



Christ Reformed Community Church

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“Between Two Gardens” Revelation 21:1–5; Revelation 22:1–5

This morning, I want to do something a little bit different than what you may expect, something a little bit different than maybe I’ve ever done before in one sense, and that is basically in one, maybe two sermons, I want to give to you sort of a big picture view of Scripture. And the way that I want to do that is by going from Mark’s Gospel, using that as a launching pad, picking up a certain theme in Mark’s Gospel, and then going in a million other different ways to sort of highlight that theme throughout all of Scripture. And the reason that I want to do this is because I think there are times in the life of any church, particularly a church whose pastor is an expositor of the Word of God; that is, you begin at the beginning of a book, and you preach through every verse in that book until you get to the end of that. There can be the danger in that sort of setting in which you can miss the forest for the trees. You can sort of misconstrue the actual meaning of Scripture by getting bogged down in the details. And if you’ve been with us as we’ve studied Mark’s Gospel, you know that we are at that critical juncture in the earthly life of our Lord in which He is betrayed, in which He is tried, in which He will be crucified, in which He will resurrect. That is the cardinal tenants of the Christian faith dealing with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. So, I want to try to provide a little bit of clarity in terms of what all of this means for Christ, what all of this means for His people, what all of this means, really, for the world. What direction is the world going in? Why did God create the world? What does divine revelation tell us about the big story picture of Scripture itself? I want to read from Revelation 21:1–5 and then Revelation 22:1–5, and you can just remain seated this morning. John writes this in Revelation 21:1:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

And then in chapter 22, beginning in verse 1:

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. 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. 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.

Let us pray.

Father, thank You for these Scriptures. Now we pray that You would open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things from Your Word, both the Old Testament and New Testament, for our good and Your glory, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

As we've been going through Mark's Gospel, really over the last couple of years, really, we have come to certain points in Mark's narrative in which he gives what we might call summary predictions of Jesus' passion. You find this, for example, in chapter 8 and verse 31: *“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.”* Or again in chapter 10 and verse 33, this is Jesus speaking: *“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”* Or another place in Mark's Gospel, specifically chapter 9, which gives another prediction: *“The Son of Man is going to be [deceived],”* verse 31, *“into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.”* And then Mark gives a parenthetical explanation, verse 32, *“But they did not understand the saying, and they were afraid to ask.”* They did not understand the import of what it meant for Christ to go to the cross, to suffer and to die; that He would be resurrected, that He would ascend, and that this was the central plan of God from before the foundation of the world. We know, as even as late as the garden when Jesus is in Gethsemane, and He is filled with the grief over the reality that He will absorb the wrath of God for His people, He begs the apostles to watch and pray, and three times they fall asleep. They're not alert. They're not understanding all that is going to take place and the passion of our Lord, what it will mean for His own life, but most importantly what it will mean for their lives and what it will mean for the world. It is in that garden that we find Jesus heading.

The gospel writers tell us it is the garden of Gethsemane, but interestingly, in John 18, the apostle John just refers to it as a garden. He says, *“There was a garden.”* Jesus, it seems to me, the last Adam, heads to that garden, and the apostles were there with that last Adam, entering with Him into the garden of Gethsemane, just as all of humanity was with the first Adam in the garden of Eden. John goes out of his way to point out the fact that there was a garden, John 18:1. And you know John well enough to know he is keen on giving to us those metaphors or those pictures of the identity of Christ and all of those *“I am”* statements. *“I am the door,”* John says Jesus says. *“I am the good shepherd. I am the vine. I am the bread. I am the resurrection and the life.”* And so, when we come to the book of Revelation written by the same John, we see another picture, this time a picture of the future, as I read it to you from Revelation 21 and Revelation 22 of a new heaven and a new earth. He calls it a *“new Jerusalem.”* John, of course receives this vision, chapter

1 and verse 10, “*on the Lord’s Day*” as he “*is in the spirit.*” That’s interesting to me. It’s on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, the day that Jesus was resurrected in which He provides a vision of our eternal Sabbath rest. And you know from reading the Old Testament that in the order of the old covenant, one worked six days and then rested on the seventh, but in the new covenant, we rest on the first day so that we can work the next six days.

And so, John receives this vision regarding the eternal Sabbath rest we have in Christ as a reality to motivate our work on this earth at kingdom advancement until we get to Revelation 21 and 22, after the second return of the Lord. That is clearly the direction John is headed. And when we come to the end of Revelation, he provides for us what that consummated kingdom looks like, what heaven looks like, the new heavens and the new earth. It is an eternal sabbath rest. Here in Revelation 21 and 22, John describes not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning. He is describing for us what is going to happen now that all of biblical revelation has come to a conclusion, now that all of history has come to a conclusion. And so, we come to the end of our Bibles, and the Holy Spirit through John is providing this glorious future picture in which we can hope for because of Christ. But like the disciples who were confused about what exactly Jesus was doing, we too may be confused as to where this world is headed. In fact, it’s popular for Christians to be interested in eschatology; that is, the study of last things, and oftentimes, you will see teachers and preachers sort of reduce eschatology to charts and sequences of detailed events throughout history or in the future. But I think it is more helpful to view your understanding of eschatology or last things as a world view. A world view is a set of spectacles you look through, and by looking through them, you’re not trying to ascertain certain events necessarily and the timing of certain events or key figures throughout history, but rather, you’re trying to grasp the overall picture of what God is doing in the world, why He created this world, the panoramic view from heaven, from God’s vantage point. And although Scripture is the greatest literary anthology that was ever written, making it very complicated to understand, apocalyptic language and eschatology and the study of last things, complicated does not mean impossible because we’re indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the perspicuity of Scripture. We believe that Scripture is clear, and that God is competent to communicate Scripture to us in a way that we can absorb and understand Him and understand His plan for the world. We might call this the meta story of the Bible or the meta narrative of the Bible. What the Holy Spirit, through all the events of Scripture, through all the history of Scripture, through all the theology of Scripture taken together, centered of course around the death, resurrection, and glorious ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, what is He telling us? What is God doing in the world? And there are many ways we could go about this. I supposed the easiest way to do it would be to take the theme of covenant, which appears in the Old Testament and the New Testament, and trace throughout the Bible the big covenants of God and how God is a covenant-keeping God, and He is faithful to His promises. And certainly, if I were to pick one theme to describe all of Scripture, it would probably be that concept of covenant, but as we’ve gone through Mark’s Gospel, I have alluded more than one time to the fact that Jesus purposely entered the garden of Gethsemane. At the garden of Gethsemane was a place that had an oil press it in which olives were crushed, and it is in that place that Jesus gazes down into the furious wrath of God into the cup that He will drink where He will be crushed for our iniquities, where it will please the Father to fling His wrath upon Jesus Christ and crush Him, as if He is an olive in an olive press. All of these sorts of images that Scripture gives are not by accident. The Bible does

not waste one word. The Holy Spirit does not waste ink when He describes to us the in-depth, sovereign purposes of God to accomplish His will. And so, what I want to do, what I seek to do this morning and probably next week as well is look at this theme of the garden, try to understand from Scripture, the meta story of the Bible from the concept of a garden.

Now, I want you to turn with me to Romans chapter 5 because here in Romans chapter 5, perhaps if I were to pick the most important chapter in Scripture, this may be it. In Romans 5:19 we read: *“For as by the one man’s disobedience,”* that’s referring to Adam, *“the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”* That’s referring to Christ. So, *“By the one man’s disobedience,”* that is, Adam, *“the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”* Or 1 Corinthians 15:45: *“Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”* There you have it again, a comparison between the first Adam and the second Adam. What exactly is Paul telling us in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 by speaking about an Adam at the beginning of time and then a second Adam that comes who is Christ; one Adam who was disobedient, one Adam who was obedient? Well, one way we can look at this is to understand, going back to the idea of a covenant, understanding that the first Adam represented the whole of the human race, and the second Adam represents the new race of those redeemed in Christ, to understand that history really takes place in a series of gardens.

For example, in the first Adam’s garden, there was eating. In the second Adam’s garden, there was drinking. The first Adam sinned in the garden of Eden by agreeing to eat the forbidden fruit while the second Adam took upon Himself in the garden of Gethsemane agreeing to drink down the fruit of God’s bitter cup of wrath and wine. Eating in the first garden. The garden of Gethsemane, drinking. Or secondly, in the garden of Eden you had a Tree of Life that was placed there for man by God to enjoy eternal unbroken fellowship with God, while in the garden of Gethsemane, it points to another tree. It points to the tree of death at Golgotha, a tree that Peter says, *“The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree,”* and Peter will write later in one of his epistles that Jesus *“Bore our sins in his body on [that] tree.”* The Tree of Life in the original Eden. A tree of death coming out of the garden of Gethsemane as Jesus took steps there.

Third, we might speak about access ruined and access restored. By eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam forfeited and so did Eve their access to the Tree of Life. They brought death to their seed. They brought death to those that will come after them. They caused God’s good creation to be cursed. And the second Adam is hanging on a tree at Calvary, and yet He conquers death; and by His resurrection, He restores access to the new Trees of Life for all of those who are in the second Adam. For all those to whom Christ represents, there comes a blessing through the gospel. Or fourth, we may think about the fact that there are angels of death and angels of life. Eden was a garden, or we could say better, became a garden of death. Access closed, and what does Scripture tell us stood there to threaten and warn anyone who would try to enter? It was an angel guarding it lest anyone enter Eden. And then you have Christ passing through the garden of Gethsemane, passing through the garden to the tomb, of life being resurrected, pointing to the restoration of all things in a new garden, an eternal garden, Revelation 21 and 22. Or finally, we may think about a curse laid down and a curse lifted. That’s really what all of this is about, that in the garden of Eden, the curse was laid down by Adam by his willful rebellion and sin. And Christ, by going to Gethsemane and drinking the Father’s wrath and going to Calvary and being

resurrected, there came a blessing, a lifting of the curse. And blessing came down, a new creation, a renovation, a restoration of all things, not just a salvation of individual souls but a redemption even of creation itself. You are familiar with Isaiah’s words. He speaks about the fact that:

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk says something very similar to that, speaking about this future reconciliation of all things in Christ through the blessing of the gospel, the reversal of the curse. “*Then shall the lame man leap like a deer,*” Isaiah says, Isaiah 35:6, “*and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.*” This eternal, future, glorious garden of Revelation 21 and 22 will be a perfect environment where creation itself has been now brought right, where the “*waters break forth*” and the wasteland and wilderness of a sin-cursed world are all put right. And you say, “Well, what is to be my conclusion with all of this?” Well, it’s to see that there was a first Adam and a last Adam. Jesus went into the garden of Gethsemane in order to restore the paradise lost by Adam in the garden of Eden. And you say, “Well, that may be somewhat of a stretch. Where do we read in Scripture about the building of a new garden, the restoration of all things, the building of a new Eden?” Well, in Isaiah 51:3 we read these words: “*For the LORD comforts Zion.*” That is, His people. “*He comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.*” God says to the prophet Isaiah, “I’m making all things new. I’m building a new garden, a new Eden that will be restored through the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ.” And for us; that is, His people, we know that this will find ultimate fulfillment in a new heaven and a new earth, as John speaks about in Revelation 21 and 22, this cosmic harmony where Christ is reigning over all things. All things are in subjection to Christ, and then as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, “*Then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.*”

In fact, turn over with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 for a moment because if Romans 5 is the most important chapter in all of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15 is probably the second most important chapter. And here we read in verse 25 something very important, but we’re going to pick up in verse 22. Paul says: “*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*” So now, another comparison between the first and the last Adam. “*But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*” Verse 24: “*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.*” That’s going to come at the end, but until then, verse 25: “*For he must reign until...*” Until the things of verse 24 occur. “*He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*” That describes a process of the lordship of Christ, the rulership of Christ, the reigning of Christ over this world in which He is using His people and His authority to renew and renovate this world for His glory so that His knowledge covers the world as the waters cover the sea. And then we read in verse 28: “*When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected*

to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.” Skip to verse 45: “Thus it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.’” But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust. The second man is from heaven. “As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

We were in the first Adam, and we sinned. We reflect that first Adam in all of our ways, our thoughts, our words, our deeds. They’re all corrupt. We look like that first man, Adam as he looked in his sin, a man of the dust. And what is God doing in the world? Well, He began in that garden with that Adam, but it’s Christ who goes through another garden to create a new garden in which all of His people will be made into His image. This is the essence of the doctrine of sanctification, that the Holy Spirit conforms us to the very image of Christ, and we become men and women of heaven where we look like Christ, and our destination ultimately is heaven. It is that new city, that new Jerusalem, that new Eden, that new garden that John speaks about in Revelation 21 and 22. So, this is the meta story of Scripture, the meta narrative of Scripture. There are two Adams, and this morning you are in the old Adam, or you’re in the new Adam. You’re either still in bondage to sin with no access to the Tree of Life, or you are in Christ, and you have free and full access to life eternal and the promise of an eternal home and the promise of the renovation and the restoration of all things as Christ rules over history and brings it all to a glorious and consummated end. That’s sort of the big picture.

Now, what I want to do beginning this morning is break down this bigger picture into three smaller pictures to help us grasp how all of this goes together, and I want to utilize the picture of the garden, which is particularly used in the gospels and in other places in Scriptures as I’ve shown, Isaiah and Revelation. And where I want to begin is actually at the end, so, this is how we’re going to do this. This may seem strange. We’re going to begin at the end, Revelation 21 and 22. Then we’re going to go to the beginning, Genesis 1 and 3. And then finally, we’ll come to the middle when Christ came the first time and how He reversed this whole thing, and it’s going to take us a little while to get to the middle, so hang on, and we might not get there this morning. But we need to begin where all things end. What is all of this taking us to? The first picture that Scripture helps us to see this bigger story is where we’re going. I read it to you, Revelation 21 and Revelation 22. Both of these chapters—Revelation 22 is really a recapitulation, I believe, of Revelation 21, but if you note with me in chapter 21 and verse 2, it describes the new heaven and the new earth. John says: “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Now, he goes on to describe in detail, which is not our purpose this morning, all the things that that will involve, but the big picture here to see is verse 2 says this is a magnificent city, and it is the very goal toward which all creation was moving from the very beginning in Genesis. This is the fulfillment, this is the end of divine revelation, revealing to us the fulfillment of how God’s initial project in Eden, though it was thwarted, will not ultimately be thwarted. God will renew a garden temple city, the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven. This will be our eternal home. You could call this the ultimate utopia, the ultimate paradise, and there are several garden features about this new Jerusalem. That’s what I want you to see.

Number one, there is a peaceful unity, verse 3: *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’”* This is eternity future, and John is describing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the purpose of this city is that it is a habitation of God. It is a dwelling of God. He calls it *“the dwelling place of God,”* and not just of God, but *“the dwelling place of God,”* verse 3, *“with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people.”* It reflects, I believe, Genesis 1 and the face-to-face intimate fellowship and communion that the first Adam had with God. And John describes this as a *“holy city”* in verse 2, a *“new Jerusalem.”* It’s inhabited. There are people walking around on its streets, living in whatever it is that they’re living in. There’s nothing here about people floating on clouds and playing harps, but there is this central, throbbing, intense heartbeat of God and His people being one and dwelling together finally in peaceful harmony with God and one another. In fact, it’s so glorious it’s called a holy city, but that means it has to have a holy people, right? Well, they are holy. Skip with me to verse 26. It says, *“They will bring into it,”* into the city, *“the glory and the honor of the nations.”* So, this is people from every tribe and tongue and nation. *“Nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”*

Now, that is heaven. No more sin, no more sinners, no more corruption, only the people of God and God, peaceful harmony. Also, no darkness, notice verse 22: *“And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.”* That’s very interesting. *“And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 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’s no darkness. There’s no sin. The light of the Lamb lights up all of it, this peaceful harmony with only light, the people of God together with one another and our triune God. That is a reflection of the garden originally, the fellowship, the intimacy that Adam and Eve had with God before sin, the peaceful harmony. But secondly, there is a powerful sovereignty that tells us this new place is like a garden. Go with me to chapter 22 and verse number 5. It says, *“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.”* Very interesting. It says, *“they will reign forever and ever,”* which implies that God is the one reigning with them. In this garden sanctuary, there is an unchallenged reign of Christ, similar to Adam and Eve who were given the dominion mandate to rule with God. They forfeited that, but apparently here, John tells us everyone enjoys this sort of royal status. Why? Well, because they’re one with the King. And because there’s no sin, they are one with His law. They are aligned in His ways, which tells us there is no chance of rebellion.

That was one of the questions I had when I was a seminary student. As I began to study Scripture in depth, it was the question of, well, if there was a first Adam and a second Adam, will there be the need for a third Adam or a fourth Adam? Well, there’s no need for a third or a fourth Adam because there will be no sin. There will be no rebellion. In fact, the Bible doesn’t even call Adam the second Adam; it calls him the “last” Adam. There isn’t to be another Adam. There will be no need for another redeemer to come and fix anything. This is the powerful sovereignty of God, similar to what Adam and Eve experienced, God ruling over them in the original garden.

And then third, there’s a permanent vitality. Verse 2 says: *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,”* chapter 21, verse 2, *“coming down out of heaven.”* And we read—well, go to chapter

22 and verse 2, that’s where it is: *“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.”* Of course, we know in the original garden, the garden of Eden, there was the Tree of Life. John says there’s going to be Trees of Life *“on either side of the river...twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.”* It never stops producing. It will never be barren, which means Eden is a perfect environment, this new Eden, a perfect environment. Those eating of the Tree of Life have perfect health. There is no death. And then there’s this providential security, verse 3: *“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.”* I think that is also a reflection on the original garden that was cursed, the ground was cursed. The world was cursed, but here John says that’s not going to happen again. *“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it.”* That is to say, there’s this providential security that things will always be right for all of eternity. So, this new Jerusalem has garden features. It has a peaceful unity like Adam and Eve possessed. It has a powerful sovereignty. There’s only one God prior to the fall, no one falsifying as if they are God, no one like the serpent deceiving man to make man believe he could be exactly like God. There’s this permanent vitality of health and eternity, this providential security.

And then, fifth, there is this plentiful industry or productivity. Chapter 22 and verse 3: *“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it.”* And then notice this: *“And his servants will worship him.” “His servants will worship him.”* There will be worship, and there will be work. We will forever be the servants of Christ, working for His glory, worshipping Him at His feet. It will be the plentiful industry and productivity, the likes of which no one has ever seen. By the way, before the fall, Adam was also a worker and a worshiper, commanded by God to work the ground and to guard the garden. Now, all of this is beautiful and awe inspiring, but we read in the rest of Revelation, the discovery that as this future garden temple city of the new heavens and new earth is being prepared, that there is a contrasting city that is competing with it, and that is the city of Babylon. We read about that in Revelation 14 through 18. This is portrayed, Babylon is, by John as the alternative God-less city, the great enemy of those who belong to the kingdom of God. John is saying, the kingdom is going to take time to grow.

This garden temple city is not going to occur overnight, and there will reach a point when Jesus returns in which it will be completed, in which it will be consummated, but until then Babylon, will oppose it. The opposing city will seek to destroy it, and so when you put all of this together if the opening chapters of the Bible tells us of a garden that God planted with the intensions of extending it into a garden city temple before it was thwarted by the deception of the serpent and the rebellion of man, then the close of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, tells us that ultimately this curse will be reversed through Christ to bring His garden project to a conclusion, but it will take war; war with the serpent, and we are in between these two gardens. We are in between Eden, and we are in between the new Eden, the new heavens and the new earth, and even today as we have come to worship the Lord, we live in a world that is still in rebellion. We live in a world in which people create opposing cities and kingdoms, ideologies, false theologies. Perhaps it’s through violence or real oppression or tyranny or satanically influenced theology or leaders or figures or nations. First John 5:19 says, *“The whole world lies in the power of the evil one,”* that there is a sense in which Satan has entered into the fray in such a way that the reversal of the curse in God’s providence will take time until all of His light shines in this world, and the darkness is gone. People

all around us seek Babylon. They aspire for security through technology or success through human innovation or power and glory apart from God, apart from His gospel.

As His people, we’re to follow in the footsteps of father Abraham. When we read Revelation 21 and 22, we know what the end is going to be, right? We understand through divine revelation through the Holy Spirit that the final chapter has been written. And so, like Abraham—he was looking forward to the city that has foundations whose designer and builder is God. We are to walk with that sort of faith. By the way, John is not writing Revelation as some sort of end-times consultant. At the beginning of the book, he writes it to seven real churches in Asia Minor, seven real churches that were dealing with false teachers, seven real churches that were dealing with real sinners that wouldn’t repent, several churches that were dealing with real persecution and hostility from the culture that they lived in, from the Romans and from their tyranny, from that paganism that had infiltrated the first century just a few years after the resurrection of Christ. And he’s writing to say this kingdom will take time to grow. He’s writing to say that this knowledge of the new heavens and the new earth should motivate the church now, in between the garden of Eden and in between the new heaven and the new earth. The church should be motivated by a glorious optimism and what God has promised in His Word, to stand for truth, to oppose false teachers, to stand against sin, to advance the kingdom of God. And as God’s covenant community, the church, we are His temple. We are filled with His presence, and we are to seek to expand the kingdom until it fills the whole earth, the knowledge and the glory of God as the waters cover the sea, as Habakkuk says, until God accomplishes His final goal of the end, which is the consummation and the completion of this beautiful garden temple city where we inhabit it with God in peaceful harmony under His powerful rule with no sin and no darkness for all of eternity. That is the end to which Scripture points us to.

And I would just stop for a moment to tell you this. If you don’t understand the end, what hope do you have if you cannot comprehend what God has promised through Christ is much more than merely the salvation of souls that He saves, that die, are raised again, and go to heaven; if you can’t see beyond the fact that God is doing something far more than that? He is reconciling the creation to Himself. He will subdue all powers and kings and rulers through the proclamation of the powerful gospel through the testimony of Christians through their lives, how they live holy before God in a dark world. That is the power of the gospel, and to the church we have been given this mission to press on and to persevere even though we may be like the churches of Asia Minor. We may be persecuted. We may face hostility. We may face false ideologies that are satanically influenced by hell. We may face theologies that distort the gospel, but we have a job to do as servants and worshipers to extend the kingdom of God, to lay the groundwork and prepare working alongside of God by the power of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the gospel because our faith is in a city whose foundations are built by God, just as Abraham believed. So, that’s really the first picture in order to understand our task, what God is doing in the world, what the big story of Scripture is telling us. We have to understand where we are going, by God’s grace through Christ, where we are going.

But there’s a second picture, and I want to go all the way back now to the beginning of time. We’ve looked at the end, where we’re going—that’s the first picture. The second picture is where we were, where we were. And I want you to turn back with me to the book of Genesis. I read chapters 2 and 3 for our public reading of Scripture, so I’m not going to take a lot of time to read back

through this. The narrative is long. But remember we started out pointing to Romans 5:19, 1 Corinthians chapter 15 to speak about a first Adam and a second Adam, to speak about the fact that we were truly with Adam in that garden. He was our covenant head, and we were there with him and in him when he sinned. Well, what takes place here in Genesis 2 through 3 really anticipates the end and what happens in Revelation 21 and 22. Here you have beginning in verse 1, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth,*” all the way through, really chapter 2 and verse 3, this panoramic view of God’s powerful creation. And it’s interesting because in this first little section of Genesis, God is referred to by the Hebrew name, *Elohim*. That is His general sort of, I guess you could say, transcendent name. It is Moses’ way as he writes giving the panoramic general view of this general deity, *Elohim*. He is powerful. He creates the universe. He orders the universe in six days. An amazing general panoramic picture, but then he gives a zoomed-in focused view beginning in chapter 2, verse 4, going through the end of chapter 3, and here every time you read the word *God* in the English, in the Hebrew, it’s the Hebrew word translated *Yahweh Elohim*. *Yahweh Elohim* is the personal name of God. That is the name that is used in Adam and Eve’s interaction with God. It is speaking to us about the eminence of God.

So, you have the transcendence of God in His powerful creation of all things. You have the imminence of God now in this zoomed-in focus where God has intimate fellowship with Adam and Eve. He is their Master. He is their *Yahweh Elohim*. He is their Lord God. Now, what do we see God doing here? Well, He does a lot. If you’ve ever heard of the word *anthropomorphism*, it’s a word that is describing the fact that the biblical writers from time to time will ascribe to God human features so we might understand something of what it means for God, for example, to create the world. What did it mean for Adam to see God’s face as the first thing that he saw upon creation? Well, we use anthropomorphisms. We know that God does not have a body like men. He does not have hands and He does not have feet, but He has something like hands and feet because we read here in this zoomed-in focused view of creation that God, after all, is not only transcendent; He is imminent, He is near. And what does He do? Well, God crouches down, and He molds clay from the ground like the hands of a potter creating Adam. So, He’s molding, He’s crouching, He’s breathing into Adam the breath of life. He plants a garden, and He puts Adam in it. So, He’s molding and crouching, bending over, planting, and delegating Adam authority. He provides for him a companion and says to Adam, “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.*” Mimic the image of God that you bear by having others that bear My image; that is, children.

God is intimately breathing into Adam’s mouth, intimately looking into Adam’s face as if to say, “I’m no merely *Elohim*. I am *Yahweh Elohim*. I am your Master, I am your Lord, I am your Creator, and you reflect Me like none of the rest of My creation does.” And then what happens on the seventh day? The Bible says that God rested. There’s a Sabbath rest, not because He needed physical rest, but He takes a day of rest in order to show that He set up this world with a purpose, and here it is. If you hear nothing else this morning, hear this. God desires to rest in a place together with man in a peaceful garden, and so He creates the universe, and especially plants a garden, and with His own hands forms Adam, breathes into him, places him in there, and He tells Adam, “You’re going to work for Me, and you’re going to worship Me, and I’m going to walk with you and have fellowship with you. You have been given a privileged status that none of the bears or the lions or the birds of the air have been given. The plant life certainly can’t have this sort of fellowship with Me.” So, He wants man to join Him, I think it’s clear, to extend the borders of this garden. Why else would God tell Adam to work and to keep the garden? This seventh day, this

Sabbath Day, points to God’s desire to rest with man. Six days of work, and then rest. Six days of work, and then rest. And the completed project of the garden temple city in Revelation 21 and 22, therefore, clearly has a prototype in the planting of Eden. That is why Isaiah says that He is going to restore Mount Zion to the garden of the Lord to be like Eden was and could have remained if there wasn’t sin.

I like how one scholar puts it. He says that “Eden is not just a piece of Mesopotamian farmland.” It is a type of sanctuary where God rests on the seventh day to say, “This is a paradise that has temple features because My presence dwells here. There is perfect fellowship with Me, and what I want you to do in order to show your worship of Me is to work. Get to work at doing what I have done in a massive way in creating the universe. Till the ground, work it, keep it, have children, raise them to do the same, until the whole world is filled with this knowledge and glory of this magnificent Creator-God.” Now, when we fast forward into the Old Testament, we see stunningly that when God gives the blueprints for the tabernacle, the temporary structure, and the temple, He constantly uses imagery that is reflective of the garden. The very blueprints of the tabernacle seem to be patterned after the garden. For example, in Genesis 3:8 it says God walked “*in the garden in the cool of the day.*” And in Leviticus when the tabernacle was constructed, we read God’s words: “*And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.*” And then in 2 Samuel 7 in the covenant that God makes with David—in fact, turn over with me to 2 Samuel just to highlight this, 2 Samuel chapter 7, just two verses. God says in verse 6:

I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”

Here is God, as verse 6 says, “I have been moving about in a tent for My dwelling, walking about, moving about, fellowshiping with My people,” just as God did in the garden before the fall. And then we read that both sanctuaries—the tabernacle, the sanctuary of the tabernacle, the sanctuary of the temple—had the images of cherubim everywhere. Of course, the most notable is the mercy seat with the two large figures of cherubim. But beyond that, the very veil of the temple had images of cherubim on them, reflective of Genesis 3:24. After Adam sinned, the cherubim guarded the sanctuary of Eden with a flaming sword. All of this is imagery pointing to the fact that Eden was to be a sanctuary. The temple and the tabernacle were miniature Edens, and even the lampstand, that very important piece of holy furniture. It’s interesting because you have the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and all sorts of other trees in the garden of Eden, and when the Old Testament, for example, in Exodus 25 describes the lampstand, it describes it as a lampstand that has six branches, six limbs. A picture of a tree, which clearly represents the garden of Eden. That was the thing that would give them life, and that was also the thing that would give them death. You eat of the Tree of Knowledge and Evil, you die. You avoid that and eat of the Tree of Life, you’re fine. Now, you’ve got a lampstand with branches. And we could also speak about the river flowing from Eden spoken about in Genesis 2:10, resembling that glorious vision of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 47 that pictures a river flowing from a future Jerusalem temple and bringing life into the Dead Sea. Or we could speak about the materials of Genesis 2:11–12 that say Eden was such a marvelous place that it was a place you could harvest gold and onyx. And how when God described the garments of the priests, they were to be donned with studded onyx stones on

their ephod, on their breastplate as if to represent the fact they represent a sanctuary like Eden. They represent the dwelling place of God. The ark made of pure gold, gold being harvested from Eden—all of that. But it’s not merely the similarities between the construction of the tabernacle and the temple and the priests’ garments, and all the imagery of the cherubim that tells us that Eden was meant to be a sanctuary.

It’s also because Adam was given a very important priestly status, going back to Genesis chapter 2. You’ve probably not fully thought of it this way, but in Genesis 2:15: “*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden.*” Notice it says, “*To work it and keep it.*” That’s two verbs: *‘ābaḏ* which means “to work” or “to serve” or “to till” and *shâmar* which means to “keep or observe,” or most notably, “to guard.” Adam is, as verse 15 says, “*to work it*” and he is to “*keep it.*” That is, to guard it. Now, when both of these verbs are used separately, they can mean a host of different things, but when they are used together, they are always linked with activities that the priests themselves in the tabernacle and the temple engaged in. For example, we read in Numbers chapter 3 these words: “*They shall keep guard over him.*” This is speaking about the duties of the Levites. “*They shall keep guard,*” same Hebrew word, “*over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle.*” Same Hebrew word; or Numbers 8:26: “*They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, but they shall do no service. Thus shall you do to the Levites in assigning their duties.*” They have a specific work, a specific task. It involves guarding and keeping the sanctuary of God, just as the cherubim guarded it, just as Adam was to guard the garden of Eden and work it. This is Numbers 18:3: “*They shall keep guard over you and over the whole tent, but shall not come near to the vessels of the sanctuary or to the altar lest they, and you, die. They shall join you and keep guard over the tent of meeting for all the service of the tent, and no outsider shall come near you.*” It seems to me that in Genesis 2:15 when God tells Adam to work and keep it, *‘ābaḏ shâmar*, same verbs used to describe the duties of the priests, that God was ordaining Adam to be a priest. He’s the first priest, and that is his work. He works to glorify God. He works to fulfill the plan in the world, the creation project of the garden, to protect that garden. He has a priestly status to extend the boundaries of Eden to all of his progeny, to produce more priests. Remember, he’s given Eve, and they are to have children, and those males are to be priests guarding and keeping.

But it wasn’t just a priestly status; it was also a royal status that Adam was given, Genesis chapter 1. He was given a sort of kingly status. Verse 26: “*Then God said, ‘Let us...’*” I believe that to be a reference to the trinity. “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.*”

*So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

Here it is, verse 28: “*And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’*” What is this? This means that God not only ordained Adam to be a priest, but God gave to Adam a kingly or royal status to be a vice

regent over all of His creation, to have dominion and subdue the creation, and to have children that will follow in his footsteps. Interestingly, the phrase *“image of God”* there in Genesis 1, in the Ancient Near East, any king of a given kingdom was considered the living image of that false god. And I believe that Genesis was written in that world by Moses as a sort of polemic against false temples to say that humanity bears the image of God, not idols. And the way that man bears the image of God best is by guarding and keeping His truth and pointing people back to their Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

So, here’s this first Adam. He is given this priestly, royal status to guard and to keep Eden, to train up his children in the ways of the Lord, to lead his wife who is called the helpmeet as they both serve as vice regents over this little garden that is meant to have its borders extended with an ever-growing population of royal priesthood men and women until the temple city of this beautiful garden extends out to fill the entire world. Of course, that’s not what happened because sin entered. Adam wasn’t that good of a priest. Instead of letting the serpent in, he should have let the serpent out when it tried to get in. Adam’s great failure was not merely the fact that he listened to the woman, that he subverted the principle of headship which resulted in the first sin, but it was the fact that Adam didn’t take his job serious enough to begin with, as the priest of God, to protect his wife, to protect future children. He let things slide. He didn’t guard and keep and work. He didn’t take dominion over creation. Instead, he submitted to a creature, a serpent, and the whole world fell into sin because of that. The project was abandoned by Adam. That’s what you need to see. He abdicated his priestly role. He didn’t guard and keep it. He abdicated his royal kingly role. He didn’t take dominion over the serpent, and as a result, this garden city temple where man had perfect fellowship with God that was meant to be extended, was shut down. They were expelled. It was guarded by a cherubim, and God said, “What you have done in one brief moment has caused more destruction that you can imagine; and in order to show you how much I hate sin and rebellion, I’m going to reverse this curse because one of your children is going to dominate the serpent and kill him.” But it is going to be a very, very, very long and bloody war that will ultimately and even gloriously so, result in the death of the Son of God Himself to pay for the sins of all of us who were in Adam and are represented by the second Adam upon the tree of Calvary. So that while sin is absolutely devastating, nothing can thwart the good plan of God.

And, as a matter of fact, apart from God ordaining and allowing sin, we would know nothing of God’s grace and forgiveness and love and mercy because that is something Adam didn’t know prior to the fall. Where we were and where we are going, the experience of eternal peace and joy and forgiveness, all of that can only be understood in the in between. What happened when Christ came? What was He doing, and how did He defeat the serpent? How does He do what the first Adam didn’t do? Well, I’ll give it you in short before we close. He is our prophet, He is our priest, and He is our King. He spoke forth the Word of God. He defended the Word of God. As a priest He intercedes for us. As a priest, He was His own sacrifice; and as a King, He rose victorious. He ascended to the right hand of God, and He rules and He reigns even now. He is a much better and glorious Adam, and that is why this morning we can smile and have hope in God as we consider what He is doing in the world and what He is telling us through His Word because of the gospel. Next time, we’ll finish, Lord willing, looking at this great theme of the garden. Let us pray.

Lord, thank You for the truth of Scripture that penetrates our hearts. Lord, it is so rich and so deep and so wonderful. It is utterly overwhelming at times to be able to absorb the depth of Your Word,

the depth of Your sovereignty in the ordering of all things, the beauty of the imagery of the garden, and what all of this means as it comes together and comes to fulfillment in Christ, and then later comes to fulfillment in the new garden city and temple of the new Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth. Father, we dwell upon the reality of heaven, not so we can escape what’s going on in our world today, but so that we can get to work and advance Your kingdom, that we can work and keep the garden, that we can defend truth, that we can be optimistic in the face of hostility, that we can love others and be gracious and generous because we know that we are winners in the end through Christ. We won’t be defeated because Christ defeated that serpent that by the time of Revelation had grown into a dragon. He’s been defeated and, Lord, we await his final, final defeat and the glory that is to come. But until then, may we be motivated like the seven churches in Revelation to work and to keep what You have given us, this stewardship of Your kingdom and the glory of the church filled with Your presence, being a light to the world. Bless us as we reflect on these things and meditate upon these things. We ask all of this in Jesus’ name. Amen.