

The Garden of Eden

Genesis 2:1-17

After the six days of creation *were completed in all their vast array* and *God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work (2:1-2)*. What does *he rested* mean? Was God tired, so He closed His eyes and took a nap? No! He was satisfied with what He had created, so He rested like a lawyer "rests" his case.

God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (2:3). Here is the cure for restlessness. We only find rest when our lives are complete and what we are doing is good. God made us for fellowship with Himself, so when we are out of fellowship with Him, our souls are restless, and we tire from seeking rest through the vanities of this world. That's why in Matthew 11:28, Jesus made what marvelous promise?

This is the account (Gen. 2:4) refers to the beginning in chapter 1 and introduces a more detailed *account* of creation with man as central. In this verse we find the name *LORD God* (Jehovah Elohim) for the first time. "Elohim" is the name of the great Creator God. "Jehovah" is the personal and covenant name of God that reveals His role as the Redeemer and Protector of His people.

The phrase *no plant of the field had yet sprung up* in verse 5 refers to the third day of creation (1:10) when dry land appeared. Also, clouds covered the earth, and the sun was not yet visible from earth. There was no rain, but *streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground (2:6)* and then *the land produced vegetation (1:12)*.

In chapter one we found that God created man *in his own image (1:27)*. Now we read, *the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (2:7)*. The word *formed* refers to the work of a potter who fashions an object from clay. The Hebrew word for *man* is *adam*. Though God made man to bear His image in the way we live, we were made physically like the other creatures. Our bodies did not come from heaven but were made from *the dust of the ground*. Because of the Fall, Ecclesiastes 3:20 reminds us of what somber fact concerning our bodies?

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). The Garden of Eden was a real place *in the east*, somewhere between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (vs. 14), in what today is Iraq (see map on page 21a). The exact location is not known because two of the rivers have dried up over the millenniums and the Tigris and Euphrates have shifted their riverbeds.

But the important thing is the book of Genesis says the origin of human life is in the region that archaeology has also verified to be the cradle of civilization. There are five things we should consider about the Garden of Eden.

(1) The **Comeliness**. It contained *all kinds of trees... that were pleasing to the eye... (2:9)*. God showed His love for beauty and splendor in the Garden of Eden. We have a lot of beauty in our present world, but if you rolled all of that beauty together and multiplied it by a billion, it would still pale in comparison to the Garden of Eden, which was a prelude to the new heaven and earth. What does the Bible say about the things God prepared for His people in 1 Corinthians 2:9?

The Garden of Eden was a place of incomparable beauty and tranquility. The fields must have been the deepest green, the bushes covered with colorful blossoms, the trees in perfect form, and the air perfumed with the fragrance of fresh flowers. This was no small backyard garden; it was a vast garden covering thousands of acres and had to have a river running through it to water it.

Since there was no rainfall, the river could have been supplied water by a kind of artesian well at its mouth. The garden may have been watered by a natural underground conduit system also pressurized by an artesian well; however, the Bible does not say. The river was very large, for after going through the garden it *separated into four headwaters (Gen. 2:10)*, each of which was a large river, including the *Tigris (2:11-14)*.

(2) The **Conditions**. The beautiful trees produced delicious fruit that was *good for food (2:9a)*. Here is story of what one pastor learned: *Several years ago I led a meeting in Williston, North Dakota. One night after the service a very well-dressed and gracious woman invited the pastor, his family, and me to her home for a special Middle Eastern meal. She and her husband, who was a medical **doctor**, were from Egypt.*

I told her I appreciated the invitation, but I had already eaten just before the service and was "stuffed." She said the meal she prepared would not make me feel any fuller. Reluctantly, I agreed to eat again. The meal was unbelievable. There were all kinds of fruit, of which I had never heard, that she had special-ordered from the Middle East. I ate and ate because it was the most delicious food I had ever put in my mouth. Yet I did not feel stuffed after eating another big meal. That fruit must have been similar to that in the Garden of Eden.

Also, *in the middle of the garden was the tree of life (2:9)*. The tree of life is mentioned only seven times in the Bible, three times in *Genesis (2:9; 3:22, 24)* and four times in the book of *Revelation (2:7; 22:2, 14, 19)*, when we are again permitted to partake of its fruit. The fruit of this tree apparently halted the aging process, thus giving eternal life. Much research is being done to understand the phenomena of aging and to find the fountain of eternal youth. But there is only one cure for aging and death. How did Jesus describe this cure in John 6:40?

Believing in Jesus means to believe in a way that changes one's life so that he or she overcomes the temptations of the world. To those who do, what promise of Jesus do we find in Revelation 2:7b?

(3) The **Concept**. God's purpose for the garden was to take *the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it* (Gen. 2:15). The garden gave man a mission, or purpose, in life, which was to *work* and *care* for it. You might ask, "How could it be paradise if Adam had to work?" Adam was created in the image of God. In *Genesis* each time God did something He simply spoke and what He desired happened. This has been called the voice of command.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam worked with WORD POWER. He did not toil and sweat. To verify this, from Genesis 3:19a what do we learn was a part of the curse of the Fall?

It appears that before the Fall, Adam and Eve also could communicate with the animals (3:1-3). Because of sin, man lost his power of the spoken word, which I believe we will regain in heaven. Having considered the **comeliness**, the **conditions**, and the **concept** of Eden, now let's look at...

(4) The **Choice**. God wanted man to be a free moral agent and to choose to have fellowship with Him and to obey His Word. Therefore, in the middle of the garden God placed *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (2:9).

Amid all the splendor and abundance God made just one prohibition. He *commanded the man, "You are free to eat, from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..."* (2:16-17). God offered Adam a necessary choice, for Adam could not be good or moral, without choosing to be so. A moral person must have the option to do evil. We cannot call a computer or a robot moral because they do not have the option to disobey.

God wanted Adam to be moral, so He gave him a choice. God has never wanted us to be robots or puppets on a string; He wants fellowship with a person who chooses to obey His word. In John 8:31b how did Jesus make it clear this is still His desire today?

There was only one restraint in the garden. Would Adam doubt God's goodness and resent His authority? Would he reject one trivial restriction in this enormous, luscious garden? This brings us to...

(5) The **Caution**. In His grace God gave still further incentive for obeying His Word by giving a clear warning of the consequences of disobedience: *for when you eat of it you will surely die* (Gen. 2:17). The tree would remind Adam that he was not his own god and that he was responsible to a his creator. God told Adam the blessing of doing what was right and the penalty for doing what was forbidden and then left it up to him to make the choice. It is the same with you and me. How does John 3:18 describe this choice?

Believing in Jesus is a choice with clearly revealed blessings to those who believe and penalties for those who do not.

We have looked at the **comeliness**, the **conditions**, the **concept**, the **choice**, and the **caution** relating to the Garden of Eden. These things reveal God created this garden to meet Adam's needs as a trinity made in His image. Because we are a trinity, we have physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. When these needs are met we are healthy, happy, and holy. This requires good food to eat, good work to do, and divine commands to obey. Omitting any of these elements is like cutting off a leg of a three-legged stool. Everything in the Bible was written so we can know how to be healthy, happy, and holy. Which of these areas needs attention in your life and what can you do about it this week?