

God Planted a Garden in the East, in Eden; and There He Put the Man He Had Formed

2: 8-14

DIG: Why does God provide this first man with a paradise on earth? Where was it located? Why two trees: the tree of life (Rev 2:7, 22:2 and 14), and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9, 17, 3:6)? What does the name Eden mean? How many rivers flowed into Eden? What were their names? What do we know about them today?

REFLECT: Where are you experiencing a "piece of paradise" in your life right now? When Elohim asks you not to eat from a certain tree in your life, do you obey any better than Adam and Eve? Why or why not? What have you learned from those experiences? How can you help others with the same temptation?

The Bible moves very rapidly from the creation of the universe to the garden of Eden. All of creation had been placed under man's authority, and it was very good (1:31). But a particular region was prepared as a special place where Adam was to make his home. This region is called Eden and it was in the east in the area of Mesopotamia. The way the Hebrew reads it means *planted on the eastern part of Eden* (2:8a). So Eden was a large region. God planted fruit trees of every kind in the garden. The planting was done directly by the LORD God, just as He had formed Adam. The picture is that Adam was created west of Eden and then placed east of it. And there He put the man He had formed (2:8b). This was to be his home during the Dispensation of Innocence. Adam's first knowledge of Elohim was of One who loved him and provided for him.

The root word for Eden is *watering* (Psalm 36:9). It is also called the garden of the LORD (Isaiah 51:3), the garden of God (Ezekiel 28:13; 31:9), and the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). Eden means *a place that is well watered*. Later the Bible says that Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was *well-watered*, like the garden of ADONAI (13:10). Verse 2:8 is a summary of this section, and then 2:9 through 14 goes back and fill in the details.

Like most things that are beautiful, the **garden of Eden** had the potential for **good and for evil**. And the **LORD God** made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground - trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food (2:9a). All kinds of wonderful trees bearing mouth-watering fruit grew in the garden, but He added two trees not found elsewhere, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life was planted in the middle of the garden to promote and preserve life (2:9b). It was obviously desirable in every way and was the source of life itself. If man ate from this tree he would be preserved for all eternity (Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 13:12, 15:4). For example, in the book of Revelation the Lord says to believers in the church at Ephesus: **To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God** (Revelation 2:7). Later in the same book, it is mentioned again; its leaves and fruit are being given to the righteous: **The tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they might have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the City** (Revelation 22:2, 14). But another tree was planted close to the tree of life in the middle of the garden, apparently close to each other to provide for testing in the future.

The second tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9b). Now, for the first time, we have the possibility of evil. Its very name is sinister, producing either good or evil to anyone who eats of its fruit. The Hebrew word for knowledge means *knowledge from experience*. So the fruit of this tree provided the person with *knowledge from experience* of good and evil in the sense of having the power to decide for oneself. But merely knowing good and evil did *not* give the power to choose the good and reject the evil! Therefore, Elohim predicts that ultimately there will be only one result for the one who eats of this fruit: death (2:17; 3:3). This was the tree of death. When we take the steering wheel of our own life, we shut God out of the picture. This is moral mutiny. All Adam and Eve needed to do was to obey ADONAI's word (2:17). Once we reject God's Word and what is best for us, we are left to our own devices. When we take and eat, we suddenly find ourselves on the outside looking in with the LORD. **The rabbis teach that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a vine because no other fruit causes so much misery and distress**. So the two most important trees in the garden were the tree of life, which brought life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which brought death.

The luscious green **garden** in **Eden** would need a great deal of water, probably more than the water canopy could provide (see **Ak - So God Made the Expanse Between the Waters**), therefore, in **2:10** through **14 rivers** are discussed. From **the land** of **Eden** there was a single **river** entering **the garden**. This **river** must have been very large because it **separated into four headwaters** or **rivers**, each having its own name (**2:10**). Two of the **rivers** we know today and two we do not.

The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah. We do not know where this **river** is today, but **the rabbis teach that this was the Nile.** **Havilah** is in central Arabia, east of **Israel (25:18)**. It is known for its very pure **gold**. The **aromatic resin and onyx** mentioned here emphasizes the wealth of **the land** in terms of water and precious stones (**2:11**).

The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush (2:13). This **river** is unknown to us. **The land of Cush** is often associated with Ethiopia, but not always. In this instance, Ethiopia is in Africa, but **the garden of Eden** is described as being in Mesopotamia. So this is probably **the land** of the Cassits, or sometimes spelled Kassits. They were known as the Cosseans and they were located east of Mesopotamia or east of **the Tigris**.

The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur in what is today northern Iraq (**2:14a**). We know of this **river** today.

And the fourth river is the Euphrates (2:14b), which is in ancient Babylonia or modern southern Iraq. We also know this **river** today. Therefore, we have two **rivers** that are known and two that are unknown. If **the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers** marked the northern and southern borders of **the garden**, the other two may have marked the western and eastern borders. But this is just a guess because the two unknown **rivers** were completely obliterated by the Flood, while two were left intact to this very day. But we do know the approximate location of **the garden of Eden**. It was between the **Tigris and Euphrates** Rivers in ancient Mesopotamia, in what is today modern Iraq.