

Rediscovering the Story of the Old Testament – Session 1 Lesson 2

Heaven and Earth Joined at the Garden

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Main Idea

Seeing the purpose of humans in the creating of a garden for the humans to flourish under the direction of Yahweh

Exercise

How would you design a place where people could meet with God?

Core questions

1. How would you describe the perfect place for all humans to flourish?

The Good Earth: Heaven and Earth Joined at the Garden

Infinite God

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.

- 1) [With His image-bearing creatures in mind, God created an entire physical universe in which he could display His glory. This well-planned universe would consist of matter and energy which would have just the right properties, natural laws, to support and sustain His image-bearing creatures. It would be an extravagant universe befitting a prodigal God with overwhelming details that range from vast expanses of space with galaxies of stars and planets, down to quantum particles from which the raw elements that the universe is made of. And all this to support physical life forms in which the complexity and intricacy of each cell within each of those life forms is greater than any object yet made by human hands.]
- 2) To display His glory, God created a well-planned extravagant universe befitting a prodigal God. [have just the right properties to support and sustain His image-bearing creatures.]
 - a) [from the] vast expanses of space with galaxies of stars and planets [*re: bible/maps-images/creation*]
 - b) quantum particles
 - c) life forms with each cell is more complex and intricate than any object yet made by human hands
- 3) God's very nature is complex and intricate.
 - i) [The intricacy and complexity of the universe is the work of a God whose very nature is complex and intricate. The first hint we see of this is given in the very first verses, “In the beginning, God created ...” (Hebrew: Bereshit bara Elohim ...). Elohim is a plural word that could be translated as gods, but the verb, bara, is singular. In the second verse we read about the Spirit of God. Later on, in various locations, scripture reveals on the one hand that “The LORD our God, the LORD is one” but on the other hand we see God revealed as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Somehow, there is one God, but there are three persons. The shorthand way we refer to this complexity is the Trinity, a combination of the prefix Tri (for three) and the root word unity.]
 - b) Genesis 1:1 in Hebrew: *Bereshit bara Elohim ...*
 - c) Elohim could be translated as gods, [also *intensive plural*]
 - d) the verb, bara, is singular.
 - e) In the second verse we read about the Spirit of God.
 - f) **Deuteronomy 6:5** “The LORD our God, the LORD is one”

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- g) **Matthew 28:19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
- h) Somehow, there is one God, but there are three persons. The shorthand way we refer to this complexity is the Trinity, a combination of the prefix Tri (for three) and the root word unity.

Temple Dedication

- i) [In Genesis 1, the phrases, “And God said, “Let there be … and there was … And there was evening and there was morning …” appears six times for each of the first six days. There has much to do in recent years about how long each day was: six 24-hour days, six ages or other options. However, because we tend to think of creation in physical terms, when we look at this passage, we should try to look at it as the people would have understood it around at the time it was given. This would give us a much different understanding. In the ancient near-east cultures of 3500 years ago, creating something meant not to physically create something but rather to assign a purpose to it. Therefore, in the eyes of ancient near east cultures Genesis 1 would appear to look like the dedication of a temple in which God’s joyful, celebrating, worshiping community of image-bearers would dwell.]
- ii) With that understanding, we now see in Genesis 1:1-2 that the universe had been physically created but it was formless and void because it had not yet been dedicated to its purpose. Then in the rest of Genesis 1, we see God dedicating the earth, which would become his temple; the place where He would dwell with His image-bearing creatures.
- 4) In Genesis 1, the phrases, “And God said, “… there was evening and there was morning, the _____ day …” appears six times for each of the first six days.
- 5) In recent years there has been debate about how long each day was: six 24-hour days, six ages or other options.
- 6) In our age, we tend to think of creation in physical terms, but we should try to look at this creation as the people would have understood it in the times of Moses.
- 7) In the ancient near-east cultures of 3500 years ago,
- 8) creating something meant not to physically create something but rather to assign a purpose to it.
- 9) Genesis 1 would appear to look like the dedication of a temple in which God’s joyful, celebrating, worshiping community of image-bearers would dwell.

The image-bearers

- i) **Genesis 1:26-27** Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish … birds … livestock … 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. And God blessed them.
- ii) **Genesis 1:28,31.** 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… God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”
- iii) **Psalms 19:1-4** The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
 - (1) [This was only intended to be the beginning. God had created living creatures that were intended to thrive and multiply to the point of filling the earth. Moreover, God’s image-bearing creatures were also, as God’s vice-regents, to fill and take care of the earth. Although God has some characteristics that are unique to Himself, the character of these image-bearing creatures is rooted in the very character of God: creative, intelligent, aesthetic, moral, relational, spiritual, able to transcend their circumstances, able to love, and the list goes on.]

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(2) At the end of six days, the dedication was complete: the sun, the moon, the stars; the sky, the sea, the land; the first of the plants and animals in the sea, the sky and land; and the first of his image-bearing creatures; all of these were now dedicated to the purpose for which God had intended them to be. In all of this, all the details of this universe were designed to reflect the character of the God who created each thing so that His image-bearing creatures would recognize His imprint everywhere they looked, reflecting the glory of the Creator God. Every image-bearer could look around and see this magnificent temple dedicated to the glory of God.

iv) God had created living creatures that were intended to thrive and multiply to be His vice-regents, to fill and take care of the earth.

v) The character of these image-bearing creatures is rooted in the very character of God: creative, intelligent, aesthetic, moral, relational, spiritual, able to transcend their circumstances, able to love, and the list goes on.

vi) At the end of six days, the dedication was complete: all of creation was now dedicated to the purpose for which God had intended them to be.

vii) All the details of this universe were designed to reflect the character of the God so that His image-bearing creatures could look at His magnificent temple and recognize His imprint everywhere they looked

Seventh Day

10) **Genesis 2:1-3, 15** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation... The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

11) **Matthew 11:28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

- [After those six days, the seventh day is given without a specified and there was evening and there was morning. After those six days, the dedication of God's temple was complete, and the seventh day would be that never-ending time when God and his image-bearers would now occupy the temple he had made. The creating, the ordering, the dedication was complete. There was a sense in which the house had become a home and was now ready to live in. When the Bible talks about God resting, surely God did not get tired and had needed to relax, rather God was now ready to use this space for the purposes he had intended from the beginning. This view is reflected later in Deuteronomy where we see that to rest from creating, from enemies, from labor is not to cease work, but to enter the work intended from the beginning. But what is that work intended to be?]
- In the newly ordered creation, the new center of activity is the garden where God would dwell with his image-bearers. The Garden was designed to provide food, not for God who did not need it, but for his image-bearers. It would be in the place that God would have his image-bearers act as farmer-priests, serving God by taking care of the garden.
- Although we now have the sense that the entire universe could be considered sacred space, a place where God could dwell, God seems to have created a center for the sacred space, the Garden of Eden. The garden contained food for the image-bearers to eat and was the place where God would meet with them. The garden was also the place where there were two unique trees: The Tree of Life and The Tree of Knowledge.

12) The seventh day is given without the phrase, "there was evening and there was morning." The dedication of God's temple was complete.

13) The seventh day was designed to be that never-ending time when God and his image-bearers would now occupy the temple he had made. The creating, the ordering, the dedication was complete.

14) The universe, God's temple was now a home, ready to rest in, be lived in, to be used for the purposes he had intended from the beginning.

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- 15) In Deuteronomy we see that *to rest* does not mean to cease work, but to enter the work intended from the beginning. The question is, “What is that work intended to be?
- 16) In Genesis 2, the center of activity is the garden where God would dwell with his image-bearers.
- 17) The Garden was designed to provide food, not for God who did not need it, but for his image-bearers.
- 18) The Garden is the place that God designed for his image-bearers to act as farmer-priests, serving God by taking care of the garden.
- 19) The entire universe could be considered a sacred space where God could dwell, but the garden of Eden was its center
- 20) The garden contained food for the image-bearers to eat and was the place where God would meet with them.
- 21) The garden was also the place where there were two unique trees: The Tree of Life and The Tree of Knowledge. [merism]