

## Imagining The Garden Of Eden (Part 6)

The River of Eden

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Most of us coming from this well-watered land in large part take rivers and streams for granted. America has several very large river systems, some among the largest on the face of the earth like the Mississippi River. There are others like the Colorado River, Hudson River, Ohio River, Columbia River, Missouri River, Arkansas River, and so on. We could probably name several more if we put our heads together. And we have hundreds of smaller rivers, and countless streams, creeks, rills, and brooks that dance across this land, except for our desert southwest where there is hardly any streams to speak of. Even out west, there are rivers and streams, just not as many as areas further north and east, and especially during a rainy season. This land is *blessed* with water.

However, the ancient Israelites did not take rivers and streams for granted, especially during the several hundred years they dwelt in the Promised Land. Of course, they were familiar with Egypt, which had the Nile, a huge river system that played a large part in their lives.

But the land of Israel, as we already know, is a land of few rivers and streams. We all know the Jordan River that is the eastern border of the land. And it has a couple of tributaries like the River Jezreel. There is also the River Kishon, in the north of Israel, which runs to the northwest from the upper portion of the valley of Jezreel alongside Mount Carmel, and empties into the Mediterranean Sea.

But, there are other rivers too, like the Sorek, the Arnon, the Guvrine, the Aijalon, the Yarkon, and the Hadera. Most, or all of those, you are not familiar with. They may be streams in the rainy season, but otherwise are dry wadis in part or completely so for the remainder of the year. Constant full-flowing rivers are a rarity in Israel.

If you will remember Moses gave Deuteronomy just before Israel went into the land, so he spends the whole book reiterating certain very important points. In Deuteronomy 11 he points out the fact that Israel does not have rivers in abundance.

**Deuteronomy 11:10-12** For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden. [It is not that easy in this land where you are going to go.] But the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land

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for which the LoORD your God cares [keep this in the back of your mind]; the eyes of the LoORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

Now, what was God telling Israel about this land that they were going in to possess? First of all it is not at all like Egypt from where they came from. As mentioned above, Egypt has the Nile River with thousands of irrigation ditches that came off the Nile. Of course the Nile, at that time before the modern dam construction, would flood every year. And water from the upper Nile region (Ethiopia) would bring nutrient rich silt mud down to Egypt (northward) and be deposited on their fields as their soil amendment for the year. That was their planting bed for the new year. And so, Egypt, even though a desert land, was the breadbasket of that portion of the world. The Nile Valley produced abundantly.

As it says in Deuteronomy 11, they watered things by foot. Evidently what they meant was their various contraptions opened and shut by their feet allowing or not allowing the water to the fields. It means irrigation. Also, it might be that they used some sort of mechanism that was pedaled by foot bringing the water up out of the river, and then dumping it into the ditches. It depends on the various regions, and uses.

But, the Promised Land was going to be very different. Israel did not have a huge river like the Nile. It had to depend upon rainfall. And (of course) the rainfall depended upon God sending it. And even the springs that were found in the land of Israel were highly dependent upon the yearly rainfall.

Most of the springs discovered and used by the children of Israel were ones like wells. The rainfall that fell on the eastward slopes of the mountains seeped into the mountain rock formations, acting as reservoirs, and these tended to seep through the mountain to the western slopes, emerging as springs. Often the springs dried up in times of drought. So the people of Israel were totally dependent upon God to provide the rainfall necessary for their survival—their crop land, and their grazing land, and their springs.

This means that rivers, which are so rare in Israel, took on a special meaning to the Israelites. To them, rivers were a source of life in a dry and dusty land. And so, rivers and streams became a symbol of life itself—a symbol of life, growth, abundance, and blessing from God.

Let us see this in Psalm 1. Of course, this is our hymn, "Blessed and Happy is the Man."

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**Psalm 1:1-2** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LoORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.

Notice here, that we are talking about a righteous man who delights in God's law. If we had read further in Deuteronomy 11, we would have found where God told them that His giving them their rain depended upon their obedience. "If you do right, I will send the rain. If you do wrong, I will not send the rain. You will be parched."

**Psalm 1:3** He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

Verse 3 compares this righteous man to a tree planted, or growing, beside a river. He is planted. Understand the idea of planting too. It is a metaphor for permanence. You put down roots. You are secure. You are not going to be moved. You are not migrating around. You are planted = stability. He is planted right next to a life- and prosperity-giving source of water—a river.

While this is in our minds, turn to Jeremiah 17 and get a bit of reinforcement. We normally come here for verse 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," but I am going to the section just ahead of that. Notice the contrast, and how it is put.

**Jeremiah 17:5-8** Thus says the LoORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength [like humanists], whose heart departs from the LoORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert [hardly like a tree beside a river], and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LoORD [the other side, now], and whose hope is the LoORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.

So, here we see these same figures coming out. When you are planted beside a source of water like a river, you have access to this life-giving substance, which gives you life

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itself, and provides for growth; you then produce fruit, which brings you prosperity. This is a great situation to be in. And it all comes from trusting in God, and having one's hope in the Lord.

We can see, here, the contrast between these two situations: One is parched, dry, and lifeless, while the other is full of life, and prosperity. It is unmentioned, but intimated that he has fellowship with God and others of like minds, while the cursed man is found apart from anyone else—in an uninhabited wilderness. He is alone. It is a sad situation on the one hand, while a very joyous and desirable situation on the other.

What I have shown you here is the first way the Israelites looked at rivers, as a source of life, and prosperity.

But, they were also esteemed in two other significant ways. The second is that they served as boundaries just like they oftentimes do today. As a bit of trivia, how many states have the Mississippi River as one or part of one of its borders? There are ten states all the way down from Minnesota and Wisconsin to Mississippi and Louisiana (Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Arkansas). And in ancient times, rivers served the same thing—boundaries between nations. They often separated peoples from one another. And everybody knew that if you crossed the river, you were in enemy (or someone else's) territory. So, you had better be careful.

Did you know that the land of Israel has its borders defined by water, particularly rivers? Of course, we have the Mediterranean Sea to the west, but did you know that the whole land is Israel as defined in Numbers 34:12 delineate the Jordan as the eastern border? But even that was right away changed because when Israel came into the land, Reuben, Gad, and the eastern half of Manasseh took land on the east side of the Jordan River. But, God had originally wanted the Jordan River to be the eastern border. Those areas that they occupied originally of Bashan, Gilead, and Golan, were often fought over by Ammon, Moab, and Syria.

Turn to Genesis 15. Here we will see how God delineated the boundaries of the promise to Abraham—the area that God planned to give to his descendants.

**Genesis 15:18** On the same day the LoORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.

Now most people think that the River of Egypt would be the Nile, which is incorrect. This

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is actually seen on some maps as The Brook of Egypt. If you notice in the back of your Bible, you might find a map that shows Beersheba, and you look west of it (left) and a bit south, you will find a little wadi that is sometimes labeled as that brook of Egypt. It is all the way from this wadi to the Euphrates. That is a long ways. And you know Israel never once controlled all of that territory, not even in the days of David and Solomon.

If you were going to go all the way to the source of the Euphrates, you would end up in eastern Turkey. That is the whole of the land east of the Mediterranean Sea, from the border of Egypt, all the way up into Turkey, encompassing parts of Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Iraq—a huge land. But, Israel never held all of this. And so, what we have to assume, then, is that these borders have millennial implications, that when Israel comes back into the land, they are going to have this whole territory from the brook of Egypt all the way up to the banks of the Euphrates river.

Nevertheless, the point is that the boundaries are rivers on the north, and the south, and southeast.

That was the second point. The first was life and prosperity, and the second was borders. And now, the third point, which I think is most interesting, is an intriguing use of rivers and streams in Scripture and their association with contact between God and man.

Turn to Genesis 32. Charles in today's sermonette talking about Jacob and Esau, well this occurred here at about the same time, just before Jacob was about to meet Esau again.

**Genesis 32:22** And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

Now the ford of Jabbok is a place to ford the River Jabbok. Looking on a map, you will find this up in the northeast section of the land of Israel, where Jacob was coming back from Mesopotamia. So, he would be going southwest from Mesopotamia back into the Promised Land. You would find this on your map near a place called Penuel.

So, he is crossing over the ford of Jabbok.

**Genesis 32:23-24** He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

We will not go into the rest of this, but we know that this was the pre-Incarnate Christ, and they wrestled all night, and Jacob would not let go unless Christ gave him a blessing. And finally, He did. But to mark the occasion, he ended up being crippled in his hip (being out of joint) for the rest of his life.

But the significant part for today is that he had an encounter with God at this point. And this encounter is representative of Jacob's full conversion. You could almost call it a baptism, here. If you will remember, he had just transported his family across the river, which is similar to what his descendants would do in crossing the Red Sea. And we found that in I Corinthians 10, Paul calls that a type of baptism when Israel crossed the Red Sea. Well, this was the night before Jacob, himself, was going to go over that river, and in a sense, you could say, this was a sign of his conversion.

And of course, this is signified, this change in status, in God changing his name from Jacob to Israel. He went from being a heel-catcher to one who prevails with God. So, he went from being ignoble, to being noble; from being a deceiver, to being one who has a relationship with God.

And we see that the river perhaps symbolizes Jacob's growth and his new spiritual life with God and Christ. We always have to remember that one of the more profound symbols of water is that of God's Spirit. And so now, Jacob, having gone through this encounter with Christ, has a new spiritual life. Return now to verse 30.

**Genesis 32:30-31** And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

Most of you have heard my dad talk about, "Do You See God?" Well, Jacob saw God. He finally "saw" God. He finally had a grip on Him (as it were). He finally had a true understanding of God, and his life was preserved.

What is the ultimate of one's life being preserved? Eternal life with God, is it not? So, it seems to me that what we have here is, in a sense, a spiritual birth where finally Jacob saw God for what He was, and he, at that point, had been given eternal life. He had been given God's seal of approval. It is very interesting that this happened, here, beside the river.

This is not the only one, though. Please turn to II Kings 2. This is the story of Elijah

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turning over his authority as prophet to Elisha.

**II Kings 2:1** And it came to pass, when the LoORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

And then they go to various places.

**II Kings 2:6-8** Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, for the LoORD has sent me on to the Jordan [Now, we are going to the river]." But he said, "As the LoORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!" So the two of them went on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

Here we have a very similar thing happening, again. Jacob crossed over the brook Jabbok. In this case, Elijah and Elisha crossed over on dry land, very much like what happened at the Red Sea, and what happened at the Jordan, again, when the children of Israel came into the land. So we have, again, a type of ritual baptism of a sort.

**II Kings 2:11** Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

In this particular incident we have the presence of God in the chariot and whirlwind. Again, we have water, and a crossing over the water in this symbolic baptism type of thing, and we also have the passing on of a baton from Elijah to Elisha—but passing over what? What did he pass on? Spiritual authority. He passed on the job of prophet from one to the other. And then, we also have the presence of God Himself.

So, here we have several of these meanings of river as a symbol, coming together. There is also the idea of a boundary that comes in here too. It is not quite the same type of boundary like we noticed up above, as the border of the land. Obviously the Jordan River was the border of the land here, but the boundary is actually what happens between Elijah and Elisha. The boundary is that Elijah could go no farther as God's prophet. He had reached the "boundary" if you will—the end of his work. And then, we have on the other hand the beginning of Elisha's work. This was a boundary to him too,

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except that he was just crossing into his at his beginning.

If you were to go down a few more verses you would see that Elisha took the mantle that he had been given and did the same thing, and went back across into the land. And we know from the story here that God gave him a double measure of the spirit, and he ended up doing quite a few more miracles than even Elijah had done.

So, we have this passing of God's Spirit in order to do the work, from one man to another, and one crosses over the boundary as an end, while the other crosses back over as a new beginning.

And then, Of course, we have water as God's Spirit. We also have the fact that in this case, it was doubled, that God's power was going to be shown even more fully in Elisha, than it was in Elijah. Elijah's ministry had been just fantastic, I mean, calling fire down from heaven on Mount Carmel was pretty fantastic; running to beat the rain ahead of King Ahab was pretty fantastic; going on the angel's food for 40 days into the wilderness was pretty fantastic; seeing those miracles on Mount Sinai—the wind, fire, and earthquake—was pretty fantastic.

But on the other hand, Elisha resurrected people. I mean he had quite the ministry—the healing of Naaman's leprosy, and that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, we can look at Elijah's ministry as being "wow" spectacular, but we see Elisha's ministry toward people in a greater way. He was the one who helped out the lady with her son; Elisha's ministry was more personal toward the people. Elijah was mostly concerned with King Ahab and Jezebel. But Elisha was more with the people. It is just one of those little things; a difference in the way God used His Spirit in them.

But we have these same things happening that occur at a river location. So then, we actually see God at work through His Spirit in this picture.

**Ezekiel 1:1** Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.

The visions of God he saw here were actually *visions of God*. These were not visions *from* God, but he was seeing God on His portable throne—the wheels within wheels, and the four cherubim, and all the different things.

Ezekiel was actually seeing God in this form on His portable throne, He was by the river,

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again; and it was also his commission, because if we would go down further through the context into chapter 2, we would find that just as he was seeing all this, God gave him his commission to be a prophet. And so we also see that border, again, as in Elisha being given his prophetic credentials to go out and use His Spirit to be His prophet. Once again, we see the presence of God, we see a river, we see God's Spirit being given, or used to His work.

**Daniel 10:2-6** In those days I, Daniel, was mourning [fasting] three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

So, here again, we have Daniel, also beside a great river, and he sees the pre-Incarnate Christ just like happened before with Jacob; and with Ezekiel had seen God; and with Elisha, and Elijah had seen the chariot of fire.

So, I should also mention here that this is just before Daniel was given the longest continuous prophecy recorded in the Old Testament, the prophecy of the kings of the North and South, which continues in chapter 10 through a portion of chapter 12. He is given a significant prophecy, here. In a way, you can say we can see how God would use His Spirit to bring these things to pass, and it is very interesting here that it was by that great River Tigris, a significant river, and (probably named for) one of the rivers of Eden.

Again, we see here that rivers serve as reminders of these recurring ideas of life, spirit, power, and boundaries, and most importantly a meeting place of the physical and spiritual—between God and man. There are similarities in the New Testament where Jesus was baptized, the voice came out from heaven that said, "This is My Beloved Son...," and that happened at the Jordan River.

There was also one time in the life of Paul where it is mentioned at Philippi, they went down to the river to pray, because that is where the believers went in that city.

So, this idea keeps going through, maybe not as strongly as in the Old Testament, but it

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is there—going to a river to be closer to God because of the idea of flowing water and God's Spirit. It is very interesting, is it not? I think it is. It seems intriguing to me.

In the time we have left, today, we will be looking into the rivers of Eden, because we are continuing to imagine the Garden of Eden. And please remember as I have told you before, we need to be careful about using our imaginations because they can be easily misused. But if we keep it under the control of the Scriptures, the imagination can be a useful tool in Bible study in coming to a deeper understanding of God's Word.

Last time we spent a lot of time on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Remember, that was my introduction, and we also tried to understand the term "eastward in Eden," meaning that it was in the eastern portion of a region named Eden. And by the end of the sermon, we had narrowed down the location of Eden to the general area of Israel, and the Garden of Eden to the perpetual holy place of Jerusalem, particularly the vicinity of the temple mount.

This only makes sense to my mind since the entire Bible centers on this very area from beginning to end. From Genesis to Revelation it is all about Israel, the Promised Land, Jerusalem, and the Temple, coming in closer and closer to that specific area.

**Genesis 2:8-9** The LoORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LoORD 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.

We need to consider briefly the first portion of verse 9, "And out of the ground the LoORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."

Some commentators take this phrase as a reiteration of that which occurred on the third day of the re-creation. If you were to go back to Genesis 1, you would see between verses 11-13 that God created the herbs of the field and trees on that day, after dividing the waters from the land. But the commentators think that this is only a flashback to that.

But, in the narrative, since a flashback disturbs the flow—you have to stop, and go back. There is no indication in this narrative that there is any disturbance. It moves along smoothly from one thing to the next. The LoORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LoORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. It is just one thing

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after another, bang-bang-bang, this is what happened, and action sentences—God planted, God put, God made the things that He did.

Moses is speaking about the Garden of Eden. This is his subject in this chapter beginning in verse 4. He is talking about the Garden of Eden and the things that happened in it, just after the creation of mankind. So, this is really an explanation of what God did next. It is in order. It is not a flashback.

He planted the Garden, and put the man there, and then He caused the trees to grow. Remember, I already showed you earlier that He purposely did this so that Adam could see God at work, and learn the lessons that come from that; also the proof that this was the Creator, a Person he needed to honor, respect, and worship.

I do not want to go into that any further except in how these things are described. They are trees grown that were pleasant to the sight, and good for food. We might look at trees, and think, "My, that is an ugly tree." Or, "What does that ever do? It is just a tree that is there. It seems to have no use. It is almost like a weed."

I remember back when I was a kid, we had a Mimosa tree in our front yard. I do not know how it got there, but it grew there right in front of Alison and Diane's bedroom window, and it was a nice looking tree, I thought. It had really interesting pink puff-ball flowers, and was beautiful, and smelled good too. Well, I had a friend who lived catty-corner to us name Louie. And Louie was from Puerto Rico. And I mentioned to Louie once how I thought it was a neat tree. And he gave me this look, and said, "Back in Puerto Rico, those things are weeds, man!" What good is a Mimosa tree except for looking pretty when it blooms?

Well, God does not look at it that way. He made trees that are pleasant to the sight, and (as well as) good for food. Evidently, the trees that God chose for the Garden of Eden had both qualities. There could have been some that were one or the other, but is not how it is worded.

Now, this is paradise, right? The Garden of Eden—is that not supposed to be paradise? So, we take this idea for granted, that God would put into the Garden trees that were beautiful to look upon, and functional—meaning that they produced something useful. But, we cannot just blithely go on, because these phrases were put in there for a purpose.

What we see is a part of the mind of God—the character of God—coming out in the trees that He put into the Garden. Is it not interesting that it does *not* say, "God planted

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these trees in the garden to be good for food, and pleasant for the sight." He said rather, "*Pleasant to the sight, and good for food!*" Is that not interesting that the first thing He mentions is that they were beautiful trees. He mentions the aesthetic quality before the functional quality. That is an interesting point to think about.

**Isaiah 33:15-17** He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil: He will dwell on high; his place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure. Your eyes will see the King in His beauty [the part I want you to notice]; they will see the land that is very far off.

I wanted verse 17, but I also wanted to see from verses 15 and 16, that this was a righteous man, kind of like Psalm 15, "Who will dwell on Your holy hill? The one who refuses the bribes, and who speaks uprightly." This man of Isaiah 33 is of the same caliber. And what does he get as part of his reward? First, he is secure. That is the one that is added. It says here that he will be given bread—food—God will provide. And secondly, he will see the beauty in God. He will see the King in His beauty.

So again, we have these two ideas that started back there in Genesis 2, coming out in this prophecy, that a righteous man will be given what he needs, and he will see beauty, specifically God Himself in His beauty.

So these two ideas of beauty and functionality—or even better, providence—come out right away in Genesis 2 that God will provide these two things—our needs, and beauty. (I will just mention, too, about the subject of some of the Psalms about the beauty of holiness. And we just saw the beauty of the King.) I almost get the sense, here in Genesis 2, that the providential part of this in terms of good for food, are physical needs that are fulfilled for us. And the beauty is the spiritual, aesthetic, mental, and emotional needs, that other part of our lives. And what does he mention first? The spiritual. He wants us to see the beauty of the trees, which is a mental thing—an attitude—a perspective. And then he also wants us to see that they are functional as well, that they will give us for what we need for our physical sustenance.

So, we see God's character coming out here in this passage. He provides for both sides of man in his whole being—aesthetically, spiritually, and physically.

It is interesting that right after He says this, that He made these trees to grow up in the

Garden to give beauty and to give food, He mentions two trees—the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And the ideas of beauty and providence continue in them, because both of them were beautiful to look upon, and both produced fruit. But what is interesting is that God opened the way to one, and shut the way to the other. He forbade it.

Though He did not say it specifically in verse 17 that the Tree of Life was open to them, He did not close it off to them either. But, He specifically told them *not* to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, even though that tree was also beautiful, and good for food. Do you know how I know it says that? Turn to Genesis 3. This is right after Satan had said his bit.

**Genesis 3:6** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Is that not interesting? This Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is described in the same way here in chapter 3 as in chapter 2, verse 9.

Notice the first two elements of Eve's decision included the two points included in Genesis 2:9. She saw, first of all, that it was a tree good for food; that the fruits hanging from the bough of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were edible, and looked delicious. There is nothing wrong with that. God had put those trees in the Garden of Eden specifically for that purpose, except for that fact that God had forbidden them to take of *this one tree*.

The second thing she factored in when she was making this decision was that it was pleasant to the eyes. And is that not what God had done? He had created these trees in the Garden to be pleasant to the sight.

So, she saw something good; something that God had originally created in this tree, and so far, it was okay, because God would expect that reaction. But it is the next one that really tripped her up. And the reason why it is this one in particular that must be the bad one is because it is not named in the second chapter. God did not put this quality into this tree. God had good for food, and pleasant to the eyes in this tree, but she added one that was not there—one that Satan had influenced—a tree desirable to make one wise. That is the deception that Satan put into her mind.

If you go back and read it, he said, "If you eat of the fruit of this tree, then your eyes will

be opened, and you will be like God"—meaning, you will be wise; strong, and powerful like God. You will be able to make these choices like God does. You will be able to create your own things, and go your own way of life. His deception worked, because she latched onto that. "Wow! Three for one! It is good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and man am I going to be smart! I am going to be just like God if I eat of this tree." But, that came back to bite her and her husband, because it was not there. It had not been created that way in that tree.

Think about it—you cannot eat a fruit and know everything. When she ate that fruit, did she know everything? What happened when she ate that fruit? The only thing that happened is that she sinned. Why? Because God had forbidden them to eat of it. And it was sin that changed the equation. I do not think that there was anything inherent in that fruit that changed anything. It was just a tree bearing fruit, but it was a tree that God said not to eat from.

And as soon as they ate from it, it did what God had created for it to do—it nourished them. It was beautiful and tasty. But it also was a symbol of their sin and is what changed things, because immediately sin changed the relationship between them and God—and everything else too, because now they began to see things in an entirely different manner, because they had contravened God. Everything was different once they had disobeyed.

I do not want to go into this too much, but I need to show you, here, that part of what Eve did she cannot quite be faulted for, because God had put those qualities into the fruit and the tree—that it was good for good, and pretty. It was desirable and beautiful. But already, she was changing the way she was looking at those particular qualities that God had created in them, because she was starting to look at them, as the sin was forming in her mind, as she was making these decisions, as she was formulating what she was going to do. And so, what she did was pervert these wonderful creations of God, meaning that they were good for food, and beautiful to behold, she was perverting all that.

So what we see here is that among other things, what happened was, first of all, she exploited God's providence. And the way that she did that was that she ate something that although provided had been forbidden. And the second thing was that there was a perversion of beauty.

So there was as perversion or exploitation of both of these qualities that God had created that were good. And we see that all over the earth in one form or another that God has made this earth to be good, but everything man does is full of sin, and it

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perverts those good things into very selfish and very wrong ends. And that is why Paul later says in Romans that the creation groans for the manifestation of the sons of God. The creation does not like the fact that it is being misused. I am not saying that the creation has this ability to have these qualities, but Paul anthropomorphizes this idea of the creation groaning in anticipation of life as God had originally created it. And things will eventually go back. We have prophecies that say that in the Millennium things are going to change. The lion will dwell with the lamb, and that sort of thing.

But, man has perverted all of that, and it started with Eve. So, these two great blessings, both of which are a part of God's character that was imprinted upon creation—providence and beauty—became a matter of corrupt, changeable, and individual perspective, having been stripped in the mind of mankind of their Godly purity and eternal quality.

So, it happened, and it became very evident very quickly that humanity began using God's providence for its own selfish ends, and employing beauty not to glorify God but to work iniquity and take advantage over others.

Just think of it. You have a beautiful woman in an advertisement—that is using beauty to take advantage of others, to get something for self. Why do you think that they do it? Because it works.

On the other hand, you have the bounty of the earth being misused, being traded for money to make weapons, to kill other people. And mankind does that to all that He provided for us. We take what God provides out of the goodness of His heart, for our sustenance, and we misuse it somehow for our own selfish ends. So mankind has been grasping after goods, and abusing beauty ever since.

**Genesis 2:10-14** Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. The name of the third river is Hiddekel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates.

It intrigues me that Moses uses so much ink on this river and its four river heads. Heretofore, everything has been very concise, with very few words, and the meaning crammed into it. But suddenly, we have five verses in which he describes this river, and

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its four streams it splits into. Why? Why does he take so much time on these rivers? God says we are to live by every word, so there must be some meaning behind all this. These rivers must be important somehow.

Now, to most commentators, what first comes to mind is that these rivers tell us where Eden is.

And this is how almost all commentaries approach this. "Well, Pishon is here. And, it is like this particular river's name in this particular part of the world. And, obviously the Tigris and the Euphrates we know those, and so all we need to do is figure out Pishon and Gihon. And, then we will have this flashing red arrow pointing to where Eden is." And so they scour the geography of the whole world trying to figure out where Eden was.

But, I do not think that this is the case of the matter, because Moses lived more than 1000 years after the flood. He was just as much post-Flood as we are. He was a whole millennia removed from the event and the time before the Flood. Shem had been dead for quite a while. Abraham was dead. For that matter, Jacob was dead, Joseph was dead. There was no physical connection back to that time anymore. Why would Moses be trying to tell us where it is, then, using apparent post-Flood geography? It seems to me more like he is talking about pre-Flood geography; how it was then, and trying to, maybe, give some indication where it would be now. But, I do not think that was his first reason for giving us this information.

And you cannot find this on any map, because if you do use any kind of topography of the earth now, or linguistics to try to figure out by the names where these places are, you do not get anywhere.

So, most commentators say, "Well, since we cannot find out where they were, and we probably never will, either, this Eden and the Garden must be mythological. It is simply the made-up geography of a primitive superstitious people. It is like the epic of Gilgamesh, or something similar. It is not based in reality. It is just a myth."

Commentator Adam Clarke summarizes, *All Man's Suppositions on the Location of the Garden of Eden*,

It would astonish an ordinary reader who would be obliged to consult different commentators and critics on the situation of the terrestrial paradise to see the vast variety of opinions by which they are divided. Some place it in the third heaven, while other in the fourth [and I have no idea what a fourth

heaven is]. Some within the orbit of the moon, while others in the moon itself. Some put it in the middle regions of the air, or beyond the earth's attraction. Some on the earth, while others under the earth, and others still within the earth. Some have fixed it at the north pole, others at the south, some in Tartary, and some in China, some on the border of the Ganges, some in the island of Ceylon [Sri Lanka], some in Armenia, others in Africa under the equator, some in Mesopotamia, others in Syria, Persia, Arabia, Babylon, Assyria, and in Palestine. Some have condescended to place it in Europe, while others contend it either exists not, or is invisible, or is merely of a spiritual nature, and that the whole account is to be spiritually understood. That there was such a place once there is no reason to doubt the description given by Moses is too particular and circumstantial to be capable of being understood in any spiritual or allegorical way.

And then, he immediately concludes that Eden was in Armenia!

I have to admit, that if we were going to try to find a place other than Jerusalem where the Garden of Eden might have been, I would have say that Armenia would be at the top of my list too, because if we are going to look at post-Flood geography, the sources of the Tigris and the Euphrates are in eastern Turkey, and Armenia. And, the other two rivers—Pishon and Gihon—could be squeezed to fit the description in the rivers now known as the Cyrus and Araxes, which are also found in that region.

But, we always have to go back and remember that Moses is describing pre-Flood geography, so any use of modern topographic maps and linguistics is only mere guesswork.

Instead, I believe his description is trying to point us to a certain direction. Remember, we are talking about rivers. And remember also what all the symbols of rivers can mean—life, growth, prosperity, regional borders, as well as a meeting place, or contact place with God. I believe that is what we are seeing here. We are seeing some of this symbolism come out. It is also interesting to read or discover what these names mean.

Pishon means "full flowing." Think of this in terms of God's Spirit. And also in terms of Jesus Christ telling us that out of His belly will flow rivers of living water. Gihon, means "bursting forth," or "gushing." This is another idea of abundant jostling water. Hiddekel means, "darting," "arrow-like," or "swift," which are more pictures of much moving water with speed and power. However, Euphrates is the only one that does not mean much like the others do. Euphrates means, "sweet." Evidently, the waters of the Euphrates is

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more refreshing and pleasant to the palate; tasty. But this still goes along with the idea of God's Spirit.

Not only is it bursting forth, full flowing, and swift to do God's work, but it is also sweet and palatable. It is something that tastes good!

**Genesis 2:10** Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

The sense of this is that the river arose somewhere in central Eden. We do not know where that was. And then it went on into the eastern portion of Eden where the Garden was situated. The river probably flowed through the Garden. And when it emerged on the other side, it divided into four streams that went their separate ways; we have their names here.

This is a picture of life, or God's Spirit going through the Garden, and then from there (because that is where God lives) it splits up going to the four corners of the globe. This water, then, is not only able to nourish and water the garden, but it is also able to water the rest of the earth; not limited to that small area. So it will, then, work its way out.

Remember we only had Adam and Eve at this point. Not even Eve yet, actually. So, there was no need to go beyond the borders of the Garden. But God had already planned for that, and made these rivers to go out and encompass the whole earth. So, it was not always to be localized, but to encompass the whole earth.

**Psalm 65:9-10** You [God] visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; You provide their grain, for so You have prepared it. You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth.

This water comes from God, it flows out from Him, and it provides life and growth over the whole earth, it says. There are several others that say very much the same thing.

Please turn to Ezekiel 47. This is the millennial temple. I want you to see that we have a similar thing happening. Not only did we have this at creation, but we are going to see it in the Millennium.

**Ezekiel 47:1, 3-12** Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and

there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. . . . And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. It shall be that fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine."

And then in Revelation 22, we see that this same idea continues on into the next age.

**Revelation 22:1-2** And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

River of water of life, said explicitly. So, what we have here is a very evident correspondence between the Garden of Eden with its river, where God dwelled after creation. We also have the place of Melchizedek in Salem. We then have the holy city,

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and the house of the Lord, and the times of David and Solomon, as well as Gihon Spring being the place of his anointing, as well as the source for the water for use in the Temple.

We have Jesus' living waters proclamation in John 7, where the waters of Gihon Spring were the ones that He was alluding to when He said, "Out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water." We then come to the Millennium with the millennial temple shown by Ezekiel with a river flowing to the east healing everything it touched. And then we, of course, have New Jerusalem in the following age. And the waters of the river of life goes out healing the nations.

They all point to the area of Jerusalem as the location. It is the central focus of God's work on the earth, and God does things the same way all the time. It is part of His pattern. And I think that is why Moses took such a long time to get us to understand the river with its four branches and the names for them, which then proceeds to the far reaches of the four corners of the earth.

**Psalm 46:4-5** There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the [dwelling place] tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

While Jerusalem is quite dry these days, lacking that river and all these streams of living water, it will one day be made again like the Garden of Eden in the Millennium so that out from Jerusalem will go God's Word and His Spirit to restore mankind to oneness with Him.