
Lesson 7 — EDEN



“And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.”

[Genesis 2:8]

In six days God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them — both visible and invisible. After finishing His work, God rested on the seventh day and declared His creation to be “very good.” God created man in His own image yet a little lower than the heavenly beings [*Psalm 8*]. Adam — the son of God — was the representative head of the human race and was given the right and responsibility to be God’s royal ambassador on the earth. After placing Adam in the garden and providing him with a bride and lifelong companion, God gave Adam a mandate to work and cultivate the garden and also to expand its boundaries to the ends of the earth.

Adam was offered a personal relationship with His Maker, as he walked with God in the midst of the garden. Adam knew his identity as God’s imager on earth. Adam was given a purpose in representing the God of heaven on the earth and expanding God’s rule to the uttermost. Adam was provided a partner and helper to love and nurture and protect and lead. Adam was given authority by God to be the head of his family.

Finally, Adam was given a place — a home — that originally was established as the point of intersection between heaven and earth. The garden was designated as holy ground where God and man could meet together and commune with one another.

Man’s home was called Eden, and as we soon will see, Eden is just as much part of our future than it is part of our past. Eden may have been paradise lost, but all that was lost is meant to be restored and eventually entrusted to God’s children.

Garden of Paradise

The ancient pagan world universally associated the home of “the gods” with high mountains and lush, watered gardens. Naturally, mortals would assume that the gods lived in the most beautiful and most abundant places imaginable. These ideas also were familiar among the Biblical authors, who clearly linked the Garden of Eden with paradise — the abode of God Himself. The Hebrew description for Eden is directly connected to *pleasure* or *delight*, so the

Garden of Eden was man's original home prepared by God and intended for his perpetual pleasure and delight. No good thing was lacking in the Garden of God.

From the very beginning, the Garden of God was meant to be paradise on earth — the unique dwelling place of God where mankind could enjoy God's personal presence and blessing and live forever with Him. We are told, however, that humankind was cast out of Eden as a consequence for direct disobedience and rebellion, which raises the question, "does Eden still exist today?"

Theologians, historians, and archaeologists long have pondered the possibility of discovering the original location of the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, man's first home has been lost to the sands of time. Even with the few geographical clues we have in the Scriptures [see *Genesis 2:8-15*], it only stands to reason that the catastrophic effects of the global flood in Noah's day completely rearranged the earth's topography, leaving little trace of Eden.

Although I do believe Eden once was a literal, physical location on the map, I don't necessarily believe we could find it today, even if we knew precisely where it once was located. Maybe we have been looking at this all wrong, however. Maybe Eden has been here all along after all.

Maybe the paradise of God hasn't disappeared, but only we have lost the ability to see it. Instead of thinking geographically, maybe we need to think differently about Eden. Perhaps Eden temporarily has become veiled to our natural eyes and exists in another dimension — a spiritual dimension. Maybe we aren't supposed to discover where Eden was at the beginning but rather are to focus on how to ensure we will be restored to Eden in the end.

- ❖ Read *Genesis 2:5-15*. Describe the conditions and provide as many details about the Garden of Eden. What did you discover for the very first time? What additional questions does this passage raise?

- ❖ What was required of Adam in his responsibility to "work" and "keep" the garden? What is the significance of knowing that God intended man to work before the fall and the curse of creation?

Paradise Lost

As aforementioned, man tragically was cast out of the presence of God and expelled from the paradise of God as a result of breaking faith and deliberately disobeying the LORD. While it is impossible to explain Adam's rebellion in Eden without first acknowledging the divine rebellion of the *nachash* — or serpent — we will save that discussion for our next lesson. In the mean time, it is important to discover the details provided in Genesis 3 regarding Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden.

"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—' therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life." [Genesis 3:22-24]

- ❖ What is meant by saying that man had become like "one of us in knowing good and evil?" Why did the LORD God prevent Adam and Eve from having access to the Garden?

- ❖ How did God keep man out of Eden? Why? What details in verse 26 stand out to you? Why?

Earthly Patterns of Paradise

After mankind was expelled from Eden and the manifest presence of God and cut off from the tree of life, death began to reign on earth [Romans 5:12-14]. Yet God in His mercy did not completely destroy mankind and leave him without hope. The entire story of redemptive history provides glimpses into God's plan to restore relationship with mankind and ultimately to restore Eden once again on the earth.

The Biblical authors intentionally re-invoke the Edenic vision through a variety of examples in both the Old and New Testaments. Eden is in mind when Yahweh reveals Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai and later instructs him to build the Tent of Meeting in the desert. This Edenic

theme is reinforced even more when King Solomon is given permission to construct the Temple in Jerusalem on Mount Zion, and of course the language used in the book of Revelation is intentionally drawing from the original paradise motif.

As you will see, God's destiny for Eden always has been part of His original plan.

Q & A

- ❖ Read 1 Kings 7:27-37 and Ezekiel 41:18-20. Both passages are describing the decorations of God's Temple. In what ways did the appearance of the Temple invoke images of the Garden of Eden? Why was the Temple so significant in ancient Israel?

- ❖ Read Luke 23:39-46. What is the promise Jesus makes to the thief on the cross? What is meant to be implied by the imagery in verse 45? How does the cross of Christ ultimately restore us into right relationship with God?

- ❖ Read 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. Where was Paul taken? Why is it so important that Paul connects his vision with Eden?

- ❖ Read Revelation 21:1-8, 22-27 and Revelation 22:1-5. What is John describing in his vision? How do we know? Who is found dwelling with God in the New Eden? Who will not be allowed in Eden?