

Biblical Theology, Lesson 3

Creation, Part 2: God's People in God's Place

I. The Garden of Eden as the First Temple

A. Garden of Eden: Paradise for humanity

- a. Gen. 2:4-14
- b. A “garden” (v.8) where God place “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food - The garden:
 - i. Has everything humanity *needs* to live
 - ii. Is a beautiful, pleasant place - it is paradise
- c. God placed the “Tree of Life” in the middle of the Garden (v.9) - The Garden Paradise is the source of life, containing all that humanity needs to live and thrive, but even more specifically, to *live forever in Paradise!*
- d. The *River of Life* - There was also a *river* in Eden that flowed out of the Garden to bring life to the rest of the Created world outside of it (v.10)
 - i. Water is needed to feed plants and trees, so that they can live and produce fruit and vegetables. This river in Eden fed the plants, grass, trees that brought sustenance and life to humanity - it even fed *the Tree of Life and the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.*
 - ii. Verses 10-14 describe this river leaving Eden and splitting to form four major rivers of the ancient world - symbolizing the whole earth. This river brought water, and therefore major ingredients of life, to the rest of the world, so that life could flourish and become a habitable home for the nations.
 - iii. Therefore, this river can be thought of as a “River of Life”
 - iv. This is why we see a “river of life” with the tree of life on either side of it coming from GOD’s throne in **Rev. 22:1-2**: “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.”

- v. Summary: THE Garden of Eden was created to be the *Paradise* that we long for - the perfect home of humanity, where eternal life, peace, comfort, provision, and prosperity are found!

But not just a home for humanity...

B. Garden of Eden: Dwelling Place for Both God and Mankind, Together

- a. The idea of “temple” simply gets at the idea of a meeting place between God and Mankind, where GOD and Man can dwell together in a peaceful relationship, the way we were created to be.
- b. God “walks” in the Garden (**Gen. 3:8**)
 - i. a place where God and Humanity dwell together, living in relationship with each other
- c. Later passages of Scripture regard Eden as a type of Temple
 - i. The Prophet Ezekiel calls the Garden of God the “mountain of God” containing “sanctuaries” - **Ezk 28:13-14, 16, 18**: The “mountain of God” is a very common way to refer to the Zion, where the Temple of God was built in Jerusalem. “Sanctuary” is also another way to refer to the Temple as well.
 - ii. The tabernacle itself, and later the Temple itself, were designed in ways that are meant to remind us of Eden. I’ll save most of this for a later lesson, when we get to that part of scripture, but for now, let me simply note that the Holy Place was filled with symbols that remind us of Eden - such as fruit engraved on the curtains, which remind us of the many fruit-bearing trees of Eden; or, all the gold and precious stones adorning the temple, reminding us of the land surrounding Eden in Gen. 2, being described as rich with gold and other precious metals. Then, in the Holy of Holies, the inner most sanctuary of the Temple, where God’s presence dwelled in the midst of His people, we find the Ark of the Covenant, with two cherubim guarding it - reminding us of the cherubim (angels) set to guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden in the end of *Gen. 3*.
 - iii. In fact, the way the Garden of Eden is described even reminds us of the layout of the tabernacle (and later the Temple). The Tabernacle/Temple

had a Holy of Holies in the middle, then a Holy Place where the priests were, then the outer courts outside of it. Here in Genesis 2, we see the *middle of the Garden*, where the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are. Then, in the Garden proper, we see the trees of every fruit, the river of life, so on, where humanity dwells. And then, outside of this, we see a description of the surrounding lands, in vv.10-14.

- iv. Finally, as I already mentioned and read earlier, the entire Bible ends with a new Jerusalem - the mountain of God, where God dwelt among His people - coming down in the New Heavens and New Earth, with a *new Garden of Eden* in the middle of it, with a tree and river of life; and this garden-city is explicitly talked about as a Temple, where God dwells among His people, even with Christ, the new Adam, on the throne.
- v. There are other examples we could look out - but we'll note them as they come up throughout the rest of our series this semester.
- vi. Summary: So the Garden is a paradise temple where God and God's people (humanity) could dwell together forever, in a relationship where humanity enjoys God and every good gift from him, even eternal life, and *glorifies God forever as His people*. This is what we're made for. And we see this in the *mission* God gave to Adam and Eve...

II. The Mission Given to Humanity: Expanding Eden

- a. Three commands given in Gen. 1-2: "have dominion," "be fruitful and multiply," "work and keep"
- b. "**Work and keep**" the garden (2:15) - Right after God creates the Garden of Eden and places mankind in it, He commands Adam to "work it and keep it."
 - i. At the very least, this means he is called to do the good work of cultivating the garden, causing it to flourish and grow.
 - ii. He's called to maintain and tend to the Garden sanctuary, the dwelling place of God and Man - the Garden Temple.
 - iii. Interestingly, these same verbs "work and keep" are used to describe the work of priests later in scripture
 - 1. The word for "work" here can also be translated as "serve"

2. The word for “keep” is also the same word for “guard”
 3. So, we could also say that God commanded Adam to “serve” and “guard” in the Garden of Eden.
 4. We see these same words used to describe the duty of priests in the Tabernacle (and later Temple) in **Num. 18:5-6**: “And you shall keep guard over the sanctuary and over the altar, that there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel. And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the Lord, to do the work of the tent of meeting.”
- iv. Summary: Adam and Eve were *little priests*, worshipping and glorifying God by serving Him through tending to and guarding the first temple - the Garden of Eden, where God and Mankind could dwell together

So, Adam and Eve were *little priests*. But as we saw last week, they were also a *little king and little queen*. We see this in the first command GOD gives them:

- c. **“Have Dominion”** (1:26, 28a) - Little kings over creation (Gen. 1, review); made in the image of God to glorify God, reflecting Him, and representing His rule over creation; commanded to bring the rest of the world under dominion, expanding the dominion of Eden over the rest of creation
- d. **“Be fruitful and multiply”** - increasing the people of God throughout the world
- e. The mission: *Expanding Eden* - They are to expand Eden throughout the world, cultivating the Earth to come under the dominion of GOD’s People, as GOD’s Place; cultivating the land, expanding the temple; filling the earth with more of GOD’s people, more priest-kings (royal priests)
- f. This is what we were made for - to live in relationship with God, glorifying Him as we obey Him, exercise dominion over the Earth rightly, and cultivate the entire earth as His Temple; as the Westminster Catechism puts it: “Question: What is the chief end of man? Answer: To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”
- g. Summary: Mankind was called to *live in a relationship with God as His People in God’s place*, paradise, and was to do so by *obeying God’s Word* in carrying out

the mission GOD gave them, in order to *worship and glorify Him*, which is exactly what we were made for (made in His image).

III. God's Covenant with Humanity (Before the Fall) (Gen. 2)

- God puts this relationship into a covenantal context. **Gen. 2:16-17** explains the covenantal relationship between GOD and man, based on the conditions of *obedience* and *disobedience*.
 - A. God Establishes a Covenantal Relationship with Humanity (Adam and Eve)
 - What is a covenant? A covenant is simply a binding vow, oath, or agreement made between parties, somewhat like a contract we might have today, except it is a much more relational term. It defines the relationship between the parties. The most common form of covenant we have today is marriage.
 - The word "covenant" isn't used in Genesis 1 and 2 (though it comes up a lot later in Genesis and the rest of the Bible). Nevertheless, we see an *implicit* (an implied) covenant made between God and mankind, represented by Adam and Eve, here in Genesis 2. God defined their relationship by establishing conditions on their relationship between each other.
 - B. Covent Promise: Obedience Would lead to Eternal Life and Blessing
 - If you obey, you live - if they continued to obey God and keep His covenant as His people, then they could eat of the tree of life - eternal life (2:9)
 - Eternal life in Paradise: Garden of Eden. Eternal life in GOD's place (Garden of Eden, paradise), as GOD's people (GOD's image bearers).
 - C. COvenant Warning: Disobedience Would Bring Death
 - If you disobey, you die
 - They were commanded not to eat of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (2:16-17)
 - D. THis is a covenant of works
 - Sufficient to stand, free to fall