

Eden and the Garden that the Lord God Planted Eastward

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The premise that undergirds Faithchasers is that the Bible in its entirety is the sacred and true word of God. We extend that out to state that all of the scripture in the Bible is to be believed and mankind is not to “cherry-pick” only what he thinks he will accept as the truth.

Knowing that Jesus our Lord is the Word of God i.e. he is the literal words emanating from God, and through his words were the heavens and the earth and all things therein created and formed¹ and he is also the author of the Redemption Plan for mankind to be reconciled back into the God’s heavenly presence. Putting all this together we should therefore be very attentive to anything that he has said.

So when Jesus said to us, *“If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”*² Our response to this should be, *“What are we doing wrong?”*

Not, *“Oh hang on a minute, do you mean us. But that old stuff was two thousand years ago.”*

We can apply this to many things, but in particular for mankind today the Word of God recorded in the Bible “is” Jesus our Lord telling us about earthly things. If we go about chopping out this-and-that because it doesn’t suit us, how are we ever going to receive and accept the spiritual things we need to know that will lead us to redemption? And don’t get this wrong by criticising already! Mankind is not guaranteed an entry into heaven. This only comes about if we have the spirit of our Lord within, and this then only comes about by believing those things that the Lord has said we must abide.

Faithchasers have assumed an obligation to address the deplorable decline in how Christians and unbelievers alike discard large chunks of our Lord’s word, and in some cases, the whole of scripture, in favour of a non-challenging social gospel or ultimately the gospel of the flesh.

Now we can make some generalised comments about how this works in reality. Science on one hand typically rejects any notion that God created the universe and they also reject that he gave us song-lines recitals in Genesis Chapter One in the form of a very succinct overview of how the creation and formation of our world occurred. Science is deaf to all matters of God and consequently rule out all notions of God’s existence.

Many churches that also emphasise a social gospel and do not teach from the Hebrew scripts in like manner fall foul of John 3:12 and their pathways soon show their spiritual mis-direction. The message from the Lord goes something like this:

“Woe to you shepherds who lead your flock into rocky caverns and heavy briar thickets where the fox and the lion hunt - or leave them without guard by the waters in the wild.”

What do you think will happen to the flock? Of course it is another rhetorical question; they will get mauled, if not slaughtered. Shepherds the world over have a God imposed obligation to actually shepherd His flock - they answer to God. (Mazzeltov on that one!)

This brings us to Eden and the Garden wherein the Lord God put Adam, the account of which we find in Genesis chapters two and three. But let’s take one step back from here. The likelihood of the general society believing that God created the universe in six days (be careful what you think here) is less than one out of ten, and right on the heels of this account we come to God forming Adam, the

¹ John 1:1-3

² John 3:12

first of modern man, whom is placed in a secluded and protected garden on the border of Eden and appeared on planet Earth approximately six thousand (or so) years ago.

If we don't teach and preach this word of God from Genesis then any wonder that the flock cannot raise themselves up beyond Colour Me Beautiful and I'm an Alpha Male because they have no idea of what they are missing and are consequently assimilating their points of view with the unbelievers of the world – which is now becoming most evident.

Is the problem with the shepherds? Or is the problem with the organisations from which they derive their reward? I dare not answer. And this is why belief in Eden and the Garden within has waned so badly. Who is equipped to teach the truth of this matter boldly and with fervour so that the flock can move onto believing spiritual things that heavily rely on the sound foundation of teaching about earthy things? In fact do we really even believe what our Lord God has said to us directly in John 3:12 or do we just go “ho-hum”?

If you are having a few issues here then you need to man up (or woman up) and re-assess what you really believe in. So let me give you a tip. Belief needs to be grabbed by both spiritual hands and clung onto like your life depends upon it - because it does! Despite what thoughts to the contrary might flood into your mind, or when your closest friend pokes fun at your attitude, don't let go of believing the Bible and every word that the Lord God uttered over the history of the Earth since its creation.

So now, how do we approach the biblical account of the Garden in Eden? The song-line recitals that Moses rendered from the oral to the written modality are very succinct indeed and every word has a meaning that can change the story line. Many, even perhaps thousands, of authors from a wide spectrum of cultural beliefs have vied for dominance with the sciences as to if Eden really did exist and if so, where was it located, ie either in this world or anchored elsewhere in the heavenlies.

The variety of ponderings and opinions about this are possibly innumerable and at the end of the day there is no consensus about any of it. So what are we expected to believe? The answer is relatively simple – believe the word of God; that's the starting point and from there the detail will fill in as does a jigsaw puzzle.

It takes time to soak up all of the leads and important underlying structures that support God's amazing work in bringing Adam into this world. Such things as the quantum leap in man's brain power to drive his super intelligence and the development of new skill sets to start mankind on the road to learning and self-improvement.

But the two major shifts in what Adam brought to mankind were that he recognised the Lord God as the divine deity of his world, something that was out of reach of primitive Hominin Man, and also that Adam was able to understand verbal commandments from God that had to be obeyed. He knew that disobedience to the word of the Lord God had serious consequences³ of life and death proportions. Without these two major developments the whole of the Lord God's ultimate Plan for mankind could not have commenced.

So understanding just these few matters sets a base foundation upon which spiritual structures can commence their constructions over the top. Whole structures become stronger and reinforced over time as our spiritual man matures within us. But it all starts with our attitude toward believing that the Lord's word is the same – yesterday, today and tomorrow. Do this and his word will never diminish nor fail us.

³ Genesis 2:17

So we have got to start somewhere and the Garden of Eden is an excellent place to get the billy-cart rolling. So, let's start with the specific passage wherein Eden is first mentioned: (Genesis 2:8)

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

There are six key elements in this song line recital that control the essence of the event, but a word of caution; rushing into deciphering this song line is fraught with issues as it is so easy to *jalopedy* off with just a vague notion thinking that with a bit of spit and polish – voila! We can write up our sermon for next Sunday.

It's never that simple and song lines, because of their ultra-succinctness, facilitate a broader latitude of meaning than say, an English essay. This was also a feature of the oral-only languages that had a limited vocabulary list emanating out from the ancient world and in part contributed to the passages in the Hebrew text.

First element: Lord God

This is our Lord as the author of the song line and the Word of God. It is an important piece of information because it will fit into our spiritual structure at a later date knowing that the Lord was with mankind from the very start and was not just born into the world where he lived for thirty-three years in the form of Jesus of Nazareth over two thousand years ago. From John's Gospel we are told that the Lord was there at the very beginning of time⁴.

Second element: The word "planted"

This word takes its meaning from the root of the word to; "strike in", "fix in", or "plant". Clearly it can be synonymous with a gardener planting a shrub in the ground, but also to affix, or put something somewhere. We are not limited to a gardening scenario despite what this may look like. There are at least twelve⁵ usages of this word throughout the Hebrew scripts where its use is not horticulturally related.

Third element: "the garden"

For most we think about a garden being a pretty place, not necessarily huge but having trees with lawns and flower beds with all manner of colours in bloom. But we would not be accurate if we said this about our subject matter and this passage in particular.

The word used in the text is based on the meaning to "hedge" for the purposes to protect, defend or seclude. Its application in this passage uses a derivative to mean fenced, ie secure, and we therefore must consider why. It also has other features that lead us away from that pretty scene of a small garden at the back of a little cottage. For instance, the Lord planted every tree that was pleasant to look upon; he planted every tree that was good for food and additionally planted the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.⁶ And if that wasn't enough, it had running through it a volume of water that surpasses the Amazon River, and in fact it was so large it eventually fed four rivers, being: the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris and one other that has not been satisfactorily identified⁷. And there is more! The Lord formed (the same word used to bring forth Adam) every beast of the field and every fowl of the air and brought them before Adam for

⁴ John 1:1

⁵ 2Samuel 7:10, 1Chronicles 17:9, Psalm 44:2, Psalm 80:8, Ecclesiastes 12:11, Isaiah 51:16, Jeremiah 2:21, Jeremiah 11:17, Jeremiah 12:2, Jeremiah 18:9, Daniel 11:45, Amos 9:15.

⁶ Genesis 2:9

⁷ Genesis 2:10-14

nomenclature. So let me ask a question, how big an area do you think we are talking about now and what are your thoughts about the Garden's landscape and the topography.

Scholars with merit indicate that the area of Israel at its extent, ie the Promised Land given to Abraham and his descendants, are implicated here, but take note that the Garden does not render well a meaning that it actually included the four rivers. So its area is certainly a significant size within the Middle East region, but not of the proportion of the entire Promised Land.

And while we are on this matter of the Garden's features, Lets jump to where Adam and Eve have been found to have sinned: The ground outside of the Garden becomes cursed and only produces herbs of the field (grasses)⁸, thistles and thorns that Adam and Eve are judged to eat for the rest of their days. Gone are the fruit trees and the vegetables and all things good for food that Adam was brought up on.

"And God expelled Adam from the Garden to farm the ground from whence he was taken"⁹. Clearly there is a place within the Garden, and just as clearly there is another place outside of the Garden, and the two are very different places. Note with interest that Adam was formed from the dust of the ground that was outside the Garden¹⁰ and we will therefore need to consider if the Garden was anchored to this terrestrial zone or some other place pertaining to the heavenlies.

And perhaps lastly (for the moment) we need to bring on board for our thoughts to consider that after Adam and Eve's expulsion, the Lord placed cherubims (note plural) and a flaming sword in the east of the garden (note not Eden) to keep the way of the Tree of Life¹¹. This piece of information is significant because these heavenly beings are immensely powerful – well beyond anything mankind could challenge, and they are charged with keeping the way of the Tree of Life. If the Garden was "just a garden" with a high hedge around it, why was there a need for the heavenly beings of such powerful capability? Sure with a mere swipe of his hand the Lord could have levelled the Garden forever if it was "just" a garden, but no! The Lord left it in place and put powerful guards to prevent access to its riches.

So now let me ask another question. Does all of this sound like a nice stone-walled garden behind a quaint cottage somewhere in the countryside? This is another rhetorical question obviously.

Fourth element: "Eastward"

This can be very deceiving. We find the same word in describing where in the Garden the cherubims and the flaming sword were placed after Adam and Eve's expulsion. The early Hebrew language from where the root meaning is derived notes that it is used prepositionally:

The front, of place (absolutely the fore part, relatively the East) or time (antiquity); often used adverbially (before, anciently, eastward): - aforetime, ancient (time), before, east (end, part, side, -ward), eternal, X ever (-lasting), forward, old, past.

It is taken from a primitive root word that means:

To project (one self), that is, precede; hence to anticipate, hasten, meet (usually for help): - come (go, [flee]) before, + disappoint, meet, prevent.¹²

⁸ Genesis 3:18

⁹ Genesis 3:23

¹⁰ Genesis 3:19

¹¹ Genesis 3:24

¹² Strong's Concordance

We can understand that there will be a very large and diverse set of opinions in relation to the meaning of this word and it is perhaps here that the key to unlocking the song line is to be found.

Fifth element: The word “in”

We could ignore this little insignificant preposition and just read through it, but if we did, we would miss the point of why the song line has recorded it. The word “in” is not complicated. We put things “in” boxes, “in” cupboards; in fact we do a lot of putting “in” every day of our lives. This fifth element is saying that the Garden is “in” a place called Eden and the significance of being in Eden becomes enormous depending on where Eden is located (or anchored to).

If we find Eden is God’s house in the heavenlies then the Garden becomes at the forefront (eastward) of where the heavenlies and our terrestrial planet co-reside. It could even be, and please run with me here, the Garden existed in a place deep in antiquity before the earth had any vegetation and before animals were present upon it.¹³

Sixth element: Eden

Surprisingly there are not as many scriptural references to Eden as we might have otherwise thought. The actual word “Eden” is only found in the Hebrew scripts mentioned in twenty verses. The Greek scripts don’t refer to Eden but the Lord has preferred to use the word “paradise” as having a meaning pertaining to a place of future happiness in heaven with God.

If we examine the Hebrew scripts we can break the use of Eden into essentially three meanings; Eden – the region of Adam’s home¹⁴, Eden – soft, delicate and pleasant, a delight to self, to live voluptuously, and Eden – the land of Nod, on the east of Eden where Cain dwelt after he went out from the presence of the Lord.¹⁵ There are other references where the use of the name is given to people.

But if we incorporate into our spectrum of thought the use of the Greek “Paradise” it is mentioned three times¹⁶ and all carry the same meaning of a “place of future happiness”. The point I wish to make is that the Garden is never referred to in this same way and therefore clearly, Eden (Paradise) is not the same “place” as the Garden. There is a subtle difference that if correctly explored will go a long way to unravelling the issues we have about them both.

Well what do we think? Do we run with the obvious and say that Eden is a region that once existed upon Earth and at its eastern end the Lord God planted a secluded garden surrounded by a hedge wherein he placed Adam and Eve? And if we run with this we can go looking for physical archaeology around the world to identify where this biblical place was/is located. Indeed this is exactly what has occurred over the millenniums and continues today.

But despite all of this manpower, no sign has been found to support the biblical account. Some might say, “See, it never existed anyway” and then they might follow that up by saying, “I told you so!”

Smile sweetly and feel the warmth from the joy of the Lord in the cockles of your heart.

The reason why the identity of the Garden has not been resolved is that it is not a physical place that we can observe. That place still exists today and is as real as you or I are somewhere in the world

¹³ Consider if Genesis 2:5 is implicated here.

¹⁴ Genesis 2:10 / 2:15 / 3:23-24, Isaiah 51:3, Ezekiel 28:13, Ezekiel 31:9

¹⁵ Genesis 4:16, 2Kings 19:12

¹⁶ Luke 23:43, 2Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 2:7

looking at this article. To understand and “see” it we need to go back to the fundamental structure of Man himself.

Hominin Man: Created by God with a body and soul.

Modern Man Adam: Made by God to have a body, a “living” soul and a spirit.

After their transgression of disobeying God’s commandment, both Adam and Eve “died” in spirit and they became modern man with a body and a soul, ie the same as Hominin Man that had already been on the planet for several hundred thousand years. Adam and Eve’s spirit had died as a consequence of their transgression (As God said it would) and they were no longer able to access the Garden of God.

This Spirit/Soul/Body structure, as we have noted, is analogous to the questions raised about the structure of Eden and the Garden, and in fact it opens our eyes to an understanding that is so broad it is difficult to fully comprehend.

Let us start with Eden. We have looked at the word usage from the passage and very clearly Eden is the same place the Greek scripts of the Gospels refer to as Paradise – a place of future happiness. A good example that exemplifies this point is from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians¹⁷ where he records *“how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter”*. Jesus our Lord also used this word, *“Verily I say to thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise”*¹⁸.

So be in no doubt about the synonymy of Eden, Paradise and heaven. They are the same place and they are populated in the form of the spiritual realm, ie flesh and blood cannot enter into heaven. The analogy between man’s Spirit/Soul/Body structure is aligned at this point through his spirit and there are reasons why Eden is referred to as a place away from which Cain travelled to the Land of Nod to distance himself from the Lord God¹⁹ and similarly why it is referred to as a region in Mesopotamia²⁰ and we will come to these references in due course.

We jump now to man’s structure at its lowest level, his body – or flesh and blood, and I think little explanation is required to see that in our structural comparison that man’s flesh is analogous with the earth. That is, our terrestrial reside on Planet Earth in the Sun Solar System of our universe. This is what some may refer to as the “real” world but in fact this is not true either.

So what is left? It is the soul of man that holds the key to the Garden. Man’s structure was created to be Spirit - Soul – Body and this is an allegorical model for the structure of Eden and the Garden when God put Adam on the earth. The key is man’s soul. In Adam’s case he was given a living soul when he was placed into the Garden, unlike Hominin Man who only had an unenlivened soul. When Adam and Eve transgressed two things happened, first their spirits within them died, and secondly they were excluded from the Garden.

We may think about how these two actions came about whether it was a specific action by God to walk Adam and Eve to the gate and usher them out of the Garden, or was it that he didn’t need to, because the moment their spirits deceased with in them the Garden was closed.

¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:4

¹⁸ Luke 23:43

¹⁹ Genesis 4:16

²⁰ 2Kings 19:12

The soul of man is one of the most perplexing bits of kit he has. The medical fraternity don't understand it, it cannot be seen, nor examined nor analysed and the reason is that it can be enlivened with the spirit from God, or remain unenlivened for the entire period of a person's life. Adam and Eve had their spirit intact then lost it because of their transgression against God. Man today naturally has an unenlivened soul and the expression "born again" refers to the reinstating of man's spirit at the point of when he turns his life around and believes in our Lord God. And here is the answer. The moment mankind is reinstated with his spirit his soul becomes invigorated spiritually and the Kingdom of God opens in front of him. Prepositionally that is not quite correct but it makes the point. The Kingdom of God opens and is within him and upon him – and herein is the identity of the Garden, it is the Kingdom of God on earth that is opened for all mankind that have their full structural compliment of Spirit, Enlivened Soul and Body.

The Kingdom of God cannot be seen, it is mysterious, it is spiritual, it is where our Lord God communes with us, it is where God wants us to walk whilst in this earthy place. Adam and Eve walked in the Kingdom of God when they first appeared on earth and from there God was able to hedge them in against intruders from the terrestrial world. Within the Kingdom of God, *"thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven"* applies to all who walk in it. It is certainly a spiritual place, it is also spatial and it is a secluded place wherein the tree of life is guarded *"by a flaming sword that turns this way and that"*.

Now the difficulty arises when we speak of the Garden in terms of it being the Kingdom of God on earth because it technically could be anywhere on the planet. Indeed there are convocations that suggest it is in the United States of America however there is no consensus for this assertion. The Kingdom of God is not affixed to any specific place; its location might appear to be determined more by where a spiritual person actually is.

With respect to Adam and Eve, it is very likely that their lives were localised in the region we now call the Middle East, and there are many indicators from scripture to support that Jerusalem and its original City of Salem²¹ was the domiciled centre of their lives from the important events that transpired over the thousands of years since their advent. And just to fill that point out a little more, consider God's promise to Abraham and his descendants for the Promised Lands of Canaan, Jacob's dream of a ladder descending from heaven whilst he slept at a place a mere ten miles from Jerusalem that he named Bethel²² and of course the birth place of God's Only Begotten Son and then the place of his ascension to heaven following his crucifixion. All of these, plus many-many more are not coincidental.

We can talk about the abundance of the rivers of living waters that flow from Eden to the Garden and outward to the world. Remember these are phrases couched in spiritual terms and are not specifically physical in the way that science wishes to look at them today. And we can perhaps understand that after God had formed all of the animals to be named by Adam they were free to wander out into the great wide spaces of the planet. We can see that when the Kingdom of God was closed off to Adam and Eve that God's providence was also withdrawn resulting in Adam and Eve eking a food supply from thistles and thorns and eating the grasses of the plains. Gone was the provision of luscious fruits and vegetables readily at hand on an everyday basis²³. (And even this passage is couched in spiritual language.)

²¹ Melchizedek King of Salem: Genesis 14:18, Psalm 76:2, Hebrews 7:1-2

²² Genesis 28:16-19

²³ In spiritual terms we have fruits of the spirit: Galatians 5:16-26

These are all lessons we can learn today. If we continue to ignore (or refuse to teach) God's word from the older scripts then with no hesitation we can expect the full force of John 3:12²⁴ to kick in. A spiritual structure cannot be built without foundations, and remember that our Lord and Saviour is not "just" two thousand years old – he is older than time itself and we need to know the whole story from the Beginnings when God created the heavens and the earth. The lesson here is about understanding the Kingdom of God, why it was lost, how we can find it today and why we should want to.

The truth is within our grasp. Go to it Faithchasers!

Geoff Rooke

Appended Comments:

- A) Eden is referenced as a physical place
Genesis 4:16 - Land of Nod on the East of Eden
2 Kings 19:12 – A place in Mesopotamia

The localised area where Adam and Eve resided within the Kingdom of God was in contrast to being expelled from it into thorns and thistles and eating grasses of the plains. Contrast this to fruit hanging from tree branches, vegetables and everything a person could wish for and we can understand why the Garden became known as a paradise by comparison. It was not The Paradise of God's abode because Adam and Eve were still flesh and blood and in our physical form we are totally excluded from ever entering heaven.

- B) The Tree of Life
This is synonymous with how our Lord and Saviour prepared the way for believers to be reconciled back to God and everlasting life in heaven. The cross of Jesus' crucifixion can be expressed in these terms, the cross representing a tree which is very consistent with the Hebrew language. He became the sacrificial Lamb and sin offering for the sin of mankind and through his physical death and because he himself was sinless he had the power to secure victory over death and hell which was before time the domain of Satan. The Tree of Life therefore becomes the pathway between the Garden and Eden, or expressed differently the pathway between the Kingdom of God and God's heavenly abode. It is worthy to note that the flaming sword and the cherubims are not "keeping" the whole of the Garden; they are keeping only the Tree of Life.

²⁴ Page 2 of this article

