

August 6, 2005 AM

**LIFE IN PARADISE
GENESIS 2:15-17**

Man “rests” in the Garden (2:15-17).

Man’s life and responsibility in the garden can be thought of in two particular relationships to this “resting.” First, we see that there is a relationship between ...

1. RESTING AND WORKING IN THE GARDEN (15)

YHWH God - emphasizes that the God of creation—chapter 1—is the covenant Lord of Israel. YHWH, their God, is also the one that defines the responsibilities of man.

“The man,” Adam, is the only human that participates in this scene. “Man” here is not inclusive of man and woman.

YHWH that “takes” the man and “puts” him in the garden. God is acting in grace towards man. Grace is not something that is only post-fall. Man has always been dependent and thus needful of God’s gracious provisions.

• ***Man is caused to “rest” in the garden***

“Put” - seems the same (in English) as what is said in 2:8. But different words are used with different connotations. 2:8 “put” = “geographical” connotation (“I put it on the table.”). 2:15 “put” = “cause to rest.” Same family of words as “Noah” (cf. Gen 5:29; and also Deut 12:10; 3:20; 25:19).

The garden in the place of rest. Speaking anachronistically, God puts Adam in the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey, the land where God dwells with his people.

Adam is resting *in* the presence of God. Do you rest in the presence of God?

• ***Responsibility in the garden***

Rest ≠ the cessation of activity. Being created in the image of God means that we are active, working beings. The garden, the land of rest, is also, then, a place of a particular activity.

Man’s task in the garden is two-fold: (1) he is to till/work/serve in the garden and (2) he is to keep/protect the garden.

[(1)] “dress,” “tend,” “till,”- common word for the tilling of the soil (3:23; 4:2, 12); other labor (e.g., Isa 19:9); service to another (e.g., Gen 29:15; 31:6); also of worship (e.g., Exod 3:12; cf. the Levitical duties in the tabernacle/temple in Exod 38:21; Num 3:8; 1Chron 24:3; 2Chron 8:14)

[(2)] “keep” - has a general usage as well as a specific usage in relation to worship and the priestly service. “Taking care of” or “keeping” sheep is the occupation of Abel (Gen 4:9); “protecting” people (cf. Gen 28:15, 20); priests must “keep,” “protect,” and/or “guard” the house of YHWH (Num 1:53 Cf. also 18:5).

When it is understood that the Tabernacle, and more specifically the Holy of holies, is the re-established Garden of God in the midst of his people complete with cherubim guarding it (cf. Gen 3:24), the nature of Adam’s responsibilities are shown to be “priestly.”

Adam’s work began in and was to flow from the Garden. Adam must first learn to be a true worshiper before he can go out into the world to fulfill his other duties.

Application: (1) The center of man’s world is worship.

Application: (2) Man was created to serve.

Application: (3) Labor is your Christian calling.

Application: (4) The man has priestly duties.

2. RESTING AND TESTING IN THE GARDEN (16-17)

The statement of God here to the man is two sided. On the first side there is the provision of God (=“life”) and on the other side there is the prohibition of God (=“death”).

“And YHWH God *commanded* the man...” - The commands of God given throughout the Scriptures are those things which define what life is for man. This does not simply include what man must refrain from, but also what man must engage in.

Life and death are put before the man. And man is commanded to choose life and refrain from death.

God sets the terms of life and death. This is the Creator-creature distinction exemplified. God does not arbitrate or negotiate these terms. God speaks and man is to obey. If man obeys he will be blessed. If man disobeys he will be cursed.

When your life is not defined by obedience to God’s word—which is what God requires of us—then you are in rebellion and will suffer the consequences: the wrath of God. That is just the way that it is, and it cannot be changed.

- ***God’s Provision***

God had abundantly provided for all the needs of man. Eating was the appointed means of life for Adam.

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat” - “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden.”

- ***The Prohibition of God***

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil - a tree that would have been granted to Adam at a particular point of maturity so that he could make judgments concerning good and evil.

“for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die” - “dying you will die”

What is the relationship between life and death in this context? What is life? Life is sometimes looked at through a microscope, as it were, in our scientific age and culture. Life is physical existence; i.e., breathing, thinking, heartbeat, etc. This is not the totality of “life.” Man’s life is defined in terms of his being created in the image of God, which includes his “breath.”

Man made in the image of God means that man is a relational being. That is not merely one sliver of who man is, that is who man is. He relates to God, others and himself all levels of existence. “Life” = having all those relationships in their proper order. Cf.

John 17:3. Life cannot be defined as simply “existence.” Because death would have to be defined as “non-existence.”

Death = the rending of proper relationships. To God: moving from the place of blessing to the place of being under his wrath and curse; To others: disunified with others. Relationships with others are broken; To oneself: the separation of body and soul when the body reaches its final point of decay because of sin (i.e., death).

“you shall surely die” - very strong statement: “dying you will die.”

This may indicate the progression of death. In the day that they eat of the tree they will die and it will lead to final death.

It may even be referring to the fact that there will be one particular death and then, as John would put it in **Revelation** a “second death.”

Our relationship with what is going on here in the garden is not just a matter of extracting principles from the story. We are actors in the same story.

Application: (1) God sets the terms of life and death.

Application: (2) God abundantly provides within his commandments.

Application: (3) Man is to respond to God’s grace in faith that is gratefully obedient.