

## Genesis: Foundations of the Faith 3) The Garden of Eden

Genesis 2:4-15 • 2020-06-21 • Series: Genesis - Foundations of the Christian Faith



If you could live anywhere you wanted to where would it be? (I'm sure you all would naturally say right here, Payson. Despite the current threat of wildfire and the smoke in the air you'd be right.) Most people need to evaluate many things before answering that question. Many websites and magazines will rate a few of the desired categories for a good place to live and work. They will examine the level of safety, the infrastructure, the beauty, culture, and even the job opportunities. People want safety, beauty, and something meaningful to do. Safety, beauty, and work: don't those categories point us to what God designed in the very beginning? Today we continue our series looking at the first three chapters of Genesis. We now turn to chapter two. There we will see another foundation of the faith as we look at how God first arranged life and work for mankind. And we will see how we obtain the perfect place to live and work.

We can't overlook the fact that this is the first time in Genesis that God bears the title "Lord." It is a word in Hebrew that basically communicates, "He who is." The Lord God exists as entirely self-sufficient. But his created beings are not self-sufficient. They need certain things to live and thrive. So, God arranged the perfect place for mankind to live and work.

The description of the perfect home begins the same way that much of the Bible does when describing paradise. It contrasts it with our lives today and lists what is absent. At the very beginning there were no "bushes of the field" or "plants of the field." Nor was there anyone "working the earth." At this point someone might turn back to chapter one and object, "Didn't God already make plants on day three of creation?" And that is correct. Moses isn't saying that the earth lacked plants. Day three mentions plants in general, but not plants of the field which are cultivated for food. In the beginning there was no need to strive for food and farm it. There was no need to work the ground to obtain a harvest. Mankind didn't have to till fields and wait for rains. God provided. Water came up from underground springs and supplied everything. Imagine a home with perfect food provision in a self-sustaining cycle that never ends. It was the perfect place to live with security.

The world was formed to sustain a perfect home for an incredibly special creature: mankind. The Lord had formed man from the dust and breathed life into him. But he did more than just create man. He gave man the perfect place to live: the Garden of Eden. In this garden were all sorts of trees and plants bearing food. There were trees which were pleasant to look at and fruits that were delightful to eat. You've witness glimpses of creations beauty. You've tasted portions of its delights. Imagine the most delightful taste any culture around the world can offer today. Imagine the most beautiful places you've ever witnessed. Can you picture the best of it all in one place? It was the perfect place to live with beauty.

Moses goes on to describe the self-sustaining, never failing, infrastructure of the garden. A river is described which sounds like it is backwards from today's rivers. It flows like a fountain branching out. That river divided into rich lands filled with things which Moses' first hearers all recognized as treasures of precious minerals, tastes, and scents. All of it was connected by a perfect natural watering system. Can you picture the most beautiful waterfront walkways of all the places you've ever seen all rolled into one perfect paradise? Can you picture the best infrastructure you've ever witnesses working flawlessly to provide for life? It was the perfect place to live with incredible life-sustaining infrastructure.

Finally, the Garden of Eden is described as a place for good work. Adam would not be idle. He would be able to use his mind, his hands, and all the wisdom God had given him. He would serve as a working man and a father. He would be given opportunity to raise a family, work, and care for creation. Work is not a bad thing. I'm sure whatever vocation you have filled in your life there have been times you've enjoyed it. What Father doesn't have something to celebrate on Father's Day? All men who work and use their hands and minds take pleasure in work done well. Can you picture the best aspect of all the vocations in life and roll them all into one perfect position? The Garden of Eden was the perfect place to live because it had work for Adam to do which satisfied the heart and mind.

Where is Eden today? Everyone's idea of paradise today is different because no matter where you go there's always something not quite perfect. The perfect city might suffer from smog issues. Even towns with beautiful forests and perfectly clear skies sometimes must deal with smoke from wildfires or other problems. The best foods are expensive and hard to find. The places with the best infrastructures fail as wars, natural disasters, and the passing of time destroy them all. And even the best vocations in life are filled with challenges that we are not able to meet with delight. Everyone from the farmer and tradesman to the social worker and doctor gets weary and frustrated with their work. Today there is no perfect place to live and no perfect work. Everyone is chasing after Eden but unable to attain it.



Genesis reveals why. When something like a wildfire starts one thing that people like to know ask is, "how did it happen?" Sometimes it can be traced to a careless campfire or a vehicle fire. One small spark is all it takes to set so much destruction in motion. The chain reaction of burning is alarming! A spark in one place can end up rain down fire or ashes a

hundred miles away. That's what happened to the Garden of Eden. God had warned man. It's not as if the man and woman didn't know any better. They were like the foolish camper in the forest playing with fire. There was a clear "ban on burning" in this garden. They had one remarkably simple rule to abide by, and they deliberately crossed it. They chose to ruin it all. They broke his ban and did what was forbidden. As a result, more than just a fire occurred. God's holy and just anger burned. And the whole world was placed under notice that it would one day burn. Until then life and work were spoiled. Later in our series we'll see how both "plants of the field" and "working the earth" are the result of creation's ruin by sin. Life and work became hard and filled with pains. The perfect home and perfect place to work were ruined. And the man and woman were told they would return to dust. Eden was lost and they were lost as enemies of God.

Can we ever attain Eden again? The whole world still searches for it and strives to attain it. But Moses doesn't list the names of places and rivers here in order that we might find it somewhere. He lists them so that his readers might know it was real. God had designed a real paradise for the first man and woman. He did not create us to live in the uncertainty of life, under the hideous shadow of death, and the toiling labor of work without fulfillment. He created us to have security, beauty, a perfect place to live and work.

Genesis lays the foundation of the faith as we see something is very wrong with our current state of life. Our home and work are ruined. We must look to the Lord God to forgive, restore, and bring us to his paradise. He alone is the source of mercy and love.

In order that we might obtain what was lost the Son of God came to this broken and ugly world. He gave up all security as he went many days without food or home. He worked with his hands as a carpenter to obtain food each day for most of his life. He gave up the service of angels and the beauty of his heavenly home to live in a small, insignificant town. There he was despised because of his lack of beauty. He gave up his position as Lord of all to sign up for a task that no one ever could dream of doing: taking on the suffering and pain of the world. His work meant living and dying for every sinner. Many are thankful today for the work done by firefighters for our community. Consider how Jesus didn't risk his life to put out a fire. He took all the fire of hell on his own body in our place. When he finished his work, he rested in the grave.

Then with his newly glorified body he showed his victory. He declared paradise regained as he said, peace be with you. Jesus once said to his disciples, "I am going to prepare a place for you!" He's going to do more than restore Eden. His plan is to restore sinners to their blessed home and work given as a gift.

His provision for our needs is remarkable! He gives more than daily bread. The water and food which he provides us satisfies our souls! Right now, we have all we need for spiritual life and eternal life as he gives us the waters of baptism. And his provision for body and soul is everlasting. Even if we lose our home or body, he will take us to live with him forever in that perfect place. Then we will have the right to eat of the Tree of Life. You have his perfect provision!

And there is no lack of pleasure and delight in the life of a Christian. We can taste and see that the Lord is God as we delight in the beauty of his love. How sweet are his Words -sweeter than honey! We taste and see that the Lord is good as we eat the Bread of Life. And we celebrate and participate in the sacrament with his own body and blood to eat and drink with the bread and wine. His promises are filled with beauty! Every rainbow and every beautiful scene is a reminder of what beauty awaits us in the place he has prepared. You will forever gaze on the beauty of the new heaven and earth.

And it doesn't matter what your vocation is in life, it is now filled with satisfying meaning. That's because we are no longer working to obtain Eden. We are working to serve the Lord. And it doesn't matter if your vocation in life is serving as a pastor, putting groceries in a bag, politics, policing, or practicing a trade. Your work has just as much meaning as any other Christian and just as much value if you do it as one serving the Lord. Adam didn't have a business making Bibles, he didn't serve on the church council, and he wasn't spending hours serving at church. But he was serving the Lord as he did the best work he could to manage and care for the garden. So it is with all of us. Don't misunderstand. It is good to have some people serving the body of believers directly. We need people to serve with gospel ministry efforts. But those jobs are not any more important than the job done by a Christian father or mother who feeds and trains their children, or a Christian plumber who seeks to do their best to work. They are all working and living for the same reason Adam was created: out of thanksgiving to the God who gives us everything. You now have fulfilling work. And you will serve him forever in the new heaven and earth!

This is a foundation of the faith: God is the source of all security, beauty, and meaningful work. And soon he will take us to our perfect home to live and work.

After a wildfire, the initial damage can be devastating. But those who witness the passage of time after a fire see the working of God to restore what was once ruined. It's a remarkable renewal. It's the same with paradise. God has designed to restore what was lost. By his working new life emerges where there was only death an ash. We live and work now by faith in his restoration. If you could pick any home and any work that you wanted, what would it be? I can't picture any better than the one God gives to those who trust in him.