

First Things
Genesis 2:8-17
“The God of the Garden”

1. **MAN WAS NOT DEPRIVED BY GOD**
 - A. The love the garden reveals
 - B. The life the garden reflects
2. **MAN WAS NOT DECEIVED BY GOD**
 - A. God revealed the possibility of sin
 - B. God revealed the peril of sin
3. **MAN WAS NOT DESERTED BY GOD**
 - A. The tree that ruined our lives
 - B. The tree that restores our lives

1. For years, true believers and skeptics alike have been searching for the Garden of Eden. Though described in some detail in Genesis 2, the actual location has been a long-standing debate.
2. I found an interesting websiteⁱ this week that listed several places that are believed by some to be the original location of the Garden of Eden.
3. Believe it or not, one of those places is Jackson County, MO. Apparently, some members of the Mormon church, based on a teaching by their founder, Joseph Smith, believe the garden was originally located near the city of Independence, MO.
4. In his book on Genesis, R. Kent Hughes tells of a British general named Charles George Gordon, who was a devout student of the Bible. He set the location of the garden on an island in the Indian Ocean, called Praslin Island.
5. One British officer who served with the general, and was familiar with the island said, “Whether...Gordon was right or wrong, you must admit that Eden should have been there.”ⁱⁱ
6. As we look at the actual biblical account of the Garden of Eden, I believe the Holy Spirit would have us to focus more on *who* planted the garden, rather than on *where* it was planted.
7. Genesis 2:8 says, “*And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.*”
8. Man’s first home, provided for him by the very God who formed him, speaks to us about the goodness of God, and points us to all He has done for us in His grace.
9. Man can never complain that God has not done enough for him. The Garden of Eden points us to the abundant provision of God, not just for the first man, but for all mankind.

10. Think about this with me as we look at this text. First of all, we see here that:

I. MAN WAS NOT DEPRIVED BY GOD

1. There are many people in the world who have an idea of God, and an image of Him as the great spoiler of fun.

2. To many, God is the cosmic killjoy, who wants to withhold from man anything that is pleasurable, enjoyable, or delightful.

3. There is a theology that was started by Satan himself, and is still spread today. It paints God as a giant prude, who stands against any and all forms of happiness.

4. Opposite of this heresy is what is taught in the Scriptures. Psalm 16:11 says of God, *"...in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."*

5. In the description of the Garden of Eden, we are reminded that God has not deprived man of joy. In fact, the home he prepared for Adam was one full of pleasure.

6. Think about the Garden of Eden with me, and consider:

A. The love the garden reveals

1. Look at our text, and notice how the writer describes the garden God planted for Adam. Verse 9 says, *"And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil."*

2. The verses following this describe the land of the garden as extremely fertile, with gold, precious stones, and other resources.

3. In *Paradise Lost*, the poet, John Milton, describes Eden this way:

*"In narrow room, nature's whole wealth, yeah more,
A heaven on earth; for blissful Paradise
Of God the garden was, by him in th'east
Of Eden planted..."ⁱⁱⁱ*

4. The meaning of the Hebrew word for "Eden" is delight. One writer described the garden as containing everything in the way of both "beauty" and "utility".^{iv}

5. In other words, everything Adam needed to both live life and enjoy it, were given to Him by God when He placed him into the Garden of Eden.
6. Again, we are reminded that the Lord God is no distant, disconnected Creator. Man is not just another of His projects.
7. God loves man. His love for Adam is seen in this garden He created for Him.
8. His love is no less true today than it was on that first day. In fact, we know that *"...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16)
9. God gave Adam a garden, *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8)
10. Considering the fact that man was in no way deprived by God, think with me not only about the love the garden reveals, but think also about:

B. The life the garden reflects

1. I mentioned earlier Milton's classic work, *Paradise Lost*. There is a sense in which this beautiful garden is no longer available to man.
2. We know that this paradise was lost. However, there is another sense in which this paradise can be regained.
3. There is in the life that Adam enjoyed in Eden, a reflection of the life we can enjoy when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.
4. Think about it. In the garden, Adam's life was one of *provision from God*. God gave Him what He needed, and sustained Him completely.
5. In John 6:35, Jesus said, *"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."*
6. Adam's life in the garden was a life of *purpose for God*. God put Him in the garden with the command to *"...dress it and to keep it."* (2:15)
7. In John 12:26 Jesus described the purpose He gives to the lives of those who follow Him. He said, *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."*
8. Adam's life in the garden was also one of *proximity to God*. Later in Genesis 3, we are told that God would come down and walk in the garden with Adam and Eve. They enjoyed closeness, fellowship, and communion with their Creator.

9. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”*

10. I hope you can see some resemblance, some reflection of your relationship with Christ in the picture that is painted of Adam’s first dwelling.

11. The truth we draw from this description of Eden is that God has not been stingy and selfish in His dealings with us. No, in Christ, He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings.

12. Looking at Eden, we are reminded that *man was not deprived by God*. There is a second truth we see here as well. Notice also that in looking at Eden, and specifically the God of the garden, we are reminded that:

II. MAN WAS NOT DECEIVED BY GOD

1. Again, in verse 9 we read, *“And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food...”*

2. Every kind of beautiful and fruitful tree grew somewhere in this garden. Verse 9 goes on, however, to tell us of two most important trees that grew in the garden.

3. It says, *“...the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”*

4. We read later on that God gave Adam permission to eat of every tree in that garden, with the exception of one of those two trees.

5. Verse 17 says, *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*

6. There is a tendency when reading this narrative, to see everything in the garden as being beautiful and perfect, and then to see the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as the one black mark in the midst of all that perfection.

7. Our idea is that somehow God planted all good things for Adam, with the exception of this one, bad tree that ended up being the downfall of the human race.

8. If we look at this story that way, we are misunderstanding the purpose of that tree, and we are missing a wonderful truth about God’s dealings with man.

9. The truth is that God was not playing games with Adam. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not a trick; it was a truth.

10. Let me show you what I mean. Consider the fact that in the planting of this tree:

A. God revealed the possibility of sin

1. We often describe Adam's original condition in the garden as one of innocence, and that is the truth.
2. However, we need to make sure that we don't confuse innocence with ignorance. Though Adam had not yet experienced the fall of sin, God did not hide from Him the fact of sin.
3. God placed Adam in a perfect environment, and revealed Himself to man as the Creator. He demonstrated His love to Adam by caring for Him and communing with Him.
4. God also demonstrated His love to Adam by letting Him know that there was something completely opposite to his God and to the love and kindness He had shown.
5. At Adam's creation, Satan had already been cast out of heaven for His rebellion. The reality of evil and sin existed before Adam and Eve became partakers in it.
6. The planting of this tree was another gracious revelation to Adam from His Maker. God was saying to Adam, "I want you to know there is a darkness that counters my light. There is a death that is completely opposite of the life I have given to you."
7. In revealing the possibility of sin, God was disclosing to Adam even more of His greatness and goodness.
8. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stood as testimony of the grace of God as much as did the tree of life.
9. Man was not deceived by God, and we see that in the fact that God revealed the possibility of sin, but consider also the fact that:

B. God revealed the peril of sin

1. Again, God planted this tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and he commanded Adam not to eat of it, warning him in verse 17, "*...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"

2. It is interesting that when Satan tempted Eve, the basic argument he made to her was that God was holding out on her.
3. He told her, "He is not being honest with you. That tree won't kill you. He is just trying to keep you from something you would enjoy."
4. The reality is that God was more honest with man about sin than Satan was. God was not holding out on Adam and Eve! He was not trying to hide anything from them!
5. The Serpent still lies to mankind today. His pitch hasn't changed. He still tells men that God's Word is not true, and that He is just trying to restrict them from something they would otherwise enjoy.
6. The reality is that God has given us full disclosure regarding sin. He tells us, as He did Adam, "...*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" (Ezekiel 18:4) He warns us, "...*the wages of sin is death.*" (Romans 6:23)
7. God is not playing games with us! He has not deceived us about sin and its penalty. Just as He was with the first man, God is truthful with all men about the peril of disobeying His commands.
8. When the doctor warns of a sickness that could infect and destroy your body, though the knowledge of that sickness may frighten you and concern you, you do not consider the doctor evil or cruel for revealing it to you. You don't blame the doctor for that sickness.
9. Likewise, when we look back to the garden, we are reminded that God was gracious to warn man of the danger of evil, and that which was opposite of His holiness.
10. We see here that *man was not deprived by God*. We see also that *man was not deceived by God*. However, before we leave Eden, and the God of this garden, we need to remember also that:

III. MAN WAS NOT DESERTED BY GOD

1. The story of the Garden of Eden is magical and fascinating, however, we must look back at it with the knowledge that Adam and Eve did not stay there.
2. Even as we read with wonder the record of Genesis 2, we know in our hearts what is coming in Genesis 3.
3. God warned, but Adam and his wife did not listen. God was honest with them, but they failed to trust Him, and we know that they fell, and were expelled from the garden.

4. The good news is that this is just the beginning of the Bible. Though man fell from his first estate, God was not through with Him. God did not desert his wayward creatures.

5. With that in mind, consider with me:

A. The tree that ruined our lives

1. Though the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not inherently bad, God warned of its potential.

2. He told Adam, "...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

3. God warned Adam of the reality of sin and evil, and though Adam had an elemental knowledge of its existence, when we ate the fruit of that tree, he gained an experiential knowledge of evil.

4. Adam knew the fact of evil before he ate the fruit. After he ate it, he learned the force of evil.

5. Adam and Eve's sin in the garden, eating from this tree that God had forbidden them, brought the reality of death and separation from God into their previously innocent lives.

6. Romans 5:12 says, "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*"

7. After that initial sin, death began to destroy the body and life of Adam. Though he lived a relatively long time, the day came when sin took its full toll, and Adam returned to the dust.

8. Every time we put another human body in the ground, we reap the results of Adam's sin and ours as well.

9. Every sin that poisons our race can be traced back to the ruin that began with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10. Before we move on, however, we are mindful that another tree grew, one through which God would further demonstrate His love for mankind.

11. Consider with me not only the tree that ruined our lives, but consider also:

B. The tree that restores our lives

1. God had every right to cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, which He did. He had every right to pronounce judgments upon them, which He did.

2. In reality, God would have been justified in abandoning man altogether, and leaving him to suffer the awful consequences of his sin.

3. Thankfully, that is not what God did. In fact, just as our ruin can be traced back to a tree, so also we find that God used another tree to make right what went wrong in the garden.

4. In I Peter 2, the Apostle Peter points us to Jesus, and says of Him in verse 24, *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body **on the tree**, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”* (emphasis added)

5. In Acts 5:30, that same apostle said to the Jewish authorities, *“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged **on a tree**.”*

6. In the beginning, God planted one tree that through our rebellion became the source of our ruin.

7. Praise be to His name, many years later, somewhere in Palestine, God planted another tree, the tree He knew would eventually hold the beaten, bloodied, bruised, nail-pierced body of His only begotten Son.

8. The fruit of that first tree brought our ruin. The fruit of that other tree brought our rescue!

*On a hill far away stood an old, rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame,
And I love that old cross, where the dearest and best,
For a world of lost sinners was slain!*

9. There was nothing beautiful or appealing about the tree on which Jesus died. It was not a tree like those planted in the garden.

10. Nevertheless, that tree is to me more wonderful than any that has ever grown in the soil of this sinful earth!

1. It is interesting to me that we never read again, after the third chapter of Genesis, about this tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2. We do, however, read again of its counterpart in the Garden of Eden, the so-called tree of life.

3. Moving from the first book of the Bible, to the last, we find in Revelation 22 a description of the eternal city of God.

4. John says, *“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* (Revelation 22:1-2)

5. The day is coming when men will once again have access to the tree of life.

6. On that day, when I get my first taste of the fruit of that tree, I will thank God, not just for it, but for Calvary’s tree, that made it all possible.

7. Let us worship the God of the garden. He has not deprived us. He has not deceived us. And thankfully, He has not deserted us.

ⁱ Ten possible locations for the Garden of Eden, *toptenz.net*, accessed 9/16/10, <http://www.toptenz.net/10-possible-locations-for-the-garden-of-eden.php>

ⁱⁱ Hughes, R. Kent, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 53

ⁱⁱⁱ Milton, John, Paradise Lost, (Barnes & Noble Classics, New York, 2004), Book IV, p. 205, line 208

^{iv} Thomas, Griffith, Genesis: I-XXV, (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1907), p. 38