

A New Look at God's Garden

Timothy P. Martin

The Power of God's Garden

- The Bible looks new because of Preterism
- The future of the Kingdom may depend on drawing anew from the story of God's Garden

**The Key to the Future is Going
Back to God's Garden at the
Beginning!**

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers...

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of Man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And dry stone no sound of water...

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

II. A GAME OF CHESS

My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
I never know what you are thinking. Think.
I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones...

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

III. THE FIRE SERMON

...

He wept. He promised “a new start.”

I made no comment. What should I resent?

On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

burning...

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

IV. DEATH BY WATER

...

He passed the stages of his age and youth

Entering the whirlpool

Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look windward,

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as
you...

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
If there were water...

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one...

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

D A

Datta: what have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract

By this, and this only, we have existed

Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider

Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor

In our empty rooms

D A

Dayadhvam: I have heard the key

Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

Only at nightfall, aetherial rumors

Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

The Waste Land

T. S. Eliot – 1922

D A

Damyata: The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

Gaily, when invited, beating obedient

To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order?...

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down...

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

Futurism ⇔ Waste Land

- Dealing with the effects of 20th century wilderness Christianity
- Waste land Christianity is separated from God's Garden, beginning and end.
- We now live “between the times”
- Waste Land Christianity

Preterism \Leftrightarrow God's Garden

- The Garden in Revelation is the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- To understand the Garden at the end is to understand the Garden at the beginning.
- Isn't the Garden at the end of Revelation the conclusion of the story of the Garden in Genesis?
- To embrace the gospel is to live in God's Garden!

God's Garden ⇔ God's Garden

Genesis

“created”

Revelation

“made-new”

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (Rev. 21:1 cf. Heb. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3)

- Why do Christians not understand the Garden scene in Revelation?
- Is it because they do not understand the Garden scene in Genesis?
- Revelation 21-22 portrays the Garden of Eden “all grown up”!

God the Gardener

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden... And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. (Gen. 2:8-9)

O God Almighty... you brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.” (Ps. 80:8-9)

In that day – “Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire...” (Isa. 27:2-4 cf. Heb. 6:7-8)

God the Gardener

The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. (Isa. 5:7 cf. Ps. 1:3; Ez. 19:10-14)

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matt. 3:10)

A farmer went out to sow his seed... (Matt. 13:10)

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. (Matt. 20:1)

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. (Rom. 11:17-18)

I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener... (John 15:1) 15

Adam the Son

... Adam, the son of God. (Luke 3:38)

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Gen. 2:15)

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed on his name , he gave the right to become children of God – children born... of God. (John 1:12-13 cf. 1 John 2:29-3:10)

We ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons. (Rom. 8:23)

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. (Rev. 21:7 cf. Rev. 3:21)

Garden Grace

- What do Good parents give their Children?

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. (Gen. 2:8)

- Did Adam have to earn his place in God's Garden?

Food & Water

And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food... A river watering the garden flowed from Eden... (Gen. 2:8-10)

- Did Adam have to earn his food and water in God's Garden?

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? (Matt. 7:9-11)

To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. (Rev. 21:6)

Gold & Precious Stones

- Did God charge Adam for access to the gold and precious stones?
- God's people are his "treasured possession." (Deut. 14:7; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17)
- Gold and precious stones placed in the Holy of Holies. (Ex. 28:9-14)
- Treasure city made from treasures from both earth (gold & stones) and sea (pearl).

The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl... (Rev. 21:21)

Garden Freedom

- What was the first thing God said to Adam?

You are free... (Gen. 2:16)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free... (Gal. 5:1)

- What about the Tree of Knowledge?
- Adam and Eve (children) were to learn from the example of God (father).

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. (Gen. 1:31)
[God knows good]

“It is not good for man to be alone.” (Gen. 2:18) [God knows evil]

It is important to understand that “the knowledge of good and evil” is not something bad in itself. Rather, it is a characteristic of wise, mature people, and especially of kings (2 Samuel 14:17; 19:17; I Kings 3:9). Adam and Eve, being newborns, were not ready to rule (Deuteronomy 1:39; Hebrews 5:14). They needed to serve for awhile and become wise before they would be allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God had promised they would obtain in due time (Genesis 1:29 – “every tree... shall be food for you”)

James B. Jordan, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, p. 136.

The Best Gift of Grace

- Did God charge Adam for dominion over the animals?

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. (Ge. 2:21)

- Was God acting to bless Adam, and train him up in every step of the story?

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman” because she was taken out of man. (Gen. 2:23)

- Did God charge Adam a bride-price for Eve?
- Did God require 7 years of hard labor for her hand in marriage?

The One Sin

- What would cause death? Any and every sin?
- The Garden is a family scene – atmosphere of Grace.
- Jesus warned about one sin.

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this age or the age to come. (Matt. 12:32 cf. Heb. 10:28-29; Rev. 2:11; 20:14)

The Necessity of Garden Faith

- Why did God give Adam that command in the Garden?
- God created the world so that Faith was necessary from the beginning.

And without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb 11:6)

- Adam was created by grace to live by faith in God's word for good works.
- The Garden of Eden is a gospel Garden.

If we are not constantly brought to an awareness of this huge God-dimension, trained in attentiveness to this immense God-presence, we will act and speak out of context, as if we are in a wasteland. But there is no wasteland. We are in a garden, a rose garden. No matter how purely motivated we are, we will finally do more damage than good if we do not operate in response to God rather than the environment. We live on holy ground. We inhabit sacred space. This holy ground is subject to incredible violations. This sacred space suffers constant sacrilege. But no matter. The holiness is there, the sacredness is there. If our lives, and in this case, our caring lives, are shaped in response to the violations, to the sacrilege, and not out of the holy, our lives are shaped wrongly. We are responding to the wrong environment, a false environment, a wasteland environment. We are called to be gardeners, not garbage collectors.

Eugene Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality*, p. 164-165.