

AM Genesis 2 &3, Luke 22 & 23, Revelation 21 & 22

The Big Picture of Scripture - Three Garden and their Trees

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[0 : 00] and three. This is the part of the service that will take the most time. The second two parts will be shorter. So we're turning to the Garden of Eden and the two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. So you'll find this on page two in your Bible, the Pew Bible, and we're reading selected readings from Genesis 2 and Genesis 3. If you want to see what they are, you turn to the back of the bulletin, you'll see the specific readings there. So we're reading, first of all, Genesis chapter 2 at verse 8. Genesis 2 at verse 8. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east. And there he put the man whom he had formed. And 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. Then I move on to verse 15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. We move on now to the start of chapter 3. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden. Neither shall you touch it, lest you die. But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. And she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And in the last section of this reading, verse 21, And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Now, many, many sermons could be preached on these two chapters. They are crucial to our understanding of God, creation, ourselves, sin, death, and hope. But I want to focus briefly on three things. The first thing that we're going to see is God's perfect provision for his beloved creation. What I want to do is skim through a few verses and just pick up a few points as we do that. It would be very helpful if you could follow these in your Bible. Listen to the amazing words of chapter 1, verse 26. Let the enormity of them strike you.

[5 : 02] Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness. The first thing is that every single human being, whether in the womb, young, middle-aged, or in the nursing home, is incredibly special and valuable. We are made in the image of God.

The second thing we see is that God gave every good gift to humanity. If you look through chapter 2, 9-12, you'll see there a beautiful garden, tasty food, a river, gold. If you look at verses 19-20, you'll see the animal kingdom, the birds of the air. If you look at verses 18-24, what you'll find there is God's provision of human love and company and family.

Through God's creation, we see so much of his character, whose nature is to give and to give and to give.

Look now at chapter 2:15. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

God gave and he gives us responsibility to look after his creation. Now you might think I'm a bit biased in saying what I'm about to say, but I think as I read this, for those of you who feel very at home in your gardens or farms, there is a reminder here that there is something very natural, very rewarding, and very God-ordained even about our time spent working outside with flowers, vegetables and trees.

[7 : 02] If you look at verses 9-10, what you see there is that God was the first planter, and that his garden was the most diverse and beautiful and well-watered.

Moving on to chapter 2, verse 16. Here we see that God gave the first man and woman so much freedom and only one rule. You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.

As we read through this section of Genesis, we see that Adam, Eve, and the human race were created to live forever. We see this symbolized in verse 9 in that chapter.

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden. Adam and Eve were given a paradise as their home. But there was something even more remarkable about that paradise, because they were given the closest of relationships with God, their creator.

We read in this section of them, walking in the garden, talking together. So the first thing we see is that God's provision for his beloved creation was absolutely perfect.

[8 : 32] The tone changes as we move on, because the second thing we see is that mankind's relationship with God is broken, and that it's beyond our repair.

Look at verse, we're moving to chapter 3, look at verse 4 there. We see the devil's lies and his temptation. How did he tempt them?

He said, you will be like God. And we see how Eve and Adam succumbed so easily. They'd been given only one rule to obey, and they knew the consequence of breaking it.

By breaking it, they'd signalled that they knew better than God. That they didn't value all he had done for them, that they did not believe that he had their best interests at heart.

And that God shouldn't get in the way of what they wanted to do themselves. I wonder if you recognise that attitude, this action.

[9 : 44] this nature. Because we all know it, and it's summed up in one little word, sin. If you look at verses 7 to 8, and then 12 to 13, what we see there is how more sin, more shame, more blame entered the world.

we see Adam and Eve now hiding from God in verse 8. And if you look into chapter 4, what we see there is the horrible fruit of sin, the real fruit of sin, is jealousy, and even murder destroy Adam and Eve's family.

so what we need to do is start to think about the diagnosis of the human heart we have here. I wonder, do you find that scripture hits the nail on the head?

Our lives are broken as a result of sin. chapter 3, verse 14 to 19, we didn't have time to read it earlier, but if we look through that very quickly, look at verse 16.

Even in our greatest happiness, there is pain. Verse 17, the planet itself, not just ourselves, but the planet itself is cursed because of sin.

[11 : 08] And keep an eye on this word cursed, it's going to be really important as we move forward. The constant struggle of life is brought out if you look at verse 18.

And the reality of death is hard-hitting and realistic in verse 19. For you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Have a wee look at verses 23 and 24 because these are crucial to our understanding of our broken relationship with God. God, the Lord God sent him, sent Adam and Eve out from the garden of Eden.

He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned each way to guard the way to the tree of life. We rejected God's love and as a result we are banished by him from his paradise. The eternal life that Adam and Eve had has been replaced with death. Now, if we were to get what we deserve, this is where scripture would end.

[12:31] There would be no hope, just despair. The second thing we see is that mankind's relationship with God is broken and that we are completely unable to fix it.

I wonder how you feel as you read these chapters. It's beyond tragic for Adam and Eve and for their children but the reality is that we are their descendants.

that is part of the human race that is just as tragic for us. But the third thing we see in Genesis here is amazing because even in the darkest of chapters, Genesis 3, what we have is we have seeds of hope in a shattered paradise.

Look at verse 15. As God pronounces judgment, it's remarkable. He gives the first promise of the Saviour. God's speaking to the devil and he says the offspring of the woman he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

If we think about what that means there it's saying that a human being would one day suffer greatly at the hands of the devil but that same human being would destroy the work of the devil.

[14:03] And this is the first time Jesus the Saviour is clearly foretold in Scripture. But there's another seed of hope. Look at verse 21. Again, God has just pronounced judgment but the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

What we're seeing here again is God's love and care in the midst of judgment. And these words are echoed in a spiritual way later on in the Old Testament.

We read in Isaiah 61 God has clothed me with garments of salvation and evaded me with a robe of righteousness.

Both these verses point us to the coming Saviour. The Messiah who would crush and bear our sin and the evil one on another tree.

The tree of Calvary. And in doing so would bring a reversal of all the results of sin and an even more wonderful eternal life than the Garden of Eden.

[15:18] So just before we move on to the second garden and to the second tree, let's just think very quickly again in summary about the Bible's diagnosis of our situation as human beings.

Firstly, mankind bears God's image. But it is shattered. Creation around us is beautiful but broken. Secondly, we are Adam and Eve's seed.

We carry their DNA both spiritually and physically. That's made clear in the New Testament.

Adam's problem is our problem. Sin, shame, blame, struggles in life, death, separation from God, the inability to obtain eternal life.

These are all fundamental to who we are. Just the final point is before we move on. We need to accept this serious diagnosis before the cure that is hinted at in Genesis chapter 3 can be offered to us.

sometimes we need to realise just how terrible the news is before we realise how amazing the good news is. I wonder what you long for more than anything else in this life.

[16:45] isn't it the restoration of Eden? Now that longing might seem utterly unrealistic but what the Bible is about to tell us is that it's not and that's why we need to move forward to the next garden and the next tree, the garden of Gethsemane and the tree of Calvary.

So what we're going to do just now is we're going to have our second singing, sing psalm. If it hadn't been for the events of Genesis chapter 3 there would be no need for everything else that happened in the Bible.

Everything we read of in the Bible after Genesis 3 is the account of God working to make things right again, working to restore and amazingly even improve on the paradise of Eden.

Because we were banished from the garden of Eden and kept from the tree of life, another and a very different garden and tree were required.

The amazing thing is that our reconciliation with God came not through what we did, even though it was all our fault, but through what he did on our behalf.

[18:05] there's a beautiful verse of prophecy in Isaiah chapter 59. The Lord looked, he was displeased that there was no justice.

He was appalled that there was no one to intervene. So his own arm worked out salvation for him.

So we move on now to the events and we need to remember this, these events are not just at the centre of the Bible, but they're at the centre of all history.

The garden of Gethsemane and the tree of Calvary. Jesus, the son of God, 2,000 years ago, entered our fallen, our broken world.

He became flesh and blood. He became one of us. He came for many reasons, but one stood out above all others.

[19 : 14] Jesus himself puts it like this in Mark chapter 10. The son of man came to give his life as a ransom for many.

That ransom is what we're going to think about just now. We're opening our Bibles again, this time in Luke chapter 22. Luke chapter 22.

I think you'll find this on page 1063. Luke chapter 22 and verse 39. Begins there with in verse 39.

And Jesus came out and went as was his custom to the Mount of Olives and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place he said to them, pray that you may not enter into temptation.

And Jesus withdrew from them about his stone's throw and knelt down and prayed saying, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me.

[20 : 23] nevertheless not my will but yours be done. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Now moving on just a little bit to chapter 23 now. 23 verse 32. 23 verse 32. Two others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him.

And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

And Jesus said, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do. And they cast lots to divide his garments.

[21 : 27] And then on to verse 44. It was now about the sixth hour and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour while the sun's light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two.

Then Jesus calling out with a loud voice said, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit. And having said this, he breathed his last.

The New Testament makes it clear that Adam was the representative of humanity. In Romans chapter 5 it says, sin came into the world through one man and death through sin.

sin. So death spread to all men because all men sinned. But the chapter makes equally clear that Jesus was a second and a much better representative for us.

Verse 17 of that chapter says, for if by one man's trespass death reigned through that one man, that's Adam, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

[22 : 54] Jesus, who we sometimes call the second Adam, is in the garden of Gethsemane. The time for him to pay the ransom is very close.

He's had the last supper with his disciples. He knows that Judas, who appeared to be one of his closest friends, is about to betray him and that his best friends, the disciples, are all about to run away.

Even more, he knows that his father in heaven is about to forsake him as he bears the sins of all who will believe in him and as he bears the wrath of God, the judgment of God for those sins.

He's under the greatest pressure that anyone has ever faced. And he feels the pressure, he prays to his father, father, if you're willing, take this cup, take this situation from me.

He's in great agony. Think of the sweat that's falling like drops of blood from his forehead. Adam only had, we might say, a small temptation and he gave in so easily.

[24 : 17] Here's Jesus and he's resolute. He says to his father, yet not my will, father, but yours be done.

Jesus knows that his mission is to be the great sacrifice for the sin of Adam's race. And in doing so, he's going to suffer many things.

He's going to suffer an excruciating death. He's going to bear the sin of all those who will put their faith in him. And he's going to experience separation from his father, as we sang about in Psalm 22.

And he's going to die. What happened on the tree of Calvary? Paul in Galatians 3 picks up on the vocabulary of Genesis 3.

That we are cursed because we like Adam are not able and do not keep the law of God. Paul states, think of this word curse, Paul states Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

[25 : 32] for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. Jesus took all the curses that would bring judgment on us on the cross, our sin and our spiritual brokenness.

As we'll see in the final section, no curse remains for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their saviour. Just to finish this short section, some verses from a song by the retired preacher's minister, Alec Macdonald, that take us back 2,000 years ago to the second garden and to the second tree.

They take us to the great ransom paid on behalf of every believer. In the garden, the light was dimmed and sorrow and distress.

There was heartbreak and temptation but courage nonetheless. In the garden, there was darkness. It was the devil's hour when the friends of light and kindness ran from the evil power.

In the courtroom and the palace, injustice reigned supreme, but the light burned all the brighter to rescue and redeem.

[27 : 05] On a hill outside the city was where the darkness fell and the light went down in darkness to the deepest pit of hell.

the light was shut away in the darkness of the tomb, but the grave could not contain it in hopelessness and gloom.

The stone was rolled, the grave was bare, the light was shining bright, the light of the world was shining and dispelled the darkest night.

We're going to sing again this time from Psalm 130, sing Psalms 130. You'll find this on page 173, page 173.

So before we come to the last section of our service, we're going to sing this and have a look at verses 7 to 8 especially because the Bible together, a sign that Scripture has just one author.

[28 : 14] The books of the Bible are not random and the story, the big story of the Bible all fits together perfectly. The Bible finishes in many ways as it starts.

There's a new creation, there's a garden and there's trees in it. There's one difference though that we cannot comprehend. The Garden of Eden was absolutely perfect.

But the new creation will be even better. We're going to read about the new creation now towards the end of the Bible in Revelation chapter 21.

Again, you'll find the references in the back of your bulletin. Revelation chapter 21. I think you'll find this on page 1250. 1250.

Revelation chapter 21 verse 1. John writes, Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

[29 : 25] And I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. and I heard a loud voice on the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

Now if you go forward to verse 22. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb.

And the city has no need of sun, or moon, to shine on it. For the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and the gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there.

[30 : 53] They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

And then just carrying on into the start of chapter 22. Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

Also, on either side of the river, the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads, and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever.

[32 : 12] forever and ever. Now we know from the Bible that when believers in Christ die, that their souls are taken to heaven, and that when Jesus returns, their bodies will be resurrected, and that he will also gather believers who are still alive.

Revelation 21 and 22 take us further in our knowledge of what lies ahead. There will be a new creation. And finally, if you look carefully at the verses we read, what we all long for will come true. The phrase, heaven on earth. Let's skim through the verses we read, and just learn some of the key truths about the new creation, and why it is even better than the perfection of the garden of Eden. chapter 21 verse 3, God no longer just walks with Adam and Eve, amazing as that was, he will dwell, he will live with his people.

Verse 4, all that pains us, all that breaks us in this world, will be unknown in the new creation. As we read there, death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away.

[33 : 48] Verse 25, the gates of Eden were shut after Adam and Eve were expelled, but the gates of the new city will never be shut.

This is an image of peace and freedom. Verse 27, the new creation is greater than the perfection of Eden because there is no potential for sin.

No evil will ever enter. Into chapter 22 verse 2, we get the picture of a new and greater garden.

A river, the tree of life it says is planted on both sides of that river. Adam and Eve had been kept from the tree of life in the garden of Eden after their sin.

But here we have, it seems to suggest, multiple trees and they bear lots of fruit every month. wealth. What we see here is abundant eternal life.

[35 : 03] And in verse 3, we see more beautiful and comforting symmetry. The curse that came with sin is removed.

It was fully dealt with on the tree of Calvary. glory. Now, you might have heard the famous phrase from Augustine, you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. I think we could add to that the new creation, a place without mourning, crying, pain, or death. is that not the place that our hearts seek and we will be restless until we find it.

Entry to this wonderful place rests on whether we have the Saviour or not. If he has not cleaned us of our sins, we're not going to enter.

Revelation is clear on this. Look at verse 27 of chapter 21. It says there, nothing unclean will ever enter it. Not that we can make ourselves clean, but we can be made clean by the blood of Christ.

[36 : 20] It continues, your name has to be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. You need to be known by Jesus.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, has to have paid your ransom. So just to finish with, we started off by thinking about the Bible.

Many writers, only one author. And we've seen how the one author has brought beautiful symmetry into his book. We thought of the three gardens of Scripture and the trees that are linked to them.

In the Garden of Eden, we as the human race, we went to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and we chose to reject God to set ourselves up against him.

The amazing thing is that right away God began the greatest ever rescue mission. As he pronounced judgment in Genesis 3, he also gave the first promise of the Saviour.

[37 : 27] and then the Saviour came and went from the second garden to the second tree, the tree of Calvary. Paul puts it like this in Corinthians 2.

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. The final, sorry, the first gospel promise of Scripture came right at the start of Genesis.

the final gospel promise comes almost at the end of Scripture. Look out for the beautiful words we see there.

I'm quoting from the NIV here. It says there, whoever is thirsty, let him come. And whoever wishes, let him take the three gift of the water of life.

The word whoever echoes John 3, 16. However, what it's telling us there is the way is open to all. Three gift, a place in the new creation is provided for you at someone else's great expense. [38 : 41] What do you have to do? Well, not much really. You have to reach out and the verb used there is take. What does that mean in practice?

this? Well, I think we can go to the three gardens again and answer that question. Three simple things. We need to admit to God that we are as Adam and Eve in the first garden.

That their problem is our problem. We need to go to the third garden and tell God that we desire to be with him where there will be no sin and death.

And then we need to go back to the second garden and we need to trust that what Jesus did for you on the cross. We need to trust him and take that personally as the answer for your sin.

There's but one qualification to this promise. You find this right at the end of Revelation and that's that the door will not remain open forever. Verse 20 says that Jesus will return soon and as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6 therefore now is the day of salvation.

[40 : 02] We're going to finish our service by singing from Revelation, I think it's chapter 21. You'll find this CBS 3works up to Hebrews 3