

Eden

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0:00] Open up your Bibles to Genesis chapter 2. We are back in the book of Genesis after spending a couple of weeks in Luke, looking at Luke's account of the birth of Christ. Now we're returning back to the beginning and looking at the creation of man here in Genesis chapter 2.

So we're going to begin in verse 4 and we're going to read all the way down through verse 17. So I want you guys to stand with me as we read together. Moses writes, These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

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 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.

[1:18] 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.

And the gold of that land is good, but Delium and Onyx stone are there. 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.

The fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but 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. Father, help us by the power of your Spirit this morning to understand your Word. Help us to understand this account of our own origins.

I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the things that I find really more funny than fascinating about this last week or two weeks of the year is all the specials that you see on TV as you're flipping through the channels, all the lists that people decide to make up at the end of the year.

[2:31] I mean, lists for, you know, I don't know, the biggest celebrity feuds of 2013. I don't even know what they are, but I see their commercials, and apparently there were some celebrity feuds. I don't know why anyone's interested in that, but they're there.

Or, you know, the biggest political events of the year. All sorts of lists. Probably the one that has always confused me the most is Barbara Walters, the ten most fascinating people.

She does that every year. Was this year? I think this was maybe the last year she's going to do it. But it's bizarre because I can't imagine anybody else compiling a list that would include the cast of Duck Dynasty, Miley Cyrus, and the Pope all together in one list as if they have something in common.

I mean, it's just, it's really bizarre. But it's indicative of human nature. We're just sort of wired to look back and be nostalgic and think about the things of the past.

Some of us more than others. I'm really not the most nostalgic of people, probably because I can't remember things that happened in the past. I barely remember things that happened during my childhood.

[3:35] I don't know if, Mom, if you guys did something to me and I blocked it all out, okay? Something terrible and horrible must have happened at some point. No, that's not true because I can't remember last week very well either. I just, I'm not, I can't remember the past very well, so I don't dwell on it a lot.

But all of us, to greater and lesser degrees, sort of like to look back and see where we've come from and what we've come through and just to think about those things. And sometimes those come with pleasant memories.

Sometimes they come with unpleasant memories. Well, the book of Genesis is a look back for us. It's a look back to our origins, to where we came from.

In fact, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, the Torah or the Pentateuch, was for Israel really an account of where they came from. Because the most significant, one of the most significant questions that we can ask about ourselves is, where do we come from?

What is our origins? And the nation of Israel could look back, and they had a book that accounted, that read as an account of their origins. Here's where Abraham came from, and here's the people that led up to Abraham, and here are Abraham's descendants as they're listed out, and here's the story of how they came to go to Egypt, and come out of Egypt, and into the Promised Land.

[4:49] The Torah reads as a book of origins, a look back at where they came from, where they originated from, and really, from chapter 11 all the way back to chapter 1, Genesis serves as a book of origins for all of humanity.

At chapter 12, it's narrowed down to Abraham, and so you're really getting more specifically the history of the people of Israel. But prior to chapter 12, these chapters that we're looking at in this series, we're seeing our own origins.

We're seeing the beginnings of all of human history. I don't know if any of you have ever tried to sort of trace out your family tree. Different people can do it with varying degrees of success.

I've never really put a whole lot of effort into doing it, and so I don't know how much success I would have if I really tried to trace it all the way back. Some people can trace their origins back centuries.

They're able to trace back their family line centuries, and identify princes and princesses and kings and queens that they're distantly related to in some sort of way. It seems like everybody that is able to trace it back can trace it back to somebody important.

[5:53] I don't know why that is, but that seems to be the case. Others can't really trace their origins back very far at all, whether it's because their ancestors were brought to America on slave ships, and that's the end of it for them, or whether it's because maybe they're adopted and don't know their family history biologically, or whatever the case may be.

Some people have a great difficulty doing that. But we can all trace our origins back to our ultimate father, the head of all humanity, Adam. In fact, we're reminded in Acts chapter 17 that God created from one man every nation that is upon the face of the earth.

And Luke says, and he determined their boundaries where they would live. From one man came every nation, came everyone upon the face of the earth.

And it's tempting, I think, for us to sometimes read Genesis chapters 2 and 3 and think of this as sort of an antiquated story from the past that's cast in mythological terms, and maybe there's some spiritual or theological truths contained there, but surely Genesis chapters 2 and 3 aren't meant to be taken as real, literal history.

Well, the writers of the New Testament would beg to differ. The writer of the book of Acts, Luke, just assumes that Adam is a real person from whom everyone is descended. Paul assumes the same thing in Romans chapter 5 where he talks about the spread of sin from Adam to all of Adam's descendants.

[7:22] The writers of the New Testament simply assume this is true. And not just the writers of the New Testament, but Jesus himself assumes that this is a real, factual, historical account. Jesus references verses that we're going to be looking at next week in chapter 2 about the beginnings of marriage, and he treats those as real statements made in the course of human history at the beginning of our history.

So Jesus and the apostles assume that Genesis chapters 2 and 3 are a real historical account. It may seem strange to us. I mean, you have this tree of life, the tree of knowledge and good and evil.

You move into chapter 3. You have a talking snake. And these all seem like strange, fantastical things. And yet, we are assured later in the Bible that they're real historical events.

But we don't really have to go all the way to the New Testament to confirm that what's being written here is history. It's pretty clear. If you just read these chapters, these two chapters, in the context of the book of Genesis, it becomes really clear that Moses, as he recorded these events, revealed to him, I'm assuming, supernaturally because he wasn't there, Moses, as he records these, assumes himself that he's writing down history.

Let me show you from the text why I think that's the case. Just follow me here. We started out reading this passage where it says in verse 4, These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

[8:46] That phrase, these are the generations, is used throughout the book of Genesis to mark all of the major divisions of this particular book. So every time a new section of Genesis starts, you have the phrase, these are the generations, or some variation, maybe this is the book of the generations of so-and-so.

We find that throughout Genesis. This is how Moses records the history of the people leading up to Abraham and coming out of Abraham. In fact, I'll show you that.

Turn over to chapter 5. You can see it there. After these opening accounts of Adam and Eve and their children, we read this in chapter 5, verse 1. This is the book of the generations of Adam.

And then you get a genealogy and a story about people at the end of the genealogy, namely Noah and his three sons. And then if you move on beyond the story of the flood, which is the next section there, you move beyond the story of the flood, you get in chapter 10, these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, leading you to the story of the Tower of Babel.

At the end of the story of Tower of Babel in chapter 11, 27, these are the generations of Terah, which leads us to Abraham. And you see the same things you read through the stories of the patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[10:04] These are the generations of. Which means that Moses is not doing anything differently in chapters 2 and 3 from what he does later throughout the book of Genesis. Namely, writing a historical account of things as they actually happened.

So you can't make a claim that the writer of Genesis was writing myth and he intended to write myth to communicate spiritual realities. That's not the case at all. Moses is writing history.

That's exactly what he's doing. There are other indicators in this passage that what we have here is a real account. For instance, if you look down in verses 10 through 14, there's almost, it's kind of like an aside.

You might even put parentheses around it because you don't need these details for the story. They're just details about the Garden of Eden itself and about the land of Eden that are thrown in here.

Take a look at what it says. It says that a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden. Eden. What is this place, Eden? Well, it's a location we know that he says is in the east.

[11:08] East of where? Well, this book is written from the perspective of the people of Israel. Moses, on the edge of the Promised Land, hands this book over to Joshua and passes it on. So, east would be east of the Promised Land.

East of Palestine. So, somewhere in Babylon, Assyria, that sort of area that would have been familiar to them. A real place. A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden and there it divided and became four rivers.

Now, note these four rivers. Note the details. The name of the first was Pishon. We're told that it flowed all around a place called Havila. And it had all kinds of gold and precious metals.

Verse 13, The name of the second is the Gihon. And it flowed around the land of Cush. And then, two more rivers with which we are more familiar. The name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria.

And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The two of the most well-known rivers in the ancient world, particular in the land of Palestine. The only river that could really compete in terms of being well-known would be the Nile River in Egypt with these two.

[12:14] So, Moses indicates that these are real rivers in a real place. It flows east of Assyria. You know, you guys know that. Assyria here probably not being the nation of Assyria, but the old capital, the city of Assyria.

And the river does indeed flow just east of Assyria. So, Moses intends for us to recognize that these are real places. This is not just made up. Now, I think it's probably fruitless to try to find the Garden of Eden, even with these details about location and all, because two of the rivers, the Pishon and the Gihon, we don't know where they are or what they are.

We have no idea. There's been all sorts of speculation about what rivers those might be. Some have said that they're nothing more than small sort of tributaries and outlets of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Some have tried to identify them with the Nile River and the Indus River, the other two major rivers in the era in the ancient Near East, but we really don't know. We have no idea what these two rivers are.

More importantly, though, probably in terms of trying to locate it, is that there's an event that occurs a few chapters later that's going to vastly change the landscape called the flood. There's a worldwide flood, and Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3 that the world that then existed was destroyed by the flood.

[13:34] And what he means by that is the world was fundamentally altered. Not altered in such a way that every river and every mountain was moved, but altered in such a way that many things were displaced and moved, and it really does us no good to try to find the exact location of the Garden of Eden.

But this is a real place to Moses. This is a real place to the people of Israel. It's in the East. You can identify it with the Tigris and Euphrates. However much they may have been changed, however much their courses may have been altered by the flood.

Nevertheless, they're real historical places, and they were there flowing at the Garden of Eden. This is real. This is history that Moses is recording.

And this history aims to answer three fundamental questions about who we are. And that is, where do we come from? It is primarily an account of our origins.

Where do we come from, and what does that tell us about ourselves? And then secondly, why are we here in the world? Why are we here in this place? Where do we come from?

[14:39] Why are we here? And then there are hints here in this chapter of where we're headed. You don't see the full picture of that until you arrive at the New Testament. But where do we come from, why are we here, and where are we headed?

These questions are answered in here, so I want us to take a look and consider, first of all, that first question, where do we come from? Because that's the main question that Moses wants to answer for us. Take a look at verse 5.

He tells us that when no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up. Now pause right there, because I want to just kind of give you some information as an aside here.

A lot of people have pointed to this particular verse and said, aha, there's a contradiction here between chapter 2 and chapter 1. Because chapter 2 is clearly a sort of expanded account of day 6 in chapter 1.

Day 6, the day in which God created man in His image. And so chapter 2 is an expanded or a sort of just a closer view of day 6 in more detail.

[15:47] But then we have here this statement that there weren't any plants yet, which were created on day 3. Right? And so many people have said, aha, I see a contradiction here between chapter 2 and chapter 1.

The Bible, therefore, is full of errors and mistakes. But I think that's a conclusion that you only come to when you don't read the text carefully. He doesn't say that there were no plants.

Notice what he says. He says, there was no bush of the field and no small plant of the field. Okay? Two things. No bush of the field, no small plant of the field.

Both of these these kinds of vegetation are associated with something called a field, which is the most common word for farmland in Hebrew. It can mean other things, but most of the time that it's used, it means land that you cultivate, land that you work, land that you farm.

And what's the reason given here? Two reasons. Number one, there's no rain. We don't get that until the flood. But number two, there's no man to work the land. So why would these plants exist in abundance? They wouldn't.

[16:50] There's no man to work the land. But even more importantly than that, turn over to chapter 3. Just look down at the end of chapter 3, which we will get to in a couple of weeks. After Adam and Eve have sinned and the fall has occurred, God speaks a curse upon the serpent and then He speaks judgment upon Adam and Eve.

And He says this to Adam in verse 17, Because you've listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it. Cursed is the ground because of you.

In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the field. Note that phrase, plants of the field.

It's the same word that we see translated in verse 5 of chapter 2 as plant of the field. And most likely, the bush of the field can be identified with the thorns and thistles here of chapter 3.

So Moses' point in indicating that these sorts of plants don't exist yet is, hey, the fall hasn't happened yet. This is before sin entered the world. That's what he wants us to know about the creation of man.

[17:55] Man was created by God before there was any sin in the world. Creation was not yet in a state of decay. Man was not yet having to fight against the natural world in order to obtain all that he needs and in order to exercise the dominion that he's supposed to exercise.

That's not the case. The world in which God created Adam was fundamentally different than the world that we live in. No decay, no death, no fight between man and nature.

Those sorts of things did not exist. Man is not yet out in the fields plowing it up, removing the rocks, removing the thorns and thistles, fighting against the bushes in order to get these small green plants to sprout in his field.

That's not the case yet. Moses would have us understand that. First thing you need to know about the origins of humanity is that we are not the product of something gone wrong. We're not.

You know, in almost every other ancient creation story, because most cultures have some sort of creation story, and in all of the others, man is the product of this warring between these false gods that have been dreamed up by these people.

[19:06] He's the product of a world that's already in disarray, in a world in which sin and bloodshed is already a fundamental part of that world. And yet, in reality, Moses says that when God created man, in the true story of man's origins, he's not the product of a world gone wrong.

He's the product of a world that God has declared to be good over and over and over. So we arise out of circumstances, perfectly orchestrated by God prior to the fall, and God has a plan and a purpose for his creation in that state.

So move on a little bit, and we'll reveal a little bit more. Verse 6 says that there was a mist going up from the land that was watering the whole face of the ground. The word mist probably means stream or something like that.

We don't know exactly. But in verse 7, we get the account. 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.

Two things here that we need to recognize about our origins. Number one is that there's an emphasis on here upon our origin from the ground, from the dirt, from the dust. We are called man of dust here.

[20:21] He formed the man of dust from the ground. And there's a play on words because the word for man is not surprisingly adam or adam. That's the word for man, adam.

The word for ground is adamah. So God formed the adam from the adamah. There's a play on words. We're meant to see a close connection between the ground, between the land that God has made and ourselves.

We are a people of the earth. And it's the ground and it's the land that we are commanded to exercise dominion over. There's something significant here about our connection to the ground, the earth.

This is who we are. We are not divine beings in any sense. We don't possess any sort of divinity. We aren't destined to leave this earth and live forever separate from the earth.

In fact, in Revelation chapter 20 we see a new heavens and a new earth created upon which those who are redeemed in Christ will live forever. We are fundamentally connected to the earth. We're not going to live forever as these bodiless spirit beings.

[21 : 34] We are a bodied people. That's who we are and we'll live forever on the earth. We're connected to the world that God has made before He made us. That's significant.

But the other thing that we see about ourselves is we're not merely physical bodies created, but we're told that God breathed into us the breath of life and then man became a living creature.

See, prior to this, we're just a mass, a lump of dirt, a lump of clay. That's all we are. Apart from God's breathing life into us, apart from His life-giving and sustaining breath, there is no life.

What's key here is not that we're called a living creature because in Genesis 1, all the animals are called living creatures, which some translate as having a soul because that's the literal word being used, a soulish creature or a living soul.

But the point here is not about us having two parts, body and soul, although that's true. The point is that apart from God supernaturally working upon us, we are nothing more than something from the ground.

[22 : 51] But now that God has begun to work within us, He has breathed life into us, now we're living creatures, now we're capable of carrying out His designs for us.

But apart from that, we're nothing. And when sin enters into the world in Genesis chapter 3, in the judgment that we just read, we stopped short, but God goes on and He says, to the dust you'll return because it's from the dust that you came.

Apart from God constantly breathing life into us, apart from Him constantly sustaining us, the Bible tells us that He upholds the whole world by the power of His Word.

Well, He's maintaining us alive as real living creatures by His own power, and apart from that, you and I are nothing. What is special about human beings is not our natural capacities.

So many times, we make the mistake of thinking, well, being made in the image of God simply means that we're smarter than all the animals that God created. That may be true, but that's not the essence of what it means to be in the image of God, to be a man, to be a woman, to be a creature in God's image.

[24 : 03] That's not the essence of it. Or we sometimes think, well, it's got to be found in our ability to make things and create things and do things that animals are unable to do.

That's not the case. What is special about human beings is not to be found in our natural capacities and abilities. It is in the fact that God is constantly upholding us and breathing life into us.

That's what's unique about us. To be made in the image of God is to be made not just as a living creature like everything else, but to be made for a specific real purpose.

which moves us into this next question that I want us to answer and that is, okay, what are we here for? That's where we come from. We come from one man named Adam that God formed from the dust to the ground.

He breathed life into him. Okay, that's history. Those are the details. Those are the facts. But why did God do that? Why did God create this man? Why would He do such a thing?

[25:02] Why would He put him in this garden? Why bother with all of these things? Well, He tells us. We're told in verse 8 that the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and there He put the man whom He had formed.

So you have the land of Eden which is in the east, east of the promised land, east of Palestine, and within the land of Eden there's a garden. So the garden is not synonymous with Eden.

We call it the garden of Eden because it's actually the garden which is in Eden. So God plants a garden and there He takes the man that He has created and He puts the man into the garden.

That's where He puts him. In fact, literally it doesn't say that He put him in the garden when you move down to verse 15 where you have the same kind of language the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden.

There in verse 15 it's the Lord God took the man and caused him to rest in the garden of Eden. So we are created in some way to imitate God who rests on day 7.

[26:06] He has made us He's put us in the garden and we are to rest there. But more than that rest doesn't mean that we sit around and do nothing. It doesn't mean that we sit in lawn chairs and drink our fruity drinks and enjoy paradise.

That's not what it means. That's not why God has put us on the earth. It says that God planted a garden in Eden there He put the man whom He had formed. Verse 9 He creates these trees in verse 9 and then we get to decide in verses 10-14.

Verse 15 again The Lord God took the man caused him to rest in the garden of Eden and here's why to work it and to keep it. To work it and to keep it.

The only other times in the Bible that we find these two particular words to work and to keep or to serve and to keep coupled together the only other times that we find these particular words coupled together is in the book of Leviticus as it describes the duties of the priests in the tabernacle or the temple.

So this is the kind of language that you find later on in the Pentateuch used to describe priestly service priestly duties within the temple which means that fundamentally man exists upon the earth and is placed in the garden to serve as a kind of priest within the midst of creation.

[27:25] What's the task of a priest? A priest mediates on behalf of others to God? A priest represents God to the rest of the congregation? What is the task of man created in God's image as we saw when we looked at that passage several weeks ago?

The primary purpose of man is to mirror forth God's glory and to represent God in the world. Well man now is placed into the garden and in the garden he is to carry out his priestly duties toward the garden and the rest of the world.

So as we work and serve and keep watch over the garden we are doing so on behalf of God and therefore we are representing God mirroring forth the glory of God in the midst of this garden.

That's what Adam was created to do. That's what you and I are made to do. I do think it's significant that he counters it in terms of work though because so often I think preachers say things like you're created for the glory of God.

That's a great it's a true statement. I say it all the time. We say that all the time. Or I say things like the purpose of life is to worship God and that's true language and yet I think for a lot of us it can seem just kind of out there ethereal.

[28:41] We can't grab onto that. We can't latch onto what does that I mean how does that work what does that do every day? I mean I'm going to get up in the morning and drink some coffee and go to work or begin to get the kids dressed and take care of the kids during the day and you keep saying I'm supposed to glorify God that's why I'm here but in reality what I'm doing every day is eating drinking taking care of work and kids and then going back to bed at night and then I start the same thing over the next day and you keep telling me these platitudes about the glory of God and worship in all of life and all those sorts of things but what does that mean specifically for me?

It's important that that when Adam was created his primary priestly duties of honoring God and glorifying God are couched in terms of work and service which means that for us living for the glory of God is not an abstract concept it's not saying that all of life is worship is not just sort of this out there sort of statement that you can't really concretely apply in your life and the rest of the Bible doesn't understand it in that way when Paul says do all things for the glory of God first he says whether you eat or drink do all to the glory of God what can be more basic what can be more simple than eating and drinking it's fundamental to all of our lives we all eat and we all drink and Paul says whether you're eating or drinking whatever you do do all to the glory of God or he says in his instructions to slaves he says when you work work as for the Lord and not for man so this business of serving as a priest in the world or of glorifying God in everything we do or worshipping in all of life it is a real concrete principle that plays itself out in your everyday activities as you eat dinner or breakfast as you go to work as you raise your children all the work and service that you do in the world is to be an offering to God so that our lives can have real meaning in the mundane experiences of life we don't we don't have to drop everything and run off to the mission field to do something great for God it's great if you do that encourage you to do that take off go to the mission field if you want but that's not necessary to do great things in the name of the Lord you don't have to have some official service position within the church in order to really serve God in your life what you have to do is to look at your everyday experiences and ask yourself how can I do this in a way or how can I have a mindset as I go about doing this that honors the Lord that's the sort of question that you begin to ask yourself so that you conduct your business dealings in such a way that they are imbued and filled with honesty and integrity so that when someone finds out that you're a Christian or when you attempt to share the gospel with them they won't immediately think well the way that this guy works is disjointed from the stuff that he's trying to tell me now so I'm not buying what he's selling because he doesn't use it in his everyday life we begin to think in terms of raising our children in ways that honor the Lord and that doesn't necessarily mean that you're the world's greatest family

Bible study leader or anything like that but it means that that in the ways that you talk to your kids and the ways that you direct your kids and the ways that you try to raise them up and teach them you're constantly continually pointing them to the Lord that's what a priest does a priest points others to God and a parent performing a priestly duty in their home continually points their kids to Christ so this is very concrete very practical stuff to realize that Adam was put in the garden to work and serve it to really do something and that doing of something is what it means to glorify God in everything that you do that's fundamentally why we're here not to walk around all day long singing praise songs that's great if you want to do that but that's not what it means to live a life of worship it means that in all that you do in all the mundane regular experiences of life you're constantly thinking how can I do this differently so that God is more pleased and more honored in the way that I do my everyday stuff that's the here and now that's the why am I here what am I supposed to do while I'm here on this earth but the last question that I said this chapter gives us hints but doesn't give us the direct answer but it gives us some pretty clear hints of what we're here for is okay I know where I come from

I know what I'm doing here where am I headed where is this all going what do I have to look forward to there are hints as I said for instance we've already seen one of the hints that God put Adam into the garden and caused him to rest there so that there's a connection between what God does on day 7 and what he puts Adam in the garden to accomplish in fact as we as we looked at day 7 a few weeks ago we talked about God's rest and we said that that rest was for mankind was fundamentally interrupted with the fall man was intended to enter into God's rest to participate with God in his rest and yet because of the fall we're unable to and when you come to the story of the flood just before the story of the flood in that genealogy that begins that next section when we come to the birth of Noah at the end of it we're told that Lamech had a son and he named him Noah Nuach because he hoped that Noah would be the one to bring some translations say relief but literally the word is rest

Noah's name is a play on words the word for rest is Nuach and you have Noah who Lamech brings names his son thinking that this one will be the redeemer promised in Genesis chapter 3 after the fall this is the one who will reverse the curse this is the one who will finally usher in God's rest for us and yet Noah was not the one Noah was pointing to a greater redeemer but we are created initially in the beginning we are created to participate with God in his rest that is to be to be in his presence and consumed by his presence and to grow in our love and adoration of him continually throughout all eternity that does not happen because of Genesis chapter 3 but take a look at the setup for Genesis chapter 3 in verse 9 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 two trees tree of life tree of the knowledge of good and evil now the tree of life is not brought up again until after the fall but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil begins to take center stage really soon verse 17 after God telling Adam that he can eat from all the trees verse 17 he says 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 so now we have two trees of special significance one of them

[36 : 30] God commands do not partake of this tree it will bring death and it does well Adam and Eve don't immediately die physically but spiritual death descends upon them the moment they eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and I don't think that that's because there's something fundamentally bad about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there's nothing sinful about that tree in and of itself in fact if you read through the rest of the Old Testament and go home and do this look up a search of to know good and evil throughout the rest of the Old Testament every other place that you find that phrase to know good and evil it's used in a positive way it indicates wisdom it indicates discernment it indicates that a person has entered into adulthood and now they can they can with wisdom determine the course of their life so the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by itself is not a bad thing it's symbolic of wisdom and discernment and the ability to make decisions the ability to determine the course in which a person is supposed to go but for Adam and for us

God is the one who determines our course he's the one who sets the boundaries he's the one who determines the end goal and he says to Adam and Eve do not try to assert your own authority and autonomy by eating of this tree I put this tree here in the midst of this garden as a test it will test your trust in me it will test your faithfulness to me it will test whether or not you can remain fully obedient and dependent upon me for direction in life and they fail that test utterly but it's not the only tree there's another tree that holds out something greater tree of life tree of life as I said appears again in chapter 3 where God simply blocks access to the tree of life and then it occurs for us again in the book of Revelation I want you to hold your place there in Genesis 2 and I want you to turn all the way to the back of your Bible to the book of Revelation where John has a vision of the new heavens and the new earth and he sees Christ exalted he sees Christ descending down with his bride who is synonymous with the new Jerusalem the new Jerusalem is also synonymous with the new heavens and new earth which is populated now by God's people alright

I want you to listen to the description of the new Jerusalem and I want you to notice some of the similarities to Eden the garden of Eden verse 9 then came one of the seven angels who had of chapter 21 then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me come I will show you the bride the wife of the lamb and he carried me away in the spirit to a great high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God its radiance like a most rare jewel like a jasper clear as crystal it had a great high wall with twelve gates and at the gates twelve angels and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel on the east three gates on the north three gates on the south three gates and on the west three gates and the wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles so far we're seeing a beautiful paradise like city and that continues as you move on

I want you to move down to verse 18 describes the walls the wall was built of jasper while the city was pure gold clear as glass the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every kind of jewel the first was jasper the second sapphire the third agate the fourth emerald the fifth onyx the sixth carnelian the seventh chrysolite the eighth beryl the ninth topaz the tenth chrysoprase and the eleventh jacinth the twelve amethyst the twelve gates were twelve pearls each of the gates made with a single pearl and the street of the city was pure gold transparent as glass so it's a place of immense beauty with all of these natural minerals gems gold same thing that we saw in Moses' description of Eden it's just magnified here it's very similar to Eden but it's greater there are more treasures there are more jewels there's more here than there was in Eden but there's nevertheless there's a clear connection verse 22

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 its light and its lamp is the Lamb similar to Genesis chapter 1 where the light is created before the sun moon and stars by its light will the nations walk and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it and its gates will never be shut by day and there will be no night there in chapter 22 then the angel showed me the river of the water of life bright as crystal flowing from the throne of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city and also on either side of the river the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations no longer listen 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 the tree of life an indicator that there is held out for God's people if they remain faithful to him there is held out the hope of everlasting life in his presence it is tempting of course for us to begin to think that because we are descendants of Adam we are all faced with the exact same choice as Adam

[42 : 43] Adam was put in the world good tree bad tree choose if he goes one way if he renders obedience to God he will be rewarded with eternal life if he renders disobedience to God he will suffer judgment and it is tempting for us to think that we are all little Adams and we have before us a simple choice if we obey we get life if we disobey we get judgment but in fact that is not the case at all we do come into the world as sort of little Adams but little Adams after the fall inherited from him a sinful fallen corrupt nature and worthy of all the condemnation that he earned from self and all of his descendants in chapter 3 and the tree of life in Revelation chapter 22 is said to be for the healing of the nations which means it fixes something that has gone wrong with these nations that have all descended from this one man fixes the problem of sin the New Testament is very clear that the only remedy for sin ultimately is the Lamb who sits on his throne here in Revelation 22 who was slain for us on a cross and it's not our obedience to God's commands that gives us access to the tree of life it's faith in Jesus Christ alone that gives us access we are not like Adam with the same choice as Adam we are fallen descended from Adam in need of another

Adam to obey in our place Jesus himself and the tree of life stands in the garden of Eden as a reminder that there is something better and yet for those of us descended from fallen Adam and Eve we can't achieve that something better cannot earn it it can never happen someone else must come along and bring the tree of life to us and cause us to eat of its leaves and that someone is Jesus himself and all of our hope is bound up in this one question have we trusted in that one who has not simply restored Eden but he's bringing something better than Eden into the world where we can live forever in the presence of God let's pray father I thank you that you've included in your word this story about our own origins that we're not left to guess as the world is prone to do we read about the constantly evolving theory of evolution about the constantly rearranged family tree of all living things and we long for something of a firmer foundation we long for the truth about where we come from unchangeable unmovable immutable truth about who we are and we find it here in your word and I pray father that we would be a people who do not do not hope in our own abilities to be better than

Adam but who trust fully in the second Adam who gives us access to your throne through faith in him I pray also that you would be pleased as we continue to sing to you and as we give back to you out of all the abundance you've given us this year I pray this in Christ's name amen holy