



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### Talk Genesis 2:8-17: The Garden of Eden and the Test of Man's Obedience

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#### Lesson 7

*Let's read Genesis 2:8-17. Here we have the account of God planting the Garden of Eden and the test of Man's obedience in the Garden of Eden.*

“ The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. 11 The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. 13 The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. 14 The name of the third river is Hiddekel (*or Tigris*), it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

#### Background Notes

When we read about the description of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2, we need to remember two things. First of all, we need to remember that the time period of the Garden of Eden was (obviously) before the Flood of Noah's day. So we should not expect to locate the long lost Garden of Eden or the same rivers and places mentioned here, because the world-wide flood of Noah's day was a global catastrophe. It drastically changed the earth's topography and geography.

For example, we have no idea today where the land of Havilah was (v11), and there is certainly no Gihon River going around the whole land of Cush (Ethiopia) today (v13). The Tigris and the Euphrates in verse 14 are not the same as the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers of today -- in fact, the Tigris River today is west of where Assyria was, not east of Assyria. The present-day Tigris and Euphrates Rivers were most likely named by post-Flood people in memory of the pre-Flood Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The most we can say about the location of the Garden of Eden is that it was probably in the general area of the present Mesopotamian valley and the present Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, where Iraq is today.

The other point we must keep in mind when we read this chapter is that Moses, the inspired author of Genesis, was writing this account in about 1500 B.C., a good 2,500 years after the Garden of Eden. Moses was writing this for the Jewish people of his time, using some names at his time such as Cush (Ethiopia) and Assyria. At the same time, Moses was probably using earlier written sources that may have gone back even as far as Adam. (We

are so brainwashed with evolution that we think Adam couldn't write. Hey, God gave Adam the ability to speak, why not write?) So Adam and others may have written some sources that Moses could have used when he wrote the book of Genesis, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

## **Doctrinal Points**

### **1. In the beginning, God gave man paradise with responsibility.**

Verses 8 and 9, *"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."*

What a wonderful place the Garden of Eden must have been! Ezekiel 28 refers to the Garden of Eden as the "garden of God." Now most of you have probably been to some beautiful man-made gardens, like the Botanic Garden in Chicago, or Butchart Gardens in Victoria, British Columbia, or Longwood Gardens outside of Philadelphia. These are very beautiful gardens, the best that man can do. Now can you imagine how beautiful the Garden of Eden was? A garden planted by God, and designed by God for mankind's pleasure. What a paradise!

But it was a paradise with responsibility. Man had two areas of responsibility in the Garden. First, he was to tend and keep the garden (v15). Second, he was to obey his Creator (v16-17). These two areas of responsibility for man in the Garden of Eden lead us to our next two doctrinal points. So, doctrinal point number one was, "In the beginning, God gave man paradise with responsibility."

### **2. In the beginning, God gave man work without sweat.**

*"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it" (v15).*

Man had a job to do in the Garden of Eden -- he was to take care of the garden. "Wait a minute," you say, "I thought this was paradise? If man had to work, this wasn't paradise!" What is the answer here? The answer is that it was "work without sweat." There is nothing negative or bad about work! In fact, man was designed by God to be active and work and serve, not to just sit around and do nothing. And before the fall of man into sin, tending the garden was work without sweat. It was not painful labor, it was a pleasant task. Let's turn to Genesis 3 to see the results of the Fall of man, in Genesis 3:17-19

*"Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':*

*" Cursed is the ground for your sake;  
In toil you shall eat of it  
All the days of your life.*

*18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,  
And you shall eat the herb of the field.*

*19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread  
Till you return to the ground,  
For out of it you were taken;  
For dust you are,  
And to dust you shall return."*

So before the Fall of man, there was work, but it was work without sweat. The Garden of Eden was not full of thorns and thistles and weeds. Part of the curse was that henceforth there would be sweat associated with work. Man would have to toil and labor to subdue the earth.

The good news here is that when the Lord returns, there will be no more curse. Listen to the words Revelation 22:3, "*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*" Notice that when the curse is removed, there will be service, but no sweat. That's the way it was in the beginning, and that's the way it will be when the Lord returns. In the beginning God gave man work without sweat.

### **3. In the beginning, God gave man freedom within limits.**

Verses 16 and 17, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

Adam and Eve were told by God Himself that they could eat freely from every tree in the Garden of Eden, including the tree of life, but not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the only tree that was off limits to man. Why did God put this tree off limits? Because He was testing the obedience of man. God did not create man as a puppet or as a robot, to only be able to act when God "pulled the strings" or "flipped the switch." God created man with a free will. God gave man the ability to choose to obey his Creator, or choose to disobey his Creator. We know the rest of the sad story. Man chose to disobey his Creator. As a result, man fell from his state of innocence and today, apart from Christ, man is a slave to sin. In the beginning it was not that way. God gave man freedom within limits.

Question: Were the trees in the Garden of Eden real trees or symbolic trees?  
Answer: We believe that they were real trees. (And we don't believe that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was sex, as some have suggested.) Exactly what kind of tree the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was, we can't be sure. But we do know that eating from that tree was an act of disobedience and the results were two-fold: 1) a conscience and experience of evil, and 2) death! God said in verse 17, "*for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*"

Was this physical death or spiritual death? Both! The translation from the Hebrew here is literally, "dying, you shall die." Death means separation. Because of man's disobedience, he would begin to die physically and eventually his body would return to dust. He would die spiritually as well -- separation from fellowship with God and, apart from salvation, his spirit would be eternally separated from God. How thankful we can be for the plan of salvation that God ordained for us.

Man chose to disobey and cross the boundaries that God had set up, and man has reaped what he has sown. This is *man's fault, not God's fault*. We need to get that point

straight, because people like to blame God for giving man the ability to choose obedience or disobedience. God did not create man as a robot, but gave him a free will -- exactly what every one of us would have voted for, right? *Man* chose to use his free will to disobey. In the beginning, God gave man freedom within limits.

**Practical Application: Let God design the perfect place for you.**

God prepared the Garden of Eden for mankind. It was the perfect place for man to live and work. God designed this place specifically for Adam and Eve. God knew everything about Adam -- his likes, his dislikes, his strengths, and his weaknesses. He knew everything about Adam and Eve, and He designed the Garden of Eden for them, the perfect place for them.

Do you think God can do that for you? God knows everything about you. God knows about your strengths, your weaknesses, your likes, and your dislikes. God can design the perfect place for you, too, if you let Him. He knows the best location for you. He knows the best job for you. He knows the best friends for you. He knows the best of everything for each one of us -- but too often we don't let God take control and bring us to that perfect place. Instead we try to dictate to God, and we try to "twist God's arm" trying to force Him to give us what **we** think is best for us.

Do you really want to be happy in life? Then let **God** design the perfect place for you!