

Scripture Reading: Genesis 2

“4 This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made the earth and the heavens, 5 before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For Jehovah God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; 6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. 7 And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8 Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground Jehovah God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 Then Jehovah God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 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." 18 And Jehovah God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." 19 Out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. 21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which Jehovah God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

"Jehovah God Plants a Garden"

In the first chapter of Genesis we learned how God in His power brought forth the entire creation and made man in His image, declaring all to be very good. God then rested on the 7th day. Here in chapter two we see a further explanation of what God did on the sixth day. We see more detail about how Jehovah God created man and woman, their relationship, their duties and where they were placed upon the earth. And as we learned last week, our covenant God now begins to tell the story of redemption, as we prepare for the fall of man & the promise of salvation in Chapters three and four.

But first, here in chapter two we come to the Garden of God, mighty rivers, vast wealth, the work of man, the beauty of marriage and two special trees in the center of God's garden.

➤ We will take several weeks to consider all of these and we begin this morning with the garden!

First, let me say just a quick word about the structure of this chapter and address some of the attacks that are made on the Bible here.

As I have said, what we have here in Chapter two is an expansion of what was done on the sixth day of creation.

Some critics are overwhelmed by all that would have needed to be done in 24 hours & others think it is contradictory. We will discuss the supposed contradictions in a moment, but first we must remember how we know about all that happened...

We have knowledge of these events because the Triune God who was there has revealed them to us as rational creatures made in His image!

- We are not creating god in our image by coming up with a novel creation account...
- It is Jehovah God, who made us in His image, who has revealed the history of these events to us.

In chapter one we saw how He clearly revealed that His work of creation took place in six ordinary 24 hour days. We saw how this stands up to the challenge of modern secular science and can be accepted in the simplicity as well as the profound depths in which it is given.

It is no different here in the second chapter. There are those who insist that God could not have made all the animals, then created Adam, planted a garden in which to place him, had him name all the animals and then create woman and commission them to be fruitful and multiply all in one day.

- When you consider ALL that God did on the other five days of creation all of this work on the 6th Day does not seem unreasonable at all.

IF on the other hand, you think science has proven that the earth is billions of years old and that the sun could not have waited until the fourth day to be placed in the sky and other such 'troubles' that modern folks have in the first chapter, then yes, you will continue to have doubts and troubles with this second chapter and those doubts & troubles will continue on for the rest of this Book of Beginnings.

- There is much that we can learn from Genesis, but it will only truly change our lives if we remember the admonition from the writer of Hebrews...

Hebrews 11:3: "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible... 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Diligently seeking Him means digging into what He has revealed to glean all the truth that we can for our lives...

- NOT looking for reasons to doubt that what has been given is the truth!

With that in mind we begin our series of sermons from this second chapter by considering how God uses plants and how He takes pleasure in Gardens. The writer gives us the summary statement about Creation that we considered last week, which also begins the discussion of plants & gardens...

"4 This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made the earth and the heavens, 5 before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For Jehovah God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; 6 but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground."

This is the first place where those who are looking for problems first stumble.

The skeptics conclude that this section must contradict the order given in chapter one because there the plants were created on Day Three and here they seem to be made on Day Six.

- What is missed by such skepticism is what is revealed about the utility and beauty of plant life.
- The expansion here in Chapter two actually reminds us that God first created plant life on the 3rd Day, fully developed as was everything else in Creation.

On Day Three, God created the seas and dry land and “Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”

The plants created on Day Three had not grown, they were created. We also learned that they were provided as food for the living, including man. Our text here in chapter two, goes on to explain that God also established the ongoing growth of plants on the earth with the rain that He gives. And finally we will see how both man and God are going to use the plants of the earth to provide food and beauty:

- **What we would call agriculture and gardens.**
- **In addition to the beauty and plenty that God provided in the natural course of things, man would also produce food and beauty.**

Our text goes on to explain how God created man from the dust of the earth and then in verse eight we read: Genesis 2:8 “Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground Jehovah God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

- **So with eyes of faith we see how God first created plant life, how God provides for the ongoing growth of plant life and how these plants provide food and beauty.**

I think we could argue that God’s planting of the garden in Eden where He placed Adam & Eve was a sort of illustrated sermon to show their task as they were commanded to “"Be fruitful & multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

- **God’s plan was to fill the earth with faithful servants made in His image who would make our entire planet a garden paradise.**
- **Understanding this helps us to see the gravity of the fall of man that we will study in chapter three.**

I am going to hold off on any discussion of the location of Eden until next week when we look at the rivers of Genesis chapter two.

For this morning I want us to focus on the various gardens in the Scriptures. I think this is important because one can argue that the Bible begins and ends with a garden and talks about many of them in between. So perhaps we should first think about what we mean when we say garden:

- **Is it a place of beauty or a place of production?**
- **Is it full of flowers and bushes or full of vines and fruit trees?**

All of us can think of examples of both and often they are combined as we see in the two great gardens in the Bible. Here in Eden we read, “And out of the ground Jehovah God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.”

And as John describes the Garden/City of God in Revelation chapters 21 & 22 we read, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

So beauty and production are often combined, but they can also be separate, although even golden wheat fields or an almond orchard in spring can be very beautiful indeed.

When it comes to the production of food, you can have something as simple as AI growing tomatoes in a barrel to the vast fields of tomatoes in our valley. When it comes to beauty we can find it in a small planter box in an urban apartment all the way up to the hanging gardens of Babylon: Considered one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. Now our secular evolutionary friends will argue that the development of agriculture, large or small, was part of the survival of the fittest...

- BUT where does beauty fit in?

How is our evolutionary advancement enhanced by all this time and energy we spend growing flowers and building vast gardens?

- Why do we even seem to desire beauty at a time of death with flowers at a funeral?

It is clearly because we know our history as a race of men and women placed in the most beautiful of gardens who were called to spread the beauty of that garden throughout the world.

It is also because we know that as Jesus brings forth the new creation all of this will be restored and that we strive to be a part of constructing and helping people understand the grand city/garden that the Holy Spirit is building!

- Even non-Christians usually strive to make things beautiful because even in our fallen state we are still made in the image of God. [*creative even in our fallen state!*]

Now people can deny all this & as they do you should notice that it ultimately comes with a rejection of beauty. Dr. Schaeffer and others have gone to great lengths to show how this has been worked out in modern art and music.

- There are many adjectives that are used to describe Picasso's paintings or Cage's music, but beautiful is usually not among them.

We can see this around us with many individuals who have embraced the world's lies about how they just evolved from rocks: Their dress and hair become very dark and they often use piercings and tattoos to reject the natural beauty of their body.

So that I am not misunderstood here, I am not saying that a black evening gown cannot be beautiful or that pierced ears are evil: A woman having a ring in her nose is often described as a thing of beauty in the Scriptures. However, when you see the young man all dressed in black on a summer day who has deformed his earlobes with the special earrings...

- Not only is it not beautiful, but we can see that he is making a stark statement about his world view:
- IF we all evolved from rocks, things are very dark and he may be just trying to be honest.

But the bottom line is that he is a man who is in need of the Gospel: Jesus has come as the Light of the world!

We can be thankful that we can not only tell him about the truth of beauty, but the Creator of beauty in our world offers salvation to escape the darkness!

When we study the Bible, we find that gardens are not only found at the beginning and end of the story, but throughout as well. We find references to Eden in both the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel [we will find Ezekiel making reference to rivers in his account of salvation as well, so Genesis must have been his favorite!]

The Book of Isaiah builds to a climax in chapter 53 which is often referred to as the fifth Gospel!

There he explains in great detail how Jesus will be the Lamb of God eight hundred years before He came as a man to save His people from their sins.

Leading up to this we read in chapter 51:3 “For Jehovah will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of Jehovah; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.”

After explaining that Jesus must be the suffering Messiah to pay the penalty for our sins, Isaiah goes on to describe the new creation and gardens loam large: In Isaiah 58:11 we read: “Jehovah will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

And again in Isaiah 61:11: “For as the earth brings forth its bud, As the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, So Jehovah God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.”

I will leave Ezekiel as homework for those who want to study this a bit more because he makes several references to Eden from the 28th Chapter through the 36th chapter of his prophecies.

And of course, as we should suspect, you find references to gardens right in the middle of the story of salvation where Jesus presented Himself as the sacrifice for sin and in the power of His resurrection...

- **Where Jesus brought forth the New Creation which culminates in the great garden/city of God.**

We usually think of Jesus going out to the Mount of Olives to pray on the night that He was betrayed, but listen to how John describes this place: John 18:1 “When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.”

Mankind was cast out of the Garden of Eden because of sin and now the Savior has come to set things right...

- **And it is only fitting to find Him praying in a garden!**

So we don't miss this detail, John reminds us of it again as Peter is in the midst of denying his Lord:

John 18:26: “One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of him whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

And to complete the image of Jesus restoring man to his proper place in the garden of God, it is again John who gives us another important detail: John 19:14: “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.”

And finally on the first Easter morning we find Mary Magdalene in that same garden pondering the empty tomb and assuming that Jesus was a gardener! Listen again to this touching encounter:

John 20: 1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb...

- **She runs to tell Peter & John who then visit the empty tomb and after they had left...**

“Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb.

12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." 14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God & your God.'"

- **Jesus did ascend to the Father's right hand and now rules as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.**
- **As promised He has sent the Comforter who is now carrying His task of filling the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus.**

As He works in our lives and as we strive to serve King Jesus, may we always remember the beauty of that first Garden of God where man was placed and may we always remember the great Garden/City promised in Revelation...

And as we do, may we be those who come to truly appreciate beauty and those who strive to make things more beautiful!

The world should see beauty in our hearts, beauty in our relationships AND beauty in our surroundings!

- **This is the high-calling of those made in the image of God and washed in the blood of the Savior!**

Communion Meditation: Jerimiah 31:10 "10 "Hear the word of Jehovah,

O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.'

11 For Jehovah has redeemed Jacob,

And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he. 12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, Streaming to the goodness of the Lord--

For wheat and new wine and oil, For the young of the flock and the herd; Their souls shall be like a well-watered garden,

And they shall sorrow no more at all."