

Paradise Lost and Paradise Restored

The Unfinished Story of God's Creation

Sermon Covenant and Doctrine 3 October 2026

Genesis 3:17-24

Romans 8:19-23

Revelation 21:1-5

Revelation 22:1-5

1 Corinthians 15:22

1 Corinthians 15:45

Luke 23:42-43

Colossians 1:19-20

Acts 3:21

Introduction: An Unexpected Invitation

More than two decades ago, when I was heading the Information Technology Division of a large corporate house, one of our technology providers invited me to address their senior marketing team.

I was somewhat reluctant. Marketing was certainly not my forte. But they persuaded me with a rather unusual topic:

“Paradise Lost and Gained.”

That caught my attention!

The title offered an opportunity to draw upon biblical insights, and I accepted. I explored the principles of relationships through the Scriptures, and I concluded with a thought that had particular relevance to that audience:

Paradise, once lost in a relationship, need not necessarily remain lost. With understanding, acknowledgement, forgiveness and a willingness to rebuild, a relationship can be restored.

Today, I wish to take that theme beyond our personal and professional relationships.

For there is a Paradise far more significant than anything we may experience in our earthly lives: the Paradise that humanity once possessed, lost through disobedience, and which God, in His infinite love and grace, has made possible for us to regain through Jesus Christ.

And this brings us to the very beginning of the biblical story.

1. Paradise Lost: What Exactly Did Humanity Lose?

Let us return to Genesis.

The first two chapters of Genesis present a picture of extraordinary harmony.

God created the heavens and the earth. He created humanity in His own image and entrusted us with the responsibility of caring for His

creation.

There was fellowship with God. There was harmony with creation.
There was no death, no suffering, no fear and no shame.

Adam and Eve were not merely living in a beautiful garden. They were living in a relationship with their Creator for which they had been created.

But then came the Fall.

Adam and Eve chose disobedience. They wanted to determine their own destiny rather than remain within the loving boundaries established by God.

And the consequences were devastating.

They lost their innocence. Shame replaced their freedom. Fear replaced their confidence. They hid from the very God with whom they had enjoyed fellowship.

The ground was cursed. Work became toil. Death entered human existence. And they were driven out of the Garden, with the way to the tree of life guarded by cherubim.

But let us pause here.

Was Paradise merely a garden that humanity lost, or was it a relationship that humanity lost?

I believe the latter is far more significant.

The greatest tragedy of Eden was not the loss of its trees, rivers or beauty. It was the loss of unhindered fellowship with God.

And that raises a question which has stayed with me throughout my reflection.

Could a benevolent Creator, who created humanity out of love and for fellowship with Himself, have intended that His creation should remain lost for ever?

I find that difficult to reconcile with the God revealed in Scripture.

I believe that the Paradise lost through humanity's disobedience is destined to be restored through Jesus Christ.

And I would like to take you through the biblical journey that leads me to this conviction.

2. The God Who Never Abandoned His Creation

The first thing we notice after the Fall is that God did not abandon Adam and Eve.

They hid. God sought them.

They were ashamed. God clothed them.

They had disobeyed. God confronted them, but He did not terminate His relationship with humanity.

Even in Genesis 3:15, within the very chapter that records the Fall, we encounter the first indication that the serpent would not have the final victory.

This is traditionally understood as the first announcement of the Gospel.

Is this not remarkable?

At the very moment humanity experiences its greatest spiritual failure, God begins revealing His redemptive purpose.

The Bible, therefore, is not simply a record of humanity's fall from grace. It is the unfolding story of God's determination to redeem and restore.

And this is where our understanding of Paradise must expand.

The story does not end in Genesis 3.

It continues through the promises of the Old Testament, the coming of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and finally the glorious vision of the New Creation in Revelation.

The Garden was lost, but God's purpose was not.

3. The Second Adam: Paradise Reopened in Christ

If Paradise was lost through one man, Scripture tells us that it is regained through another.

The Apostle Paul writes: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

And again: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18).

Paul calls Jesus "the last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45). What the first Adam lost, the last Adam came to restore.

Have you ever noticed how often a garden appears in the story of our redemption?

The first Adam fell in a garden. In Eden he said, in effect, "Not Thy will, but mine."

The last Adam knelt in a garden. In Gethsemane He prayed,

“Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

The first Adam’s disobedience closed the gate of Paradise. The last Adam’s obedience, even to death on the Cross, opened it again.

When Jesus died, He was laid in a tomb in a garden (John 19:41).

And on the first Easter morning, when Mary Magdalene met the risen Lord, she mistook Him for the gardener (John 20:15).

Was it really a mistake?

The One who stood before her was indeed the Gardener, the One who had come to replant the Paradise that humanity had lost.

But perhaps the most moving moment of all comes from the Cross itself.

Beside Jesus hung a criminal. He had nothing to offer: no good works, no religious record, no time left to make amends. All he could say was, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

And Jesus replied, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42-43).

Think of it.

The cherubim had guarded the way to the tree of life since the days of Eden. And now, on a Roman cross, the first person to be told that he would enter Paradise was a dying thief.

The way that had been closed was open again. Not because humanity had found its way back, but because God, in Jesus Christ, had come all the way to us.

Here, then, is the bridge between Eden and the New Creation: the Cross. The flaming sword that barred the way to the tree of life did not simply vanish. It fell upon the Shepherd. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd... smite the shepherd” (Zechariah 13:7), words Jesus applied to Himself on the night of His arrest (Matthew 26:31). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isaiah 53:5). And Peter calls the Cross itself a tree: Christ “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). The tree of life that was closed to the first Adam is opened to us through the tree on which the last Adam died.

What God has done for us in Christ also makes possible what we could never do on our own.

Corrie ten Boom was a Dutch Christian whose family hid Jewish people from the Nazis during the Second World War. She was sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where her beloved sister Betsie died.

After the war, Corrie travelled widely, speaking about God’s

forgiveness. In 1947, at a church in Munich, a man came up to her after she had spoken. She recognised him at once. He had been one of the cruellest guards at Ravensbrück. He told her that he had since become a Christian and believed that God had forgiven him. Then he held out his hand and asked whether she would forgive him too.

Corrie later wrote that she stood there, unable to move. Everything within her resisted. She prayed silently for help, and, as an act of the will, she lifted her hand and took his. And, she said, a love that she knew was not her own flowed through her, and she was able to say, "I forgive you, brother, with all my heart."

That is what Paradise restored looks like on a human scale. Not a return to the past, but the love of God breaking into a place of deep wounding and making something new.

The gate that Christ opened is not only the gate to the life to come. It is also the gate through which His love enters the broken relationships of this life.

4. Heaven, Paradise, the Kingdom and the New Creation: One Hope, Many Names

This brings us to a question that many sincere Christians ask.

We speak of Heaven. Jesus speaks of Paradise. The Gospels proclaim the Kingdom of God. And the Bible closes with a vision of the New Creation. Are these four different places?

I would put it this way. They are not four destinations, but four windows on to one hope.

Heaven tells us where God dwells. That is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Notice the direction of that prayer. We do not pray to escape from earth to heaven. We pray that heaven will come to earth.

Paradise tells us what it means to be with Him: fellowship restored, the garden reopened. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

The Kingdom tells us how God's reign breaks into our world, now in part and one day in full.

The New Creation tells us where it all ends. The prophets saw it long ago. Through Isaiah, God said, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth" (Isaiah 65:17). Ezekiel saw a river flowing from the Temple, bringing life wherever it went, with trees on its banks whose leaf would be "for medicine" (Ezekiel 47:12). And Peter preached that Jesus must remain in heaven "until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world

began" (Acts 3:21).

The restitution of all things. That is the promise.

And in the final chapters of the Bible, all four windows open on to the same view. John sees "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven", and he hears a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them" (Revelation 21:2-3).

Heaven comes down. The Kingdom comes in fullness. The New Creation is revealed. And at its heart stands the tree of life: Paradise restored.

5. All Creation Restored, and More Than Restored

If this is so, we must ask a further question. Is it only humanity that will be restored, or the whole of creation?

Listen again to our reading from Romans:

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God... Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

— Romans 8:19, 21-22

Notice that Paul does not say creation is groaning in the pains of death. He says it "travaileth in pain": it is groaning in the pains of childbirth. Something new is about to be born.

The ground that was cursed because of Adam is not destined to be thrown away. It is destined to be set free.

Paul says the same thing to the Colossians: through Christ, God was pleased, "having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:19-20).

All things. Not some things. All things.

This is why I am convinced that the Paradise lost will be restored. The God who created all things out of love does not abandon what He has made. He redeems it.

Now listen to how carefully the last pages of the Bible answer the first.

In Genesis, humanity hid from the presence of God. In Revelation, "they shall see his face" (Revelation 22:4).

In Genesis, the ground was cursed. In Revelation, "there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3).

In Genesis, pain and toil entered human life. In Revelation, “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Revelation 21:4).

In Genesis, a river flowed out of Eden. In Revelation, “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal” proceeds “out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22:1).

In Genesis, cherubim with a flaming sword guarded the way to the tree of life. In Revelation, the tree of life stands on either side of the river, yielding its fruit every month, and “the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2).

In Genesis, the gate of the garden was shut. In Revelation, the gates of the city “shall not be shut at all” (Revelation 21:25).

But notice one more thing. Revelation does not simply take us back to Eden.

Eden was a garden. The New Jerusalem is a garden-city, filled with people from every nation, tribe and language.

In Eden, Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. In the New Creation, God’s people will see His face and reign with Him for ever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

Paradise is not merely restored. It is surpassed.

What God brings out of the Fall is greater than what was lost in it.

Conclusion: Back to the Marketing Room

Let me take you back, in closing, to that room full of marketing professionals more than twenty years ago.

I told them that a relationship, once lost, need not remain lost. With understanding, acknowledgement, forgiveness and a willingness to rebuild, Paradise can be restored.

I still believe that. But today I want to add something I did not say then.

In our human relationships, restoration needs both parties to do the work. Each must understand, each must acknowledge, each must forgive, and each must rebuild.

In the story of the Paradise that God restores, it is very different.

It is God who seeks us, as He sought Adam and Eve in the garden.

It is God who bears the cost of forgiveness, on the Cross.

It is God who does the rebuilding, making all things new.

Our part is simply to acknowledge our need and to receive what He

offers. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

And having received it, we are sent out to do the same. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature", and God "hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

Every broken relationship that we help to mend, every act of care for God's creation, every word of hope we speak to someone in despair, is a small sign of the Paradise that is coming.

The story that began in a garden will end in a garden-city.

The way that was guarded by a flaming sword is now open.

And the One who once called, "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9), is still calling.

Paradise was lost. But in Jesus Christ, Paradise will be restored, and more than restored.

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

Amen.