

The Gospel In The Garden

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[0:00] When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.

And a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man that 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. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers.

The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. Bdellium and Onyxstone are there.

[1:10] The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria, 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 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. Amen. Well, I need to admit that when I began my time of study this week, I fully expected that I was going to find the primary purpose of this text, this unique text here in chapter 2, to really just be telling us something about humanity as a whole. And of course, there is certainly a lot for us to glean about what it means to be human here, and certainly lots that we can take away for all of us here.

But what I came to determine as I studied through throughout the week is that the central focus of these verses is not actually on humanity in general.

[2:36] The central focus of these verses is on Adam in particular. And I actually think that's very important if we're going to understand this text the right way and understand why it's actually here and what its purpose and its function is in teaching us this morning.

We need to understand this focus. Herein lies the key, I think, to grasping the significance. The emphasis is on the one man through whom God's covenant blessings and stipulations will be mediated to the rest of humanity.

Okay, let me say that again. Humanity is a part of it. It's just not the focus of it, right? The emphasis here is on one man, not the man and his wife, not the man and his family, but one man.

And it is through this one man that God is going to give his covenant blessings and his covenant stipulations that will then be mediated by this one man to the rest of humanity.

Now, if we can get that picture, and we're going to spend a lot of time thinking about it this morning. If we can get that picture, then we can really begin to understand why this text is so valuable to us.

[4:02] Why it's so necessary for us. Adam is presented here as a covenant head of the human race. That's then affirmed throughout the scriptures.

When we see other authors throughout the scriptures referring to this scene, that's what they refer to. God especially formed him.

He has given him life. And then he places him in the bountiful garden temple in which he and his wife and his offspring will enjoy that life in covenant communion with the Lord God.

So that we understand the blessings of these verses and the potential curses embedded in these verses. They come to the rest of humanity through the one man, through Adam.

Now, why is this important? Why should we look so closely at Adam before trying to quickly apply this text to ourselves?

[5:08] And it's for this reason. I want to suggest this morning that the text is here to prepare us for a greater Adam.

Jesus, who will come to restore and secure the covenant blessings of life for his people by succeeding in every way that Adam failed.

That's why I think this text is so important for us. We want to look especially at Adam, the first Adam, and the stipulations around Adam, and what God was doing with Adam so that we can actually begin to understand the last Adam, the greater Adam.

In other words, we're going to sum it up this way. I want to show you in this text, I want to show you the gospel in the garden. The gospel in the garden. And it begins here.

I want you to see the life-giving God of the garden. The life-giving God of the garden. Look again at verse 5.

[6:18] When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up. And then it gives an explanation for why it was in that condition. The Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.

A mist was going up from the land, watering the face of the ground. Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Like in chapter 1, God is the sole actor in all of these verses. It is God who addresses the condition of the land.

It's God who forms the man. It's God who plants the garden. It's God who assigns the man his task. It's God that stipulates the covenant on which his blessings will be based.

This whole text then, fundamentally, is about God and his work in the world. The gospel in the garden begins with God.

[7:31] And who is this God, according to Moses? We've seen so much about him in the creation narrative in chapter 1, but there's something different that Moses begins to do here in chapter 2.

In chapter 1, Elohim was the name used for God, signifying God's creative power and transcendence and majesty.

Here, there's a slight shift. Elohim is still present, but attached to it is another name for God. It's a combination of names. It's Yahweh Elohim now.

Lord God is what we see now. And it's repeated throughout this section that takes us all the way through the end of chapter 4. We see this uniquely even in this text from the rest of the Pentateuch that Moses provided for us.

Lord God. There's one exception. And it's at the beginning of chapter 3 in the exchange between the serpent and Eve. Everything else, this is the name that's being used, and I think it's significant for us.

[8:40] Elohim is maintaining the reference to God's transcendent power and his majesty as the eternal creator and ruler of all that exists.

It's communicating that to us. God's redemption and personal nature and love and covenant and compassion.

The combination brings together on one hand God's majesty and on the other hand God's intimacy, both of which are critical to the unfolding narrative here in chapter 2.

We need the God Elohim who can create and rule. We need to understand him in that sense to understand chapter 2. We also need the covenant God, the redemptive God, to understand the fullness of the gospel in chapter 2.

And what we find is that God's transcendence, amazingly, does not preclude his eminence. His majesty and power and holiness do not make intimate communion with his creatures impossible.

[9:58] Neither do his personal covenant nature and love for his creatures come at the expense of his glory.

He loses nothing of his power and transcendence and majesty by condescending to us in relationship and in communion. He is at the same time the magnificent creator and personal covenant redeemer of his people.

And as both creator and redeemer, the Lord God is the all-sufficient source of life for his creation. Even in the name that Moses gives us, we see here that the gospel begins with the life-giving God of the garden.

And we see it unfolding in at least two ways here. We see it first in the pre-garden condition of the land in verses 5 and 6.

[11:08] Now, there's no reason to stumble over this by trying to compare it to what was said about day 3 in chapter 1. Moses isn't doing the same thing. In the creation of the world, God has a special purpose for the place that he's going to put the man in this garden that he's about to plant.

It doesn't take away from what he did on day 3. He's just designated a place. And the description given to this place before God comes and plants the garden and forms the man is similar to what we saw at the beginning of chapter 1.

This formless and empty void that was the condition of the cosmos before God intervened. That's the picture that we now have of the place where he will put his garden and his man.

It's somewhat formless and barren and empty. And there's two reasons given for this condition. Notice it in verse 5.

First, it's in this condition because the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land. He has withheld the water cycle that he created back on day 2.

[12:20] He has withheld it at least temporarily from this section of his creation. It hasn't rained yet. Secondly, we're told it is in this condition because God has not yet created a man to cultivate the ground.

Now, what's the point of all of that? The pre-garden conditions of the land are remedied by God alone. Only he can bring the rain.

Only he can create the cultivator who will work the ground and keep it and use it. Moses is presenting the Lord God then as the source of all life and blessing by first acknowledging the condition of the land before the garden.

The garden needs God to have life and blessing and fruitfulness. But there's more. We see in verse 7.

That this life-giving feature of God is in the creation of Adam himself. Notice the special attention God gives the creation of the man.

[13:39] It's distinct from the rest of his creation. God personally and intentionally forms the man out of the dust on the ground. Human life then is both a special creation of God, unique as an image bearer as we saw in chapter 1.

And yet being made from the dirt is fragile. Still less than God, this creature from the dirt.

And once God formed the man out of the dust, notice, he breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. And man becomes a living creature. God does this, at least in the description of creation, he does this with no other part of his creation. It is the kiss of God imparting something of himself into this creature.

And man becomes a living creature because the God of all life has given him life to live. Man's life, therefore, comes directly from the personal kindness of the Lord God.

[14:57] Paul will say it this way when he preaches in Athens in Acts chapter 17. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And he is not far from us. For in him, Paul says, we live and move and have our being. The gospel of this text, the gospel of the garden begins with the life-giving God of the garden, who alone is the source of all life and blessing.

But I want you to notice a second thing. We see the life-giving God of the garden. Now I want you to notice the bountiful garden of God.

The bountiful garden of God. Look again 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.

[16:13] The tree of life was in the midst of the garden. And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After forming the man and giving him life, God plants a garden paradise in which he can place the man, in which he can enjoy this life.

Everything about this description conveys the bounty of God's goodness to the man. God calls the garden to bring forth trees that are both beautiful to look at and produce fruit that is delicious to eat. But the significance of the garden is greater than beautiful landscapes and delicious fruit. It is the special place of God's presence in the created world.

A garden temple in which the Lord God intends to commune with his special creation. Ian Duggett calls it a sort of holy of holies.

A holy place and fruitful place in the midst of God's grand creation. So that God puts man in the garden not only to enjoy the bounty of the garden itself, but in order that he might worship and commune with his creator.

[17 : 42] This is how it was meant to be. Adam was there to worship. Adam was there to commune with God.

Adam was there to bring the rest of humanity to this God for worship and communion. And in the midst of this garden sanctuary, notice highlighted for us these two trees.

First is the tree of life of which man was free to enjoy. What is this tree? It's mentioned sparingly throughout the scriptures.

In fact, even in the narrative itself, we don't see it again until the end of chapter 3 when man is expelled from the garden and it is emphasized that he is expelled from access to this tree of life. We see it come up again in the book of Proverbs, linking the tree of life to all that is good and fruitful and righteous. And then we see it again at the end in the book of Revelation.

[18 : 58] In the new heavens, in the new earth, there it is again, the tree of life. Well, what is this tree? How are we to understand it? What was its purpose?

It's not that the fruit of the tree actually had the power to provide life to Adam. That's not the purpose of the tree.

It's not like playing a video game where you get tired eventually and you begin to lower your health and now you've got to hurry up and run to the tree of life real quick before something bad happens. You eat the fruit and now you're regenerated, right?

No, that's not what the tree is there for. There's no power in the fruit itself. God is the one who provides life and he's already blessed man with life.

He's breathed it into his nostrils. He is living. The tree was there as a symbol of the life he had received, a symbol of the life that he enjoyed because of the life-giving God of the garden.

[20 : 01] It's there as a kind of catalyst for worship in God's garden temple. Calvin understood it sacramentally for Adam.

I find this really helpful. He understood it to be sacramental for Adam in a way that we view baptism and communion.

It's not that partaking in the Lord's Supper actually contributes to our justification. There's no power in the cracker. There's no power in the juice.

However, it does work to communicate to us the source of our justification in the death of Christ on the cross. Says Calvin, He gave the tree of life its name not because it could confer on man that life, but in order that it might be a symbol and memorial of the life which he had received from God.

He intended, therefore, that man, as often as he tasted the fruit of that tree, should remember whence he received his life in order that he might acknowledge that he lives not by his own power, but by the kindness of the Lord God alone.

[21 : 33] I find that wonderfully helpful. It's not that Adam had to eat of the tree of life to live.

It's that he was free to eat of it so that he would understand with great thanksgiving and worship this God who had given him life that every time, as Calvin said, he reached out and took of that tree, he would be reminded that the source of all of his life and blessing is in the Lord God.

But there's a second tree in the midst of the garden. We'll see in just a few moments this particular tree was prohibited. Adam was not to eat of this one.

He's free to eat of the tree of life so long as he is in the garden, but he cannot eat of this one. It's the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And again, the tree itself wasn't given special power.

The fruit here was not poisonous. It was just forbidden. And like the tree of life, God thus named the tree as a symbol of what only belongs to God.

[22 : 49] moral autonomy, absolute knowledge and wisdom belongs only to Yahweh Elohim.

It does not belong to the creature of the dust. And it's there to remind the creature that God alone has the ability to truly know all that is good and evil.

The man must rely then on God to rightly provide him with that wisdom and to take of the tree would be man's attempt at gaining on his own that which he must rely upon God alone to obtain.

Says Bruce Waltke, good and evil is a merism for all moral knowledge. Only God in heaven who transcends time and space has the prerogative to know truly what is good and bad for life.

Thus the tree represents knowledge and power appropriate only to God. So the life-giving God placed the man in a luscious garden temple where he could enjoy the blessings bountifully of communion with the Lord God so that the gospel in the garden shows us that God's intention was to give life to man through his personal presence in a blessed covenantal relationship.

[24 : 26] Are you with me? There's the life-giving God of the garden. There's the bountiful garden of God. And then we get to the third place. We find here the covenant guardian of God's garden.

It's a lot of G's. Don't try to say it too fast. It's the covenant guardian of God's garden. Here we finally get to the man himself.

Let's look first at verse 8 and then we're going to jump down again to 15 to 17. Verse 8, The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there he put the man whom he had formed.

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.

As the first man, Adam is the guardian of God's garden. He's living there in covenant with his creator and we see I think in this a three-fold function that is going to become prominent in the scriptures.

[25 : 54] It first belongs to Adam. He's first a king. He's placed in the garden to rule as God's image bearer. We see it in verse 8 and then at the start of verse 15 God creates, he plants and then he places.

He places his vice regent. He places his king to rule in the garden. Adam is also a priest tasked in verse 15 with working working and keeping this garden temple as the place of God's presence in the world.

There are linguistic links here that is unique to the work of the priest in the tabernacle later in the Pentateuch. Particularly the work of guarding the holy place from that which is profane.

God puts Adam in his garden temple, his holy place, the place of his presence in order that he might guard it from that which is profane. As Ian Duggett said, he's to keep an eye out for serpents that will contradict his God and attempt to deceive his creatures.

That is Adam's job. He is thus the lead worshiper who protects the holy place and who leads his people in true worship and obedience to God.

[27 : 19] He is a king who rules. He is a priest who brings us to God and cares for God's temple. Third, Adam is a prophet.

We see it in verses 16 and 17. He is responsible for receiving and then communicating God's word. And it's here that the covenant is stipulated by a demand for obedience.

look again at verses 16 and 17. 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 you eat of it you shall surely die.

What is God's word to his man? you are free to enjoy the life-giving bounty of everything in the garden with one exception.

Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God's command to him is clear and so are the consequences of his disobedience.

[28 : 33] The blessing of obedience in this covenant is life and life in abundance in God's garden and in his presence. the consequence of disobedience is death.

On the day he eats of it he will surely die. And what is the nature of this death? Well we need to understand it first in the context of this passage.

What is life in this passage? Life comes from God and it is experienced in his presence and the fruitfulness and the bounty of his blessings that come only from being in covenant peace with him. That's life here. What then is this death? The death that the man will suffer as a result of his disobedience is the removal from God's presence.

An expulsion from the garden and all the life giving blessings that come as a result of it. Certainly physical death is included in this but it's more than that.

[29 : 50] Adam will continue to live beyond his sin but his would be a living death felt by his soul until the day that his body returns to dust.

it would be catastrophic for Adam. And with such a severe consequence of course the natural question that we want to ask is why was the tree necessary?

Why did God put it there? In the context of the passage we may answer it many ways the context of the passage the answer is so that he might acknowledge the clear distinction between creator and creature Adam needs to understand who he is in relationship to God.

The temptation for Adam was not as simple as just eating that which God had forbidden. Our propensity for doing something simply because someone told us not to do it won't take hands on who has that propensity.

It's in us isn't it? The idea of the forbidden someone tells us not to do something and something in us it makes us want to do it all the more you parents understand this.

[31 : 24] That propensity for doing wrong simply because it's wrong that's a sign of the depth of our depravity that's a feature of what we experience in our nature that Adam did not have.

This is not as base as just God saying not do it and that just made Adam really want to do it. No that's not what this is. Adam does not have that kind of depravity at this moment.

His temptation is actually true to all of us in a significant way. The temptation is to be his own God. It was a move toward moral autonomy living independently of the Lord God.

That would be the temptation of the tree. The purpose in forbidding it was fundamentally to remind the man exalted as he was in the created order that he was yet under subjection to God.

To eat of a tree would not be an offense against an impersonal law. It would be an offense against the personal Lord God who had formed him and given him life and abundantly blessed him.

[32 : 47] It would be to say I want something that you have not given. I want something of my own apart from you. It would be a desecration of the covenant between God and this man.

The tree was essential then to the covenant between the two. Again says Calvin abstinence from the fruit of one tree was a kind of first lesson in obedience that man might know he had a director and lord of his life on whose will he ought to depend and in whose commands he ought to acquiesce and this truly is the only rule of living well and rationally That men should exercise themselves in obeying God Why is the tree there?

The tree has to be there It has to be there The covenant between God and man demands the stipulation of man's obedience The temptation would be to reject God to be his own God to have apart from God something that he believes God has not provided rightfully to him The gospel in the garden then is rooted in this covenant obedience So long as Adam ruled according to God's law So long as he guarded the garden temple against the profane So long as he proclaimed God's word to others who would obey it all the life giving blessings of God's bounty would belong to him and to humanity As the covenantal head of the human race Adam's job was to convey these blessings to the rest of us as our prophet priest and king but you know where the story goes he fails to do it why is it so important that we look closely at the one man in this text because we know that he failed he failed to meet the demands of covenant obedience he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he plunged the human race into sin and death because he sinned we have this nature of sin says

Paul in Romans 5 therefore just as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin so death spreads to all men because all have sin as our covenant head in Adam we are corrupt we're guilty before God the text then is here to prepare us for a greater Adam we need one who will perfectly obey we need one who will restore fallen humanity to fellowship and life with God and he can't merely be one of us but he must at least be one of us there's a uniqueness some of you men are understanding this in the book that you're reading right now in the person of Christ there is a uniqueness in this second Adam that must be true he must!

when the New Testament authors address this text it is to show Jesus as the true and better Adam our perfect prophet priest and king as the eternal son of God in flesh Jesus succeeded in every way that Adam fell though in Adam we receive death those of us who are in Christ the greater Adam receive life the life of God for eternity writes Paul to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 as by one man came death by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead for as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive thus it is written he says and he quotes

[37 : 22] Genesis 2 the man the first man Adam became a living being and then he says but the last Adam became a life giving spirit the first man was from the earth a man of dust the second man

is from heaven as was the man of dust so also are those who are of the dust as is the man of heaven so also are those who are of heaven just as we have borne the image of the man of dust Paul says we shall also bear the image of the son of heaven the man of heaven Jesus is the Lord the true and better Adam in him and in him alone we have life for he succeeded where Adam failed only in him could we have this life we need to see Adam so that we can see Jesus if we don't see Adam in Genesis 2 if we immediately get to the text and we go to our life today we're going to miss Jesus we need to see Adam so that we can see him we need to see Adam fail so that we can see Jesus succeed the gospel of the garden is not found through Adam it's found through Jesus and yet this passage is so important to our understanding of the gospel of Jesus we find here that it begins with the Lord God that God alone is the source of life and blessing but we also find that the true bounty of life and blessing is found in communion with the Lord God your greatest enemy is not the death that will put your body in the ground it is your expulsion from the garden of God finally we see the covenant stipulations of obedience that are necessary for life and blessing in communion with God all of that is here in Genesis 2 those stipulations are given first to Adam who failed to meet them as each and every one of us has failed to meet them but they are fulfilled finally fully in the Lord Jesus Christ and here's the bottom line the gospel of the garden is that though you are guilty and condemned in Adam and in your own sin the life giving God of the garden became a man fulfilled the law died on the cross and rose from the dead so that you could be forgiven and he could once again give you life the one who fulfills this is the first one that we saw in the text the God of life condescends to us and Philippians too he empties himself and becomes obedient unto death even the death of the cross why so that he can give you life and life abundantly all of us by nature do exactly as Adam did we attempt to gain and follow our own wisdom we want to judge for ourselves what we believe is good and bad and that is at the heart of sin in this scene and it's why death reigns in us now but if you will repent and come to Jesus trusting in his righteousness you will be forgiven and you will receive this life eternal for as in Adam all die in Christ the greater Adam shall all be made alive let's pray