

# The Eternal Garden

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Date: 18 May 2023

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     22. I'm focusing really on the first five verses of the chapter, Revelation 22 verses 1 down to verse 5. We have, I hope you won't say finally, but we have at last come to the end of our series looking at the gardens and here in our reading this evening we find, well at first it's quite hard perhaps to find the garden but hopefully as we spend time we'll see in these verses that this very much is the garden, very much is the final garden. 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 the other side of the river the tree of life of 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 shall 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 and ever. Of course in the final chapter we do have in all the senses the culmination of the whole of Scripture. This is the culmination of what it is we are.

From Genesis to all the prophets, all the judges, to the New Testament, to the life and times of our Saviour in his time on earth, to our own age just now, this age where our Saviour has risen and we are seeking to serve and we see the churches being built across the world and we come this evening and we look forward, quite literally we look forward to this final garden. It's amazing isn't it that Scripture both begins and ends with a garden. We said this all the way along but the theme of the garden, and I hope you've seen this, it's not just something I've tried to find and tried to really make it work.

It's there in Scripture. I'm certainly not the first person to do this theme, not the first person to see it. The early church often talked about the gospel of the gardens. There's plenty more gardens we could have looked at but it's been almost three months now so it's time to come to an end some point but the reality is the theme of growth and of life and of life from death appears of course again and again throughout Scripture, throughout the parables of our Saviour and here this evening we find the final garden and some translations will have as the heading of these first five verses, I think the NIV has, I'm not sure, other translations definitely have it, Eden restored, Eden restored and really that would be the the working title perhaps of our time this evening, our short time this evening, Eden restored or perhaps more accurately Eden resurrected and we'll see that more why in a second that perhaps Eden resurrected is more appropriate for what we're looking at but here we see a garden.

Well it's also a city you're saying we've read and we're all familiar of these final chapters. If you read the end of chapter 21 we see it speaking of the city, you know verses, the whole chapter 21 is describing to us the dimensions.

21 verse 9 onwards we see the dimensions of a city, we see all the jewels and all the measurements. of course we know that the chapters and the verses aren't inspired, they're not from God, they are man made and are included by man. So really chapter 21 and chapter 22 they aren't separate. The city is described in 21, the jewels, the beauty, the size. But we hit chapter 22 and we're now inside the city and we see a glimpse of what this city looks like, this new heaven and the new earth, what our future looks like.

[ 4 : 29 ] This is a garden, it is a garden of our future. This is a garden that one day we will all spend, those who know and who love the Lord, we will spend our eternity in. This is Eden again, Eden restored. Before we carry on and just very briefly, we know ourselves when we read Revelation, if you're being very honest and I will join you in being honest, there are parts of Revelation which the greatest Christians you can think of the greatest Christians you can think of, the most well known theologians, you can name anyone you want from the early church Augustine onwards perhaps and you go into the reformers, Calvin, Luther and Knox, Beza, there's a theme all to the modern theologians, the Bavinx, the Grudems, there's a theme in that everyone comes to Revelation and we have to be very honest.

There's times we have no idea, just no idea. And it's good for us to have no idea because it reminds us that we're dealing with God's Word and what's made known to us is for us to understand what's not for us to understand.

It's time for us to speculate and to spend in discussion. But there's great mystery. Of course there's mystery. This is the future. This is heaven. This is heavenly spiritual realms we're dealing in.

But just for ourselves this evening, often in Revelation, John of course being a human, John being a man who was given these visions, he often uses human terms to describe what was seen before him. We've seen this before, didn't we? We saw before that when we saw Satan being described in Ezekiel, he described with the various jewels and colours and shapes. And we said then that this is just the best that we can humanly do in our human language to describe what is heavenly, what is beyond us. And it's the same when we come to Revelation. We come to see a city being described for us and earthly jewels being used. There's a sense where this is the best that we can do humanly understanding. This is the limits of our human understanding. We can imagine crystal. We can imagine gold. We can imagine the precious jewels in the street.

But really, the reality, it's not simply earthly jewels and gold. It is something much more glorious. And I know we probably assume that anyway, but just to remind ourselves that there's metaphor here.

[ 7 : 20 ] There's imagery being used here. What is being said? Well, as we look at these first, these five verses, let's take a tour, a tour this evening. And this is really a glimpse of our future. But with respect, this could be called our home report, perhaps, of our future home. This is us taking a tour of at least part of where we will be for all eternity. Let's begin this tour. We begin the tour. The angel shows us the river of the water of life. As we begin this tour. We really follow the river. We follow the river with our eyes, with our body, perhaps. So we walk alongside this river and we see the elements of this final garden. We can look at three or four this evening. There's plenty more. Three or four is enough for us to grasp. Enough for me to grasp anyway.

As we look at these three or four elements of our future home. We'll be reminded, I hope, of a garden we looked at a good few months ago now. The first garden.

We said at the start, the garden of Eden wasn't just a pragmatic, practical lump of land that God gave his people to live on. He made it beautiful, didn't he? He made it practical, yes. But we also saw that Eden was so much more. It was a temple. With Adam, of course, called to guard and to serve in it.

And Eden, before the fall. Eden before the fall. Eden was created by God and all its beauty, all its wonder. It was there as a foreshadowing, wasn't it? A foreshadowing of mankind's eternal home.

Where heaven and earth will be joined together. We will dwell physically and spiritually with our Lord and Saviour for all time. Time without end. In the eternal Eden. That's why Eden restored doesn't quite capture it. If we're saying this is Eden restored, then really we're saying that this Eden in heaven, this future Eden, the new heavens and the new earth, it's restored. It's just the same as the old one, but now the same again. But it's not, is it? There's elements of the old Eden. We have the river, we have the tree, we have God's presence there. But that's why I would say perhaps there's more Eden resurrected. Like us one day in our resurrection bodies, whatever they might look like or be like, that is beyond our understanding. But it will still be us. It will still be you and I, with perhaps our personalities, our own sense of humour, our own understanding, but of course without sin.

[ 10 : 19 ] But also there's a sense, isn't there, as we saw even last Lord's Day, no last week's prayer meeting, when we saw the risen Jesus and his resurrected body. It was still him. But also there's something different. Eden is still Eden, but of course it's the new heavens, it's the new earth. Everything has started again. And it's not like the old Eden, it's a new Eden where it's city and garden together.

There is the wonder and the beauty and the presence of God in the old Eden, but now it is so much more glorious. We'll see that as we go on. So here we have the river first and foremost, the first part of our tour of our future home. We follow the river, then the angel showed me, showed John, show me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This river has a central place in this new heavens, this new earth. This river has a central place in in this new Eden, in our future Eden. And we're told of course, three things about this river. First of all, we see it's been described of course, as the water of life. This river represents to us the reality that our future home, our true Eden, our eternal Eden, as we'll be calling it, that there and there alone we will truly have eternal life. The image isn't it of this water, this ongoing flowing stream that is giving life, but not in a sense that the earthly, that our streams do. Our streams give life, give fertility, they provide water for us and the animals. But the sense here that this water of life, it flows and because it's flowing all the time, we'll see in a second of course where it flows from, because it's flowing all the time. There's a sense that this is the ongoing reality of life.

Unlike the first Eden, where life would come to an end, the curse came, sin came, Adam and Eve, they fell.

Sin entered the world, darkness and death entered the world. That will not be so for us of course. As we approach, as we enter into our own eternal Eden, we see this flowing river of life. Our life, our eternal life, the perfection that Adam and Eve once lived in, that was cut short. Our eternal perfection will never be cut short. As long as this river keeps flowing, this river of life, we will receive eternal life as it were from it. That is the image we see here, this glorious, beautiful, crystal clear river. That's the second description we have. It's a flowing river of life and it's crystal clear, bright as crystal. There's no more impurity. There's no more problem. There's no more issue.

[ 13 : 41 ] Even the cleanest of our rivers, our waters. We know ourselves and some of us know perhaps quite well, even the cleanest looking river, if you drink it, can cause problems for you. Quite ill at times.

Even the most pure looking bit of water can cause severe issues. But not so for this river. This is a crystal clear river. There's no impurities anymore. We read that, didn't we? Verse 14 and verse 15.

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers. And this is how we know this is imagery, metaphors. Because in the new heavens and the new earth, there is no outside other than hell. And we will now see that or know that, but it's not our experience. But follow the imagery. Outside are dogs and sorcerers, sexually immoral and murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Impurity is out there. Impurity is gone. Now in our eternal Eden, there is only crystal clear purity. The water of life is perfect. It has no problems. It has no issues. There is no more sin to be found, no more illness, no more darkness to be found. We will drink, as it were, eternally from this eternally flowing water, which is perfect. And why is this crystal clear water, why is it so pure? Well, why is any good water pure? Well, it comes from a source, a pure source. And what is the source of our river flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb? The river has to be clear and perfect.

The river, of course, gives eternal life. It, of course, represents our eternal, ongoing reality. Because it comes from the source of that through eternal life. The river is an image. Perhaps there might be a river. We don't know. But it's an image either way. As we look and follow the river, we look up to its source. And there's the source, the throne of God and of the Lamb.

[ 15 : 57 ] The true, of course, source of our water of life. And just think just now, as brothers and sisters, think just now of how life-giving the water of life is for us.

And how Jesus preserves us and keeps us. Of how he shows his love towards us. And how, at times, when we feel so weak, he upholds us and he reminds us of his love towards us.

That's how we feel and how we experience that water of life in a sin-sick, fallen state. How much more glorious will it be for us in eternity and glory when we are seeing and feeling and experiencing the eternal life given to us by our Saviour. Without sin, without fault, without curse, without impurity, eternal, crystal clear, flowing water. As we follow the river, we then, of course, see the city. We are, of course, in the middle of the city. Verse 2, through the middle of the street of the city. We've gone from a garden of Eden now, of course, to a city, the new heavens and the new earth. And there is so much we could say here. And so many opinions and views that I personally have, and I'm sure that many of us have. And there are plenty of fellowships for us to discuss these things. And we should, we really should discuss them.

There is one thing that Ian McRaeon, the Christian Graver, had always gone about, and I think he is right. We seem to have lost our desire to speak about glory because we're so scared, perhaps, of being wrong or so scared of being not quite right. But Scripture, with respect, it leaves gaps for us because we don't understand things. We can't understand things till we see it ourselves.

But what Scripture does give us, it's there for us to ponder and to glorify God. The new heavens and the new earth, there's new creation. Heaven and earth meet, as it were. God steps down to earth to be with his people forever. And there will be life, there will be human flourishing again. We see that there was work in the Garden of Eden. Perfect man had to do work. It wasn't labour, was it? But there was work.

[ 18 : 24 ] Adam and Eve had work to do. But it was good work. It wasn't called hard work until after sin, after the fall. If it was life to be lived and it were work to be done and things to be done in the old Eden, then we shouldn't perhaps expect the new eternal Eden to be any different. Human flourishing will take place.

Life will grow and exist for all eternity. But it will be how it's supposed to be without sin. The garden is turned, as it were, into a city. The garden for two becomes a city for the many, many of God's people. Home for two has become now a city for many, many people. And the city, of course, implies the reality that God's people is a broad number, a large, innumerable number of the promises he made to his people, promises to Abraham.

He would make his people like what? Sand of the sea, stars of the sky. There are many, many of God's people in this place. I've heard it before that there will be many there, many there from around the world, who perhaps many beside them wouldn't think they'd be there, but many who love the Lord, who know the Lord, all shapes and sizes, all cultures, all backgrounds, all colours, all nations, all together in this city. Here we see this reinvented reality, this garden city, the garden and the city have become one together.

The city, of course, represents new heaven. This new heavenly Jerusalem we can read, if you have time, in chapter 21, as you read the dimensions of it and the beauty of it. And again, even the dimensions in chapter 21, even they have specific prophetic importance. And there's a whole series for us there in the future, Lord willing. But for now, just to say that chapter 21, it's not about, it's not there for the mechanics, it's not there for the drawing and the designs of a city. It's there to show us that God will dwell with his people. God will in the new heavens and the new earth, he will have his people live and flourish and exist and dwell in peace and enjoy together as brothers and sisters.

And we will see him as our face to face, see our saviour face to face. God's people dwelling eternally in God's presence. Here again, we see Eden, don't we? Eden, we saw God as we're walking with Adam and Eve and we touched on that, that the scripture is somewhat silent, that's what that meant, but we can be assured from what we did see and say that God did exist with Adam and Eve. He made his presence known to Adam and Eve. And we said before, we touched on and we continue to touch on it, that some will say, and good reformed teachers will disagree on this, but some will say that when God walked with Adam and Eve, it was a pre-incarnate second person of the Godhead. It was our saviour who would appear with Adam and Eve, as he did several times throughout the Old Testament. We know he did appear in his pre-incarnate state, he made himself known to his people. It's never serious for us, perhaps, or willing in the future, of the appearances of our saviour in the Old Testament, as the second person of the Godhead.

[ 22 : 18 ] And here's the clue that I would personally hold on to to reaffirm that it was Jesus who is aware, well, he wasn't Jesus, it was the second person, it was the son who appeared to Adam and Eve in the garden. Because whose face will we see in verse 4? They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads.

God is spirit. God is spirit. We are created creatures. God has no face to be seen. God has no body to be seen.

God has no face to be seen. Who does? Who does have a face to be seen? Who does at this very moment have a resurrected physical body that he has chosen to exist in for all eternity? And why? Well, verse 4 tells us why.

Because our glorious saviour out of his love for us, he has chosen to maintain his resurrected body, to be human flesh, human flesh, man and God for all time, so his people will see him. And for all eternity, we will see his face.

We'll see him as he is. He will walk and have fellowship with our risen saviour in his resurrected body. And of his love for us, he has made himself available to us for all eternity, to see him, to fellowship with him, to worship him, to hold on to him, to cling on to him, I'm sure we all will.

[ 23 : 58 ] That is the future of this city. God's people dwelling eternally in God's presence. That was true in Eden for a while, but it's only in a general sense, in a very mystical sense, but not so with the eternal Eden. It's God's people dwelling physically, with our saviour physically, also spiritually of course, but physically, our resurrected bodies, touching and feeling, understanding and perceiving for all eternity, for all glory.

That is our future. Then we have of course the most obvious connection that tells us, if you aren't convinced yet, then we should be convinced at this point. What do we see in the middle of this city?

The tree of life. The tree of life is here, the very centre as it were, of the new heavens and the new earth. We have the tree. The tree. The tree before which couldn't be eaten, couldn't be touched, couldn't be used.

The tree which we saw access being completely cut off from with flaming swords and terrifying heavenly beings. Access is now restored. But not just access is restored. Now the tree of life, it's being used. We see now the purpose, at least part of the purpose of the tree of life.

On either side of a river, the image of that is this overarching huge reality of a tree just existing. And this beautiful huge tree, the 12 kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month. And there's no month's eternity.

[ 25 : 57 ] How can we say months if we're dealing with an eternity? There's no time anymore. But, well why? The leaves of the tree for the killing of the nations. The idea is here, the tree tells us and reminds us and shows us that what we lost in Eden, what we lost in Eden is restored to us eternally in our eternal Eden. The tree of life, which represents eternal life.

Adam and Eve, of course, we said that Adam and Eve, once they sinned, they had to be barred from the tree of life. Because if they ate from the tree of life, they would spend their eternity in constant death.

If they would spend eternity as sinful, fallen creatures, and God in his love would not let that happen. Well now, because we're resurrected and we will spend eternity in our own resurrected perfection, the tree is ours to take and eat from.

Because eternal life is ours, forever and ever, time without end. No longer, verse 3, will be anything I curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

And how do we end this section? What is the end of our hope even this evening? And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light.

[ 27 : 33 ] And they will reign forever and ever. As we look back to the Eden that was destroyed by the curse of sin, every garden mentioned we've seen, including the last few weeks of Gethsemane, and then we saw the garden of resurrection last week, we saw our risen Saviour appear to his people, triumphant from the grave.

That garden reminds us that the future for us is this garden. And those of us who know and who love the Lord, we know this is not just some airy, fairy hope we have of a general floating around the skies of God.

No, this is real. Resurrected bodies. We will see and experience and exist physically and truly, eternally with our God.

And his presence, and his full joy. An eternal Eden. Eternal Eden where there is eternal perfection. No more curse.

No more night. No more tears of the night. No more anxiety of night. No more pain of night. An eternal rain. And an eternal Eden.

[ 28 : 51 ] That is our hope this evening. That is why we have in this final garden the most glorious reality. That no matter the struggles and pains, and we know ourselves for our great struggles and great pains.

There are many long nights and long nights of tears for us all. This side of glory. But we all still live in the shadow of the first garden.

We all still live in the shadow of the curse of that first garden. But because of Gethsemane. Because of last week's garden. Because we worship our risen saviour.

We have not just a vague hope. But a certain and sure hope. With our future we found in these five verses. Those of us who know and who love Jesus. Our future is here.

We are following the river of the water of life. Facing for all time the face of our saviour. We will reign with him.

[ 29 : 54 ] Forever and ever. Let's bow our heads now. A word of prayer. Lord we thank you for the gift of your word. Lord thank you for the promises we have in it. And thank you Lord for this eternal promise.

That through all the days of our life. We know that that day is coming. And will soon be with us. When we will join together in worship. And that worship will be eternal. As we see our saviour as it were.

Face to face. And our joy will be complete. As we see. And spend eternity alongside him. For until that day comes. Until that day of eternal worship dawns upon us.

Help us to serve you well. Help us to serve you faithfully. We pray to you Lord for the meeting that must take place tonight. We pray to you Lord for the Kirk Session and the deacon's court. We pray Lord for wisdom for us.

And that all we seek to do and all we seek to say would be for your glory. And for the glory and the building up for your kingdom in this place. We bless once more your people here this evening.

[ 30 : 52 ] Help us to go home in safety. And to go home glorifying you. And thinking of the wonder of who you are. And the promises you give us. Ask all these things. In and through and for Jesus.

His name's sake. Amen. Well let's close with these well-known verses from Psalm 72. Again no time this evening.

But I'm sure you have time yourselves when you go home. Perhaps as you go to bed even. Or tomorrow whenever you have time. To read again Psalm 72. And in Psalm 72 we of course are singing of an eternal Eden.

We are singing of the future heavenly glory. Psalm 72 verses 16 to the end. Of corn and handful in the earth. On tops of mountains high. With prosperous fruit shall shake like trees.

And Lebanon that be. The city shall be flourishing. Her citizens abound. In number shall like to the grass that grows upon the ground. Psalm 72 verses 16 to the end.

[ 31 : 53 ] The God's praise. The role of an handful in the earth.

and of the mountainside with drops and drops shall shake the trees on earth and on earth and on earth the city shall be flourishing our citizens abide good numbers shall like two vagabonds that grows upon the ground whose name forever shall endure last night in the sun men shall be blessed in heaven and earth all nations shall become blessed be the Lord our God the God of Israel forgive our love that wondrous works in glory of the Christ and near the translape

O life of the Christ glorious name to all eternity the whole world this glory filled the men so let the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit both you now and forevermore Amen