

## **SESSION 17: GOD PLANTS A GARDEN**

*Genesis 2:8-14*

February 11, 2024

As we delve further into Chapter Two—and specifically its narrative about the garden in Eden—it is important for us to remember—to repeatedly remind ourselves, because it is easy to slip back into thinking otherwise—that Chapter Two is an *expansion*, a *recapitulation* of Chapter One, supplying more details.

Simply, I would state it this way: Chapter Two of Genesis does not adhere to the orderly timeline of Chapter One; that is, one cannot lay Chapter Two over Chapter One and the sequence and timing will match up perfectly. However, one *can* rely on the sequence order of Chapter Two *within itself*; that is, in Chapter Two the events of vv1-6 occur before vv7-9.

### **Read Genesis 2:8-10.**

**v8**

*And Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east;*

There are two maps included on the back of the handout. Please take a look at the first map, showing Canaan next to the Mediterranean Sea. Remember that in this case the chronicler's—Moses'—point of view would have been from, roughly, the area southeast of what we call Israel today—but was then Canaan. We can't say, of course when Moses *began* writing the Pentateuch—it could have been on day one of the Exodus—but near the end (and near the end of his life) he would have been in Moab or Ammon; remember, it was from Mt. Nebo that Moses gazed upon the Promised Land across the Jordan (Deuteronomy 32:49), and we see that on this map directly across from Jericho.

So from his vantage point the location of Eden, the garden, and the rivers emanating from it would have been east, or, probably more precisely, northeast. And note the phrasing here: “Eden” is not the name of the garden; Eden was the name of the area where the garden was “planted” by Yahweh Elohim. So later when it is referred to as the “garden of Eden” (e.g., v2:15), we take that to mean the garden located in, or associated with, Eden.

We cannot locate with any measure of precision Eden itself. But as we see in v10,

...a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ❏

Please look at the second map. To the left we see the Mediterranean and the Sea of Galilee in today's Israel. East of that we have, first, the Euphrates, followed by the Tigris. These are the only two, of the four rivers named in this passage (vv10-14), we can identify. The Euphrates is to the Middle East what the Mississippi is to middle America; in some biblical passages it is referred to simply as "the great river," or just "the river."

It is reasonable to assume, being in the northern hemisphere, with rivers flowing southward, that Eden would be located somewhere in the vicinity north of Haran (haw-RAHN). But keep in mind that earthquakes and other upheavals, not to mention the Flood itself, could have altered the courses of these two rivers. So we take this map as offering just a general idea for the locations.

I need to point out one variant in our versions—unfortunately, once again in the NIVs. All our common versions have "God planted a garden," but the NIVs add a word, changing the tense of "planted":

Now the LORD God **had** planted a garden in the east,

John Sailhamer points out that the NIV translation (of pluperfect tense) "is not warranted by the immediate context or Hebrew syntax." He goes on to explain that this is done by those wanting to force Chapter Two into the tighter and more sequential order of Chapter One; as I have explained, there is no reason to do this. So, no, contrary to the NIV, the garden was planted by God *after* the creation of man, as affirmed by the second half of the verse.

*...and there He placed the man whom He had formed.*

Probably most of us have a picture in our mind of Adam being created *in* the garden, but the text clearly states that the first man was made elsewhere—perhaps elsewhere in Eden—*then* placed in the garden. The word translated "garden" (*gahn*) includes the idea of an enclosure. ❏ This helps explain the effectiveness of God barring entrance to the garden in v3:24.

#### **four rivers**

"This is a very unusual situation. We know of no parallel to it. We know of streams uniting to form one major stream. Here the reverse is true: one major stream becomes four." (Leupold)

#### **garden**

"The word 'garden' (*gan*), an 'enclosure,' or a sheltered, protected spot, corresponds to the Oriental conception of a garden. Paradise, the conception borrowed from the Persian by the Septuagint translators, is appropriate but suggests rather a royal park. A place of particular beauty and excellence best reflects God's favor toward His chief creature." (Leupold)

### **Read Genesis 3:24.**

Presumably this suggests that the cherubim and “flaming sword” were stationed at an entrance—or perhaps the *only* entrance—to the garden.

**v9**

**And out of the ground Yahweh God caused to grow every tree that is desirable in appearance and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

This verse amplifies v8: “Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden.” I love the fact that periodically we see mirrored in the first days of this earth some of the elements that will mark its final eternity. This is not just textually fascinating, but affirms the cohesive narrative of God’s word: It is all of a piece; His genius, divine economy was planned all the way through to the end from *before* the very beginning of Creation. And here in the subtext of the adjective “every” we have the first of a couple in this verse. In Chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel the prophet describes in detail what is commonly termed the “Millennial Temple,” but which, I concluded for our *Last Things* study, was not, and will not, be built. Even so, in his description of the river flowing out from the temple he uses the same imagery and words that are here in v9.

#### **Ezekiel’s Temple**

See Last-Things.pdf, page 140, and the two-page handout located after page 362, at the end of the study notes.

### **Read Ezekiel 47:6-7, 12.**

John, in the Revelation, says much the same thing about the eternal New Jerusalem on the New Earth.

### **Read Revelation 22:1-2.**

This passage not only echoes the imagery of v9 in Genesis, but here we see again “the tree of life”—its importance revealed by its first appearance in Eden, and reappearance in the New Jerusalem of the eternal state.

But back to the beginning of the verse. This time God makes the man before He makes a place for Him (as opposed to most of what He did in Chapter One). However, He logically makes the space and then populates it with the trees that will delight and feed the man.

What God “caused to grow” or “spring up” within the garden was *kol ‘ets*—not just a few, not just a variety of, but literally “all, the whole, all the of every” tree—not every tree created or that would be created, but “every tree that is desirable in appearance and good for food.” I take that to mean it did not include trees such as thorny acacias or even maples, thus predominantly an orchard of fruit trees. All *these* trees were beautiful *and* good for food. Two trees are highlighted: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And I am intrigued by something Leupold writes about these two trees. 📌

As we have seen, the tree of life will also be prominent in the believers’ eternal state. But if what Leupold writes is correct—and I see no reason to take issue with it—it raises an interesting parallel with the testing of Job, where, in Job chapters one and two, Satan is given permission to test Job’s allegiance to Yahweh. We are all familiar with the story.

In Genesis, man is created without knowledge of good and evil; I would suggest this means he doesn’t know anything about evil, nor does he know anything about good. He not only doesn’t know anything about the difference between them, he doesn’t even know either *exists*. To him, there is just what *is*.

Into this situation God plants two trees. Both trees have an actual, physical purpose, but both also *represent* something. The tree of life represents eternal life—implied, with God. Based on Genesis 3:22, were the man to eat from this tree he would “live forever.” Interestingly, God does not issue a restriction on this tree, as he does for the other.

For the moment, in this setting, the second tree is the one far more important—*critically* important—for it will determine the path man will take here on out.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil does just that: it doesn’t *make* the eater either good or evil; it just informs him that both exist. Adam didn’t have this knowledge; he was good, but was ignorant of that fact. Having eaten of the fruit of this tree, he then understood that both good and evil existed—and *his eating from the tree proved the existence of evil*.

### **Leupold**

“Both trees are mentioned because both were there and both were destined for a very definite purpose. The tree of life, as appears from 3:22, would have served its purpose in the event of the victory of man in the first temptation. Its existence shows that God had made ample provision for man’s good. Since, however, it never came to be used, it at once very properly recedes into the background after the first mention of it and is alluded to only after the Fall in 3:22. Its purpose apparently was to confirm man in the possession of physical life and to render physical death an impossibility.”

Just as Job was tested by God when He permitted the actions of Satan, the two trees created by God will represent (in Chapter Three) a test of Adam and Eve’s love for their Maker, and allegiance to Him by their obedience to His command. By eating from the tree they realized the existence of evil because it now dwelt in them, and they suddenly realized they had once been good. Robert Hawker states it more succinctly. ❏

If they had passed the test, presumably they would have been invited to dine from the tree of life. Having failed the test, that meal would be denied them. And the tragedy is that it took the introduction of evil for Adam to learn that he *had been* good. More on this when we get to vv16-17 in Chapter Two, and, of course, Chapter Three.

**Hawker**

“And the tree of knowledge of good and evil; perhaps, a token that man, by disobedience, had learnt the knowledge of the good he had lost, and the evil he had taken to him.”

**v10**

**Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.**

Note carefully what this verse states: the river does not originate in the garden, but above it, in another portion of the Eden region. It then flows *into* the garden as one river to supply the plants and trees (and man) with water. And either while still in the garden, or after it flows out of the garden, it branches out to become four separate rivers: the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates.

**vv11-13**

No one knows where the first two rivers are located. Guesses range from the Nile to the Ganges in India, and we cannot even be sure the rivers still exist.

**v14**

**And the name of the third river is Tigris; it is the one that went east of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.**

The Hebrew does not say “Tigris,” but *Hiddekel*, which stands for the river called in Assyrian *Hidiqlat*, and in old Persian *Tigra*—i.e., Tigris. And in the Hebrew text the river Euphrates is *Perath*; no description was necessary, for everyone knew where it was.

In Chapter Two, from v4 on, God is setting the stage for the epochal, tragic events of Chapter Three, when Adam and Eve, and all of Creation will veer off-course.

For the moment—and only for a short while—the garden is truly a paradise. The first man has everything he requires for survival, for health, for joy (at least once Eve is created), and for communion with Yahweh God. Life is good; *he* is good.

In no time at all things will go south.

# SESSION 17

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### Eden

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### Where Was Adam Created?

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### For More on Ezekiel’s Temple

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### The Trees in the Garden

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*Hawker:* And the tree of knowledge of good and evil; perhaps, a token that man, by disobedience, had learnt the knowledge of the good he had lost, and the evil he had taken to him.”

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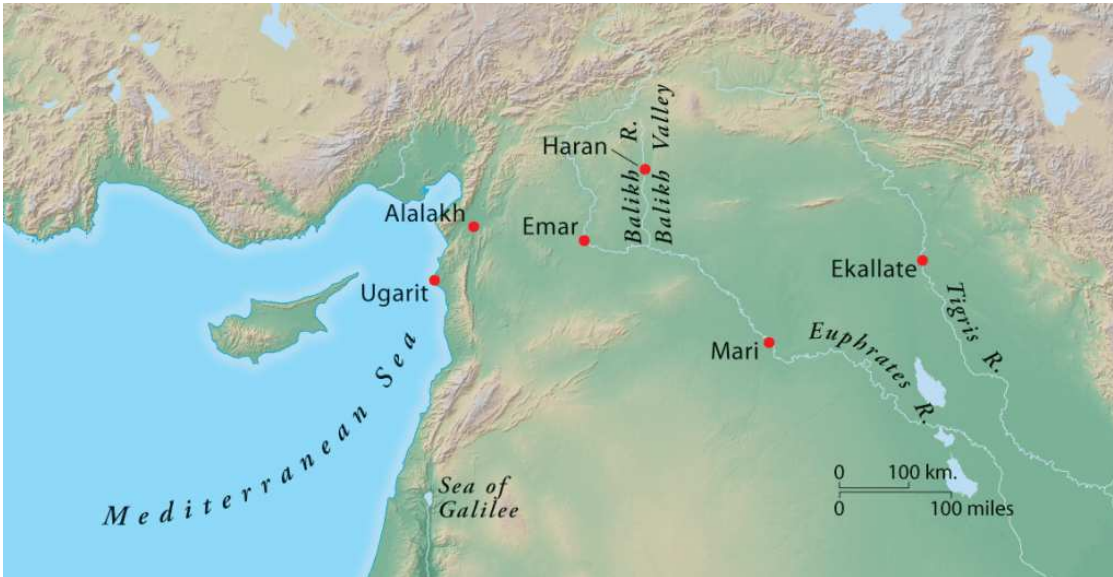




MAP ONE



MAP TWO



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