

HUMANITY EXPELLED AND WANDERING

Genesis 2-3

The longing for home, a place of tranquility and joy, runs deep in the human heart. Many great works of art and literature feature a journey to the place of rest and belonging. Many languages have words for missing home.

“O Lord, our heart is restless until it rests in you”. – Augustine

“Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne’er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand” – Sir Walter Scott

The Christian faith is depicted as a pilgrimage to a destination.

We were made to have unbroken fellowship with God

When we look at the created order, we see that God placed humans in a prepared Garden (Genesis 2.8). In this place, the first humans could flourish, multiply, and cultivate.

The Garden is described as a place of goodness, plenty, beauty, purpose, and order (Genesis 2.9-17).

Adam and Eve were “unashamed” because their world was harmonious (Genesis 2.25). They had nothing to hide, nothing to fear, and nothing to prove.

We could say that Adam and Eve were home, where they belonged. For a time, all was right in the world.

Human sin creates separation from God

God gave parameters for His creatures. Adam and Eve had freedom but were forbidden from “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2.17). To take of this tree would be to claim self-determination. By violating God’s law, Adam and Eve rejected God’s benevolent care, claimed autonomy, and incurred death.

As a result of their transgression, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden (Genesis 3.23). God did this to be consistent with His Word. Just as God said a direct violation of His law would result in death, so he cut Adam and Eve off from life. He placed the cherubim with a sword to show the seriousness of sin (Genesis 3.24). Adam and Eve brought sin and death into the home and God’s holiness could not (and cannot) tolerate sin.

Human sin distorts the good qualities of home. They experienced shame (Genesis 3.1). Humanity is sent into exile. “East of Eden” becomes a cipher for life outside God’s design.

Even in the expulsion, God acted graciously by giving Adam and Eve promises of restoration (Genesis 3.15).

Jesus came to guide His people home

God’s redemption plan includes a place to be in the end (Revelation 21.1-4). We find the cross of Christ as the “tree of life” from which the first humans were cut off (Galatians 3.10-14).

Followers of Jesus live in such a way that points to (albeit in a very limited way) the eternal heavenly dwelling.

To the degree that we love our lives here, we must remember that heaven will be a fulfillment and enlargement of every good sentiment with the removal of every painful sentiment.

Key Idea: The Christian life is a journey home.

Application Questions:

What ideas and feelings are associated with our ideal vision of home?

What problems occur for people who are perpetual wanderers?

Why does God remove Adam and Eve from the Garden and bar their reentry?

Humans were “unashamed” in their Edenic state. After the fall, shame enters. What is shame? How is a Christian to deal with shame?