

“*Short of Glory* is an exceptional introduction to the way the events of Genesis 3 are woven through the biblical witness. Mitchell Chase’s theological acumen and exegetical sophistication are front and center as he carefully elucidates the far-reaching implications of sin and the even farther-reaching implications of God’s grace to his people. Highly recommended as an example of theology and exegesis in service of the good news.”

Brandon D. Smith, Assistant Professor of Theology and New Testament, Cedarville University; Cofounder, Center for Baptist Renewal

“We often speak of living in a ‘fallen world.’ But what does that mean, precisely? In order to embrace the good news of the gospel, we first have to understand the problems that Jesus came to fix. In this penetrating reflection on Genesis 3, Mitchell Chase helps us see every aspect of life as, to quote Tolkien, ‘soaked with the sense of exile.’ *Short of Glory* will help us better appreciate how comprehensive the work of Christ is—and make us long for it to be completed.”

Gavin Ortlund, Pastor, First Baptist Church of Ojai, California; author, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On* and *Why God Makes Sense in a World That Doesn’t*

“Understanding what went wrong is essential for understanding how it can be made right, and by whom. Mitchell Chase expertly guides readers not only through Genesis 3 but also through the reverberations of Genesis 3 in the rest of the Scriptures. The tentacles of the fall can be felt on every page of the Bible. Not paying attention to these themes might mean missing what the good news is all about.”

Patrick Schreiner, Associate Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *The Visual Word* and *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross*

“We live in a world of turmoil, heartache, and evil. We know it shouldn’t be so, but we don’t always spend enough time reflecting on why it is. As this book helps us to stare at the greatest of all tragedies, two things start happening: we see the world in much sharper clarity, and we find ourselves drawn again and again to the hope of Christ.”

Sam Allberry, pastor; author, *7 Myths about Singleness*

“Mitchell Chase’s book is refreshing because he retrieves the covenant of works to explain why original sin must be traced back to Adam as our federal head. Plunging into the sorrow of Adam’s iniquity, Chase then lifts our heads to see the hope we have in Christ, our covenant surety. Unless we understand the tragedy of our fall in Adam, we will not rejoice at the triumph of our redemption in Christ, the second Adam. Here is a compelling exposition of our exile east of Eden.”

Matthew Barrett, Associate Professor of Christian Theology,
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Executive Editor, *Credo Magazine*; author, *Simply Trinity*

Short of Glory

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Short of Glory

A Biblical and Theological Exploration of the Fall

Mitchell L. Chase

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*For Mike Senior,
my friend and colaborer
in the ministry of good news*

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THE TASK OF WRITING REQUIRES THINKING, and we find out how clearly we think about things when we write about them. I have been edified through the process of thinking about the glory that God has made us for, as well as the fall in Genesis 3, which had a profound effect on the remainder of Scripture's storyline and on all of our lives.

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brother, whose heart seeks the kingdom! We often smile together about a remark from R. C. Sproul in reply to an anonymously submitted question from the audience many years ago during a panel discussion. Sproul's response has shown up on coffee mugs and social media ever since: "What's wrong with you people?" Well, Mike, this book answers that question.

Introduction

WHEN A FLOATING SHELF FELL from our living room wall, we heard multiple sounds at the same time. The small clay pot cracked, the frame with the picture crashed, the shelf itself was especially loud, the candleholder clattered, and a short rectangular wooden sign whacked the floor. Sitting in the living room as this happened, my wife and I jumped up to intervene and deal with the mess. It turns out that one of our sons had been on the other side of the wall and banged it at the right—or wrong—spot, causing the shelf to shift and collapse under the weight of its contents.

Not every fall is the same. But the more items involved and the greater their weight, the louder the crash and more numerous the sounds.

What would a breaking world sound like? And how long would the sounds of such a fall last?

The Scene That Changed Everything

Genesis 3 gives Bible readers the explanation of what happened between Genesis 2 and 4. The middle chapter ushers us into different conditions. In Genesis 2, the man and woman are together and without shame and in covenant with each other. The garden has plentiful

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food, there is a commission to multiply and subdue, and there is a benevolent Creator, whose words of wisdom will be life and peace for his image bearers. Then in Genesis 4, an older brother murders his younger brother, and this tragedy happens after the elder's sacrifice is rejected while the younger's is accepted.

What explains the transition from peace to tragedy? What accounts for the rise of wickedness? The content of Genesis 3. It's the scene that changes everything for everyone. It's the part of the movie that has such explanatory power, you're just confused if you return after leaving the room for a few minutes.

During a series of talks addressing temptation, D. A. Carson once said:

What's the importance of Genesis 3 to our thinking? The primary importance is that it sets the stage for the entire Bible storyline. Problems and solutions must match. If you want to understand what the Gospel is about, what Jesus is about, what the cross achieves, then you must understand the nature of the problem they address.¹

There are different ways to conceive of the Bible's storyline. You can think of the Old Testament as what anticipates Jesus and the New Testament as what announces his arrival. You can view Scripture as the epic of God's redemptive story where he promises, advances, and then fulfills his plan to raise up a Savior for sinners. You can notice how the Bible begins with the story of creation and ends with the hope of new creation.

1 D. A. Carson, "The Temptation of Adam and Eve" (lecture given as part of a series entitled "The Christian Life: Fighting Temptation," Bethesda Baptist Church, Allen Park, Michigan, August 27, 2013).

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One helpful and popular way to conceive of the Bible's storyline is with four words: *creation, fall, redemption, consummation*. What would consummation mean without our understanding of what was reaching a culmination? We need the category of redemption in order to make sense of the biblical story. And yet we know that redemption isn't something needed because of creation. The story of creation was about our good God making a good world. He didn't make a broken world.

When we look around us and within us, a truth is clear: not all is well in God's world and in God's image bearers. We see destruction, disease, and death. We see wickedness and false worship. Signs of corruption—ethically and physically—are everywhere. Things are not the way they once were or will be. In the order of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, the unpleasant reality of the fall is evident. We must grasp it, process it, reflect on it.

The word *fall* is shorthand for the rebellion and repercussions that began in the garden of Eden in Genesis 3. The fall is what happened to God's creation, and it's why there is a need for redemption. We live as fallen people in a fallen world. The hope of consummation tells us that the conditions of the fall are temporary. All things will be made new, even though that's not the way things look right now.

To grow in our understanding of the Bible's big story, we must think about the fall. We must know what happened, why it happened, and what followed.

Ground for Later Growth

Maybe you already think you know what happened in Genesis 3. "Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the face of temptation," you say, "and then judgments followed that have affected us all ever since."

But would you be willing to think more deeply and slowly about this chapter, connecting its themes with the rest of Scripture?

All of us are born outside Eden, so Genesis 1–3 is a special set of chapters. God makes the world, and specifically a garden, for his people. And there, in the sacred space of Eden, God’s image bearers defy his word and succumb to the tempter. When God exiles them, we are exiled in them too. Yet, in that same chapter where God announces judgment, he gives a promise of hope that a deliverer will come one day and defeat the serpent.

The rest of the biblical story grows out of the ground of Genesis 3. When we meditate on the content of this chapter, many biblical themes and connections become clear. The events in Genesis 3 become a lens through which to read and understand the progressive revelation of God’s redemptive epic.²

Think of Genesis 3 as containing seeds of various kinds. There are temptation and shame and coverings. There are a tree of wisdom and one of life. There are messianic hope, the reality of death in the dust, and exile from sacred space. There are blame shifting, hiding, and a response of faith. If we will spend time thinking about the intricacies of Genesis 3 and the interconnections across Scripture, we will see how pivotal this chapter is in the biblical storyline, and we will recognize the many notions that grow out of the garden ground.

If we situate the fall in Scripture’s storyline effectively, an exploration of Genesis 3 will result in greater joy in the good news about Jesus. By tuning our ears to creation’s groanings, our hope will be stirred along the way. In Romans 8, the apostle Paul says:

2 According to T. Desmond Alexander, “The events of Genesis 3 are exceptionally important for understanding the biblical meta-story.” *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008), 102.

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Creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (8:19–21)

While Genesis 3 announces the subjection of creation to futility, that status is not permanent. Corruption will give way to new creation by the power of God. If you are in Christ, did you know that your future is glory?

As we study Genesis 3 and its innerbiblical connections and consequences, my prayer is that your hope will be stirred, that you will join the groans of creation longing for liberation. Genesis 3 records tragedy, yes, but it doesn't record only that. Interwoven amid deception and fig leaves and exile is a hope for a future Son. Tragedy is mixed with hope, and one day that hope became flesh and dwelt among us.

Sacred Space

WHEN I THINK ABOUT A GARDEN, I have memories from childhood. My maternal grandparents had a garden every year, and I helped till rows, plant seed, and pick produce. And in my earliest conception of the garden of Eden, I pictured rows of dirt and an assortment of growing plants. What I didn't imagine was sacred space like a sanctuary, yet that would have been more accurate.

An Expandable Sanctuary

One way to tell the story of the Bible is with the theme of sacred space. It's the kind of theme that locks the metanarrative together. Sacred space is given, lost, promised, and at last received again. As readers cross the threshold into Genesis 3, they come to a sacred place that God gave his people. God had made the heavens and the earth (1:1–25), and part of his work on earth included a garden in a place called Eden (2:8).

We shouldn't conceive of Eden as a walled and bounded space. At the same time, though, Eden comprised only a small place in the ancient Near East. Conditions in Eden were not like conditions outside Eden. Part of the judgment in Genesis 3 was exile from the garden

(3:22–24). Furthermore, in the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9), and these trees wouldn't be accessible once exile happened.

According to the creation commission in Genesis 1:28, God told his image bearers, “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.” Multiplication and dominion were key to this commission. What would happen as Adam and Eve had children and those children had children? Expanding generations would mean filling up the sacred space of Eden.

It is reasonable that expanding generations implied an expandable sanctuary as well, especially if part of the commission was to subdue and exercise dominion. Subdue what? Exercise dominion over what? Since the conditions outside Eden wouldn't have matched life inside Eden, the task of Genesis 1:28 was to bring the glories of Eden to the rest of the earth. When Revelation 21–22 depicts a transformed heaven and earth radiating with the glory of God, we are seeing a vision of Eden's goal, the trajectory set in the garden paradise.

The sacredness of Eden is confirmed by the tasks God specified: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Not just to “work” and not just to “keep”—both tasks were the plan. These terms occur in the Old Testament independently, but when they appear together, we can notice a context of priesthood. To “work” means to “serve” or “minister,” and to “keep” means to “guard.” For example, the Lord said:

Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him. They shall *keep guard* 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. (Num. 3:6–8)

And from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and *serve* no more. 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. (Num. 8:25–26)

And you shall *keep guard* over the sanctuary and over the altar, that there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel. And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel. They are a gift to you, given to the LORD, *to do the service* of the tent of meeting. (Num. 18:5–6)

Reading the Pentateuch as a whole, we can see that the priestly instructions had precedent in Adam's garden responsibilities. More than a farmer attending to rows of crops, Adam was a priest in sacred space, charged with serving and guarding, or working and keeping, Eden.¹ As J. V. Fesko put it, "Adam's mandate is not merely to labor but to expand the garden-temple throughout the earth, fill the earth with the image of God, and subdue it by spreading the glory of God to the ends of the earth."² Knowing this about Adam, we can see his priestly failure in Genesis 3.

- 1 Meredith Kline says, "God produced in Eden a microcosm version of his cosmic sanctuary. . . . It was the temple-garden of God, the place chosen by the Glory-Spirit who hovered over creation from the beginning to be the focal site of his throne-presence among men." *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 35.
- 2 J. V. Fesko, *Last Things First: Unlocking Genesis 1–3 with the Christ of Eschatology* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2007), 102.

The scene in Genesis 3 involves the entrance of a deceiving creature into Eden. The dialogue and events of that chapter resulted from Adam's failure to serve and guard the garden sanctuary effectively.

Adam was to "subdue" 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" (Gen. 1:28). The serpent in Genesis 3 was a creeping thing "that moves on the earth," and Adam should have exercised dominion over it.

Genesis 3 records, among other things, the defilement of sacred space.

A Promise of Land

God exiled Adam and Eve from Eden, and he placed cherubim on the eastern entrance to guard it (Gen. 3:24). Adam had failed to guard the sanctuary ground, so God appointed cherubim who wouldn't fail at the job.

Mankind multiplied outside Eden, and there is no account of anyone entering it after Genesis 3. Bible readers have often wondered what happened to that garden land near four ancient Near Eastern rivers. No biblical author tells of its destruction, but the flood in Genesis 6–8 probably destroyed it. We shouldn't imagine that currently somewhere in the ancient Near East is a place called Eden with cherubim guarding its eastern entrance.

In one sense the biblical storyline leaves Eden behind, but in a truer sense it doesn't. The notion of sacred space continues, and the reverberations of Eden echo in later Scripture. God's design was that his people dwell with him in a place set apart for his glory. This hope is echoed in God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12. God said to him, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's

house to the land that I will show you” (12:1). Abraham’s nephew Lot traveled with him and “saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD” (13:10).

Just as God relocated Adam to a place (the garden of Eden), he would relocate Abraham to a place (the promised land). And this place would be filled with a fruitful family. God said, “And I will make of you a great nation” (Gen. 12:2). Abraham would be a new Adam with the task of multiplying in and filling up a specific place. In order to understand the importance of the promised land, we must see it in the context of the first couple’s separation from Eden.

In Genesis 12, Abraham arrives at this land and travels through it, building altars and worshiping the Lord. The promised land plays a crucial part in the Bible’s storyline because it is an instance of sacred space where God’s word and glory are to be obeyed and treasured. Though Eden was in the past, the hope of Eden continues.³ God will have a people as well as a place for them.

The Holy Space of the Tabernacle

Long after the exile from the garden of Eden, and approximately six hundred years after Abraham received precious promises about a people and a place, God rescued the Israelites out of Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai. There at the bottom of the mountain, they constructed what God had directed them to build: a portable tent of meeting, called the tabernacle, where God would manifest his

³ When the book of Isaiah provided comforting words to distressed Israelites, part of God’s comfort was that God would make the promised land like Eden. “For the LORD comforts Zion; / 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” (51:3).

holy presence and glory in the midst of the people he had redeemed (Ex. 35–40).

A large courtyard surrounded this dwelling place, and the entrance was on the eastern side. When the priests entered the tabernacle itself, they entered the large room known as the Holy Place, and its entrance was also on the eastern side. Progressing deeper into the Holy Place, only the high priest could go into the last room—the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies). He would enter it once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

Israelites could enter the courtyard, only priests could enter the Holy Place, and only the high priest could go behind the veil into the Most Holy Place. These levels of access reflected increasing holiness, as people approached the God who tabernacled among sinners. Degrees of access were reminiscent of Genesis 1–2. God had created the earth, and on earth was a place called Eden, and in Eden the Lord planted a garden. The existence of the tabernacle was about holy space. This space was holy because God is holy. Those who entered the tabernacle had to be set apart as his holy priests, and they were to represent the nation of Israel, which was called to be a holy people.

For those who lamented the loss of Eden, the tabernacle was a glimpse of glorious news: our holy God could draw near to sinners. Though cherubim prevented Adam and Eve from returning to Eden through the eastern entrance, the tabernacle had an eastern entrance to picture image bearers coming back into the presence of God. This portable tent was a visible reminder of the hope of Eden.

In fact, as the Levitical priests entered the tabernacle, they did so under curtain coverings that had artfully designed cherubim woven into them (Ex. 26:1). And the veil that separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was also designed with cherubim on it (26:31).

As the high priest went behind the veil on the Day of Atonement, no cherubim with flaming swords blocked his way. Rather, the Lord—who is a consuming fire—received him, and in receiving him the Lord was receiving those whom he represented.

The high priest acted as a new Adam, crossing through the cherubim and entering the presence of a holy God.⁴ Like Adam, the priests were to serve and guard the tabernacle. The place was a sanctuary and holy; thus it was sacred and echoed Eden.

Cleansing and Dwelling in Sacred Space

The book of Joshua narrates the keeping of God's promises made earlier to Abraham. The Israelites—Abraham's descendants—were inheriting the land of promise. Their responsibility was to serve as a kingdom of priests in a land that needed to know the Lord. God warned against becoming like the nations and taking on their gods. Instead, the Israelites were to maintain true worship and covenant faithfulness, setting the example of what it meant to be image bearers of the Creator.

The challenge of inheriting the promised land was that it was occupied with idolaters. Some of these idolatrous peoples would seek Israel's destruction, so God announced ahead of time that he would give the land to his people. They did not need to fear the inhabitants of the land. The Israelites only needed to trust the Lord and persevere as they beheld his steadfast love and faithfulness.

4 As Michael Morales puts it, "The later high priest of Israel serving in the tabernacle must be understood fundamentally as an Adam-figure serving on the (architectural) mountain of God." *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 37 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 53.

Subduing the Canaanite combatants, as well as demolishing the idolatrous shrines and pillars and altars, was part of cleansing sacred space. The uncleanness of immorality and false worship had pervaded the land, and the Israelites were to exercise dominion so that the glory of the one true God would be esteemed and loved.

The conquest in the book of Joshua focuses on Canaan, for that was the land God promised to Abraham. And yet the goal of the conquest was much larger. As Israel occupied Canaan and subdued idolatry, they were eventually to expand. The expansion of sacred space recalled the goal of the garden: the worldwide worship of Yahweh. By teaching and upholding and modeling true worship, the Israelites would be serving and guarding sacred space, a place where the knowledge of God was to spread so that the nations might honor him in their repentance and belief.

When the Israelites crossed the Jordan into Canaan, the tabernacle crossed with them. This tent of meeting was portable for a reason, that the Israelites could carry it to the land of promise. Once in Canaan, the portability of the tabernacle was no longer essential. Something more stable could be built. King Solomon oversaw the construction of the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 5–8). And this temple replicated the degrees of access that led into the Most Holy Place, where, behind the veil, only the high priest could go.

While the tabernacle was replaced by the temple, the latter—like the former—echoed Eden.⁵ Through eastern entrances, the Israelites were led into the presence of God through his appointed representa-

5 According to T. Desmond Alexander, “Linked to both Eden and the cosmos, the tabernacle, as a model, conveys the idea that the whole earth is to become God’s dwelling place.” *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2008), 41–42.

tives (the priests). The presence of the temple meant that Jerusalem was the most important city on earth. Moving outward, we can think of this holy city and then the land to which it belongs and finally the earth on which the land exists.

The ability to mark gradations of importance/holiness is a major reason we hear echoes of Eden. When the Israelites prepared to conquer the land in the book of Joshua, they entered it from the east, crossing the Jordan River and coming up to Jericho. The glimpses of Eden remind readers that God's redemptive plan moves forward, and that human sin will not prove to be an insurmountable barrier to him. Whenever a priest went into the courtyard or the Holy Place or even behind the veil, the picture was being redrawn of image bearers ascending into the presence of the God who made them and loves them and has come for them.

Seated with Christ as Heirs of the World

The first coming of Christ brought inauguration, and his second coming will bring consummation. Part of his inaugurated work is the spiritual rest and citizenship that are true for all his people. We have "come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). These spiritual realities are profoundly true and yet are only the beginning.

What has begun is important, nevertheless. According to Hebrews 1:3, the ascended Christ "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and according to Ephesians 2:6, we have been "seated" with Christ "in the heavenly places." Already we have rest in Christ (Matt. 11:28–30). But ours is a rest that isn't yet finished. Our union with Christ has not exhausted the fulfillment of God's people dwelling in sacred space for his glory. Union with Christ has brought the inauguration of certain things, and it also guarantees their consummation.

Abraham and the patriarchs all died in faith, “not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). Believers who die have this in common with Abraham: they die in faith, not receiving the fullness of God’s promises.

Knowing the promises that Abraham and his offspring would inherit a land, Paul used global language to identify the fulfillment: “For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13). Heir of the *world*? Let me immediately affirm that Paul hadn’t misunderstood the Abrahamic covenant. He rightly understood what God’s promises to Abraham ultimately entailed. Like Eden, the land of Canaan had a trajectory: that the knowledge and worship of the living God would cover the earth as the waters cover the seas (Hab. 2:14).

God had spoken to Abraham about a certain land, but the heirs of God’s promises would receive far more than that property. That sacred land foreshadowed the global renewal of all things. Remember Jesus’s beatitude for the meek? He said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). The *earth*. Not just the land of Canaan. Not just space that was marked by certain regions and bodies of water. Jesus’s promise for the meek is that they are heirs with Abraham of the world.

God’s plan is not about returning his image bearers to the paradise of Eden. He will do more and better than that. The believer’s hope for the future is the joining of heaven and earth. This coming marriage is the goal of Eden, and it is the climax of the Bible’s storyline. In Revelation 21–22, all things become new. The forever home of God’s people

is a transformed and glorified cosmos. The current intermediate state of deceased saints will give way to a final and everlasting state of immortal embodied life in a place that God has purified by his power.

The longing for this better country is not just a New Testament hope. According to Hebrews 11:16, the patriarchs desired a “better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.” The storyline of Scripture takes us from the garden to this glorified city. In one of John’s visions, he “saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2).

When God makes all things new, “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” (Rev. 22:3). The new heaven and new earth are depicted as a glorified city. And unlike the old Jerusalem, where a temple stood, in the new Jerusalem there will be no temple, “for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (21:22).

Sacred space will be the pervading reality. There will be no gradations or levels of access. The new Jerusalem is a city behind the veil. The events in Genesis 3 did not derail the redemptive plan of God to lead his people to the city that is to come. There will be no exile from that blessed new creation land because our union with Christ brings everlasting citizenship. The dominion of Christ with his people will be total, and it will never be undermined by the serpent. Of that place we’re told that “nothing unclean will ever enter it” (Rev. 21:27).

This Christian Life

The geographical context of Genesis 3 is the garden of Eden, but the context for our lives is different. We live in a post-Genesis 3 world.

Like the end of the Bible's storyline, our future is the new Jerusalem. We are already citizens there, so we are pilgrims going home. Can't you sense and see disarray in the world? Doesn't the glorious hope of new creation ignite your heart? The presence of Eden's sanctuary should direct our desires.

What is lost in Genesis 3 will be redeemed. God will once again dwell with his people in a sacred place, and things like the tabernacle, the temple, and the land of Canaan foreshadowed this hope. When we notice the theme of sacred space in Scripture, we can rest assured that God will not forsake us. Meditate on the glories of Eden, for they point to greater glories still to come.

"Under the sun"—a recurring phrase in Ecclesiastes—we face trials of various kinds. Our passing years involve one loss after another—health, jobs, finances, friends, family. We need to know that these earthly troubles do not have the last word. By thinking about the Bible's storyline that takes readers from the garden to the lasting city, we can understand where to plot our own lives. We can be hopeful in a fallen world, for God has made his people heirs together with his beloved Son. Along with Abraham and all the redeemed, we will inherit the earth.