

## Created for worship - Genesis 2: 4-17

Genesis 2: 4-17 offers a beautiful complementary account to the creation story of Chapter One. It focuses on God's creation of man (*adam*) from the ground (*adamah*) and of God's calling for Adam to 'work (serve) the garden and take care of it'. It is important we start our series on worship here. Worship is not one activity among many but is the *fundamental vocation* of all human beings. The key question, therefore, is never 'Do I worship?' (we all do) but 'Who/what do I worship?'

### 1. Worship –our original setting

The Garden of Eden was landscaped and planted by God (v.8). It was beautiful, rich and refreshing and there is a real sense in which all in the Garden offers worship to God. But the symbolism of the Garden intriguingly shares a symbolism with the Tabernacle/Temple of Ancient Israel. For example, both Eden and the later sanctuaries were entered from the East and were guarded by cherubim (Gen 3:24; Exodus 25:18ff). God is said to 'walk' in Eden and in the later sanctuaries (Lev.26:12). Eden is thus seen as a *garden-sanctuary* for communion with the Creator and Adam, in turn, is seen as a 'priest', a great leader of all creation in offering glory to God.

### 2. Worship – our fundamental orientation

A second striking feature of this second creation narrative is that its primary focus is on God's relationship with Adam and Adam's response in his call to work and take care of the garden. In noticeable distinction to Gen 1-2:3, God in this account is now consistently called **Lord God**, the One who is in covenant relationship with Adam. Humanity's whole orientation is to serve and glory God. We were hard-wired for worship. It is defining of our very nature and our 'chief end'. Adam's worship is expressed in everyday work – every part of our lives is to honour him and to be offered as worship. It follows that if worship is so fundamental to our identity then there is no such thing as a vacuum of 'non-worship'. The error of humanity expressed in Romans 1:18ff is not the *neglect* of worship but the *exchange* of worship. Adam failed to obey God, became turned in on himself and since then we have had a propensity to worship the created order rather than the Creator. Only through Christ, the Second Adam, can we be rightly re-orientated.

### 3. Worship – our most shaping activity

Psalms 115 speaking about idols says 'those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them'. Worship is never a static activity, always dynamic and has a profound shaping effect. False worship distorts, true worship heals, liberates and expresses our true ultimate destiny. Who (in all honesty) are we worshipping and how is it shaping us?



## Read Genesis 2:4-17

1. What do you find most striking about the Garden of Eden and how convinced are you that it has all the symbolism of a *garden-sanctuary* (see sermon notes over)? Note the parallel between the river flowing from Eden (Gen 2:10ff) and the river flowing from Ezekiel's visionary temple (Ezekiel 47:1-12).
2. Adam, prototype humanity, is seen in the Garden as accountable to his Creator and created to serve him. How important do you think it is to realise that there is no such thing as a 'vacuum of non-worship' – that all human beings are created for worship – it's just a matter of what/who they worship? In what ways do secularists and atheists express their worship?
3. To not worship the true and Living God is to worship an idol. Read **Romans 1:18-25**. How is an idol explained in those verses and how can we be tempted to idolatry?
4. Gordon Wenham, in his commentary, points out that the terminology of Gen. 2:15 (to 'serve' or to 'work/till') is elsewhere used in the religious sense of serving God (Deut. 4:19) and in particular is applied to the service of the later Levites (Num. 3: 7-8). The implication is that all work is part of worship. What N.T texts bear this out and how do you relate to this perspective?
5. How can we affirm *in practical ways* the truth that all of what we do and say and think is to be offered to God as worship?
6. We sometimes talk about 'church worship wars', squabbles about modern worship songs, organs, drums and liturgies. But the biblical vision is so much bigger and so much more urgent! You could, for example, summarise the Book of Revelation by seeing it as the whole of history being read through the lens of a battle for worship. Do we worship the Lord and 'the Lamb on the throne' or do bow down to the ideologies and idols of 'Babylon'? How can we lift our Sunday worship to having this sort of breadth and depth?

**As you come to pray read Psalm 148.** How does it relate to the Genesis story? Spend time in thanksgiving and worship as a group before you pray for others.

