

## Heaven: The Life Beyond

“Keep seeking the things above where Christ is seated...Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” – Paul 60 A.D.

### **Part 2 “The Garden of God—Our First Glimpse of Heaven”**

**Scripture:** Genesis 2.10-12

**Subject:** Could the Garden of Eden have been a prototype of the Heaven to come? Was God giving the Hebrew nation the idea that Heaven would be a restoration of Eden? One wonders if God allowed us to see a picture of what Adam lost so that we would have a better idea of our future home. It is crystal clear that there are striking similarities between the description of Eden and Heaven. The Tree of Life was found in both Paradise and Eden (Genesis 3.24; Revelation 2.7). The existence of man on earth began in the Garden of God according to the Genesis account. Revelation, the last book of the Bible, records the final chapter of man existence on this earth. Between the two books is the continuation of man’s alienation from his Creator. It is clear from Romans 5 that Paul was convinced that the failure in the Garden with Adam was the source of all human failure and suffering. The sin of Adam drove a wedge between God and His only human creations. This spiritual eruption created pain in the whole creation (Romans 8.20). The world as Adam knew it in the Garden was never the same afterwards. A fresh and careful look at Genesis 2 and 3 will enable us to find a sketch of Paradise. It was all the Jewish nation had for centuries for their understanding of the life beyond this one. While the information for the Hebrews was limited at best, it still allowed them to have a mental picture of their future home.

**Survey:** The word paradise is borrowed from the Persians (*pardaysa* or *pairi daeza*). The word meant walled garden or park. The Hebrew word is *pardes*, which is found only three other places in the Old Testament (Song of Solomon 4.13; Ecclesiastes 2.5; Nehemiah 2.8). It is translated as orchard, park, and forest. In the third century BC the Hebrew Old Testament was translated in to Koine (common) Greek. The translators used the word paradise (*paradeisos*). From this time forward the word became synonymous with Heaven. Jesus used the word Paradise when He spoke from the cross to the dying thief (Luke 23.43). Paul referred to Paradise as the third Heaven. Finally, John wrote that the Tree of Life was in the Paradise of God (Revelation 2.7). There have been various theories about the location of Paradise ranging from the center of the earth to an intermediary place lower than Heaven. These theories are far-fetched and riddled with a faulty basis. It is evident that Paradise and Heaven are used these few places to refer to the same place (Revelation 22.2).

**Spotlight:** Someone said, “The older we get, the closer home we get and the more we desire it.” There are some things that we have that are already in Heaven. According to various passages, our treasure, our citizenship, family members, our hope, our name, our inheritance, our rewards, and most important, our Lord are presently in Heaven! There is an analogy of our spiritual journey to Heaven. Jesus compared it to a great feast. “The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son” (Matthew 22.2). Our journey to that great feast began with Adam in the Garden (Romans 5.12, 14; 1 Corinthians 15.22).

**Substance:**

#### **1. Where is the Garden of Eden?**

- A. Some suggest that Eden disappeared from the earth. The theory argues that the Tree of Life was located in the Garden and was relocated to Paradise (Revelation 2.7). This is a stretch of Scripture. The tree in Heaven is a representation of eternal life. It is an eternal reminder of the grace of God that provides salvation and grants to every believer the wonderful gift of eternal life.
- B. So what happened to the Garden? In Genesis 6 there was a universal flood. Peter emphasized the complete destruction of the world, as they knew it at the time. “Through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water” (2 Peter 3.6). Eden was destroyed with the flood. It is impossible to pinpoint its location. The four rivers in Genesis dramatically changed from the flood and the descendants of Noah renamed all the rivers from previously known names.

#### **2. What Are The Similarities of Eden And Heaven?**

- A. The radiant beauty of both is revealed in Scripture. Ezekiel wrote about Eden, the Garden of God (Ezekiel 28.13). The passage is a description and a comparison of Eden and of the opulent lifestyle of the King of Tyre. In Ezekiel’s account, the beautiful cherub, blended in with the beauty of the Garden of God (Ezekiel 28.11-17). The precious stones of Ezekiel (28.13) compare to those of Eden (Genesis 2.12) and those of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21.19-21).
- B. The Jewels of the Garden: (Genesis 2.12; Ezekiel 47.1-12; Revelation 21.18-21).

1. The good gold was abundant. Later, gold would be used to overlay the mercy seat in the Tabernacle where the blood would atone for the sins of Israelites. The street of the New Jerusalem is made of pure gold. The gold is so refined that it reflects the light of God giving a beautiful transparent appearance (Revelation 21.21). Gold was a gift to the Christ child by the Magi (Matthew 2.11). The Magi were seeking the King!
2. Bdellium was also mentioned. It is difficult from the context to determine exactly what bdellium was. In ancient times it was an aromatic resin or gum used for making myrrh. This too, was a gift from the Magi to the Christ child (Matthew 2.11). Myrrh was used as one of the burial spices in ancient times (John 19.40). However, some suggest that the ancient Hebrew word was a reference to the pearl. In Numbers 11.7 the manna from Heaven is described as the color of bdellium. Does this suggest the similarity to the white round pearl? If there is any connection to the two, it is found in Revelation 21.21 where the Gates are made of pearl and the streets are of gold. What we can draw from this is that what was raw in the earth at the time of Eden is perfected in the New Jerusalem. In either case, it was a significant part of the garden.
3. Onyx (chalcedony family; pronounced kal sed nee) stone was later used in the ephod of the priest (Exodus 25.7). Upon the stones were engraved the names of the sons of Israel (Exodus 28.9). Revelation 21.12 states that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the twelve gates. The walls of the city were adorned with precious stones; two of which were chalcedony and sardonyx or onyx.

### 3. What Are The Differences Between Eden and Heaven?

- A. Eden was a temporary place, while Heaven is the permanent home of the believer. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4.18).
- B. Satan infiltrated Eden and the whole race was corrupted by sin. Neither will be part of the New World. "And nothing unclean, and no one who practices abominations and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21.27).
- C. God was present at different times, but did not live in the Garden. Whereas in Heaven, He will be ever present. "And He will dwell among them and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them" (Revelation 21.3).

### 4. Paul Confirmed The Importance Of The Garden, The Events, And The Fall: Romans 5.17-21

- A. Paul, in intricate detail, compiled the doctrine of original sin. The whole foundation of the Christian faith began in the Garden. The fact that Paul formulates this doctrine from the story of the Garden confirms that Paul believed the place was the literal, material and tangible home of the parents of the human family. To suggest that the existence of this Garden was mythical is to also deny the need for redemption. The two cannot be separated.
- B. Paul stated that the entire created order was affected by Adam's fall. In Romans 8.20-22 Paul wrote that the entire creation desires to be free from the corruption, slavery and pain brought about from the cosmic affect of Adam's sin. Paul based the doctrine of redemption on the fact the whole world inherited the sinful nature of Adam. Christ came to redeem man from the curse his sins (Galatians 3.13).

### 5. What Do We Learn From The Garden That Is Pertinent To Our Final Destination?

**Note: Heaven is not a recreation of Eden. Nor was Eden Heaven on earth. Eden was a unique and gorgeous habitat for man on this earth. But Eden was lost. Eden, based on all we know from Scripture, pales in comparison to our future home.**

- A. The word Eden (Hebrew *eden*) means "place of abundant water" (Genesis 13.10). It lay between four great rivers. The water nourished the plush and robust garden. Rivers are to the earth what blood vessels are to the body. They each are necessary for life. The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God (Revelation 22.1-2). This is a constant reminder of the life sustaining power of water, man's greatest physical need. The trees, which will bear twelve kinds of fruit, are along the banks of the river in the middle of the street. The leaves have healing powers.
- B. The tree's power came only from the One who planted it. God alone grants to whom He chooses to eat of the fruit (see Revelation 2.7).
- C. The tree, located probably in the very center of the garden along side of the tree of knowledge, conveys an eternal message of life (John 1.4a; 17.3; 1 John 1.1-2).
- D. The fruit of the tree had no inherent power of its own. Rather it's power gave the quality of life that only God could grant (Proverbs 3.18; 11.30; 13.12; 15.4).