far away from yours we pray that you would hold before us the beauty and joy of your creation the blessing you have poured upon us in making us your people and breathing your life within us set a desire within us to come to Jesus to become more and more the genuine humans you are making us to be may we live for your glory we ask it in Jesus name amen to to be to!

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