

Eden 9-3-06

Genesis 2:4-17 (NIV)

⁴ *This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens--⁵ and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground,⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground--⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.⁹ 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. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.)¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*

In our preceding passages, we saw the creation of order and fullness. The crowning act of creation was man and woman made in the very image of God. We saw that we most represent that image when we live in the rest of God, the seventh day. We saw the word God (*Elohim*) repeated 35 times (5x7). Five is the number of grace and seven the number of perfection. God imbued creation with grace and perfection. In our passage today, we zoom in for a close up from the Eden perspective. Some think this is a second account of creation, that Moses had two different creation stories and put them back-to-back. I prefer to interpret it as a retelling of the first from the vantage of Eden. We move from a cosmological perspective to a geographical one.

The opening word for this section is Moses' heading for the important sections of the book. In Hebrew, it is *toledot*. Some translations say "generations" others "account" or we could say "the story". We will see it ten times as we journey through this book. (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9 and 37:2) That headline word is followed by the words found in 1:1, "heavens and the earth." Some scholars even refer to Genesis as the *toledot*, meaning "accounts of", early man up to the Exodus.

This section introduces us to another name for God, *Yahweh*. It identifies the creator as Yahweh Elohim or the Lord God. Because some other cultures used El for God, Moses is clarifying which god he is referring to. *Yahweh* is the covenant God of Israel. We will see Him make binding agreements with the patriarchs. Before Moses wrote this passage, he had already met this God in a burning bush when God revealed

Himself as I AM, or *Yahweh*. (Exodus 3:14) When we read Lord God, we should think of the Eternal God who so personal with us that He makes covenants with His people and is all- powerful to keep His commitments. This is the name the text will focus on through the end of chapter 4. The only time it will revert to back to Elohim alone is in the coming conversation with Satan in 3:2-5. You see, when we are tempted, we think of God as some restricting old grandfather who wants to deny us of pleasure, someone who doesn't want to let us in on His special secrets. We see Him as a stingy god that withholds the really good stuff just because He wants to keep us in our place. How unlike the true covenant God that is personal and desires to bless us. (Genesis 12:1-3)

In the immediate context of the Sabbath, *Yahweh-Elohim* wants man to take time to celebrate His goodness as our Creator and Redeemer. In the Ten Commandments, Moses points out that when we take our Sabbath rest, we should take the time to celebrate Him as Creator. (Exodus 20:11) And when He reminded them of the Sabbath rest in Deuteronomy, He connected it with their redemption from Egypt. (Deuteronomy 5:15) Today as we worship we celebrate His recreation of our hearts and His redeeming us from a life in bondage to sin.

Verse 4 is what is referred to as a chiasmic parallelism. I'm not bringing it up to impress you with a big theological term, but as tool to help us understand much of the Hebrew writings. We will see the style repeated often. It is an A BB A type of literary devise with a word changed to express the thought in a different way.

A heavens and the earth	B when they were created (bara)
B when the Lord God made (asa)	A the earth and the heavens.

We saw a similar pattern in 1:26,27

God created man	In his own image
In the image of God	He created him;

The emphasis is the middle thought. It is not that the author was trying to say something different. He is just expressing the same thought in a different way for emphasis.

Then we have a description of the earth. There is no bush or small plant, no rain, and no one to tend it. The words used for these small plants is not the same words that were used on the third day of creation. This is either referring to the weeds and thistles that will spring up after the fall (Genesis 3:18), or that these small plants did not sprout until God began to cause the springs to overflow onto the land. This could have either been the flooding of the rivers or actual springs. In the red rocks all around us, you will find round white circular spots. Geologists say that these were ancient springs that washed the iron oxide from the sand, leaving these white circles we see today. There were sure a lot of them. To the north near Tuba city there are tracks of dinosaurs in the same rock strata and the imprints of large ferns. I would guess that was this would be the same time period we are reading about. Instead of rain, the canopy over the earth somehow kept the moisture above the earth from condensing and falling. The numerous springs made for easy irrigation.

This was the condition of the world once it was filled. It needed caretakers, man. Thus man was the final act of creation. ⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of

Commented [notes1]: 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Ex 3:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Gen 3:2-5 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Gen 12:1-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Ex 20:11 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. Deut 5:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. Gen 3:18 (NIV)

the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. He shaped man from the dust of the ground. Today we understand that this is not like fashioning a clay figure, but that we are actually made of the same elements as the earth. We are closely related to this earthly realm. The Hebrew for mankind is *adam*, and the Hebrew for ground is *adama*. In case we were to get a little cocky, as man has been known to do, we can remind ourselves that without God we are merely dust. God shaped the DNA of the first man just as He shaped yours and mine, to uniquely prepare us to live equipped to bring Him glory. (Isaiah 43:7)

He shaped man as His last act of creation and then did something unique to man. He breathed into him. How intimate and personal! In addition to being made in God's image, we have His breath in us. The word for breath can mean spirit or wind. It is as if He blew life into us. God did His own kind of CPR on the man He had made and that breath made Adam a living creature. Suddenly he was alive. The same word, "living creature" is used of the animals in 1:20 and 24.

In our world today there is an effort to raise the value of animal life to that of human life. God never intended that. A righteous man regards the life of his animals (Proverbs 12:10), but that does not mean they are anything near the value of a human life, made in the image of God, instilled with His very own breath. And yet, like the animals, we are of the earth. What potential man possesses for good or evil. Animals do not contemplate and adore God. Neither do they plot mass murder out of an evil ideology.

Many have speculated just where Eden was. There was a recent television special locating ancient Eden in Iran. Some of the clues were quite speculative. It probably is of no consequence where it once was. When I was in India, the students were often asking me where I thought it was. They had some strange idea that it had been preserved and was hidden from man. I told them that I was sure that the flood would have annihilated any remnant of that Garden. Besides, after being untended for so long, it wouldn't be much of a garden. Most scholars think it was somewhere in what is now modern day Iran or Iraq. We know where the Tigris and Euphrates are, but the other rivers cannot be identified with certainty today. All that we know for sure is that it was a paradise for Adam. The word Eden means "delight". There was every tree that was pleasant to the eye and desired for food. Adam walked and talked with God. Many come to our area of the country looking for the perfect conditions. No one ever had more perfect conditions than Adam. He had everything man needed.

In the very middle of that garden, God placed two trees. One was the Tree of Life and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam could at any time choose life or death. He had life, and so never needed to take of that tree. Some think that Adam may have lived forever had he not fallen. (Romans 8:20-21) Others believe that, like Enoch, he would age to a point and simply pass into the permanent presence of God without death. After the fall, he was forbidden from returning to take of the Tree of Life. (Genesis 3:24) God did not want him living on in a fallen state. But we will see the Tree of Life again in the paradise of God. It is mentioned four times in the book of Revelation. (Revelation 2:7, 22:2, 14, 19)

Commented [notes7]: 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."
Isaiah 43:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 20 And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky."
Gen 1:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 10 A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.
Prov 12:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 20 For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.
Romans 8:20-21 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.
Gen 3:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
Rev 22:2 (NIV)

It wouldn't have been paradise if he had no alternative but to obey. If his only choice was to do as His Maker willed, he could not say he was truly free. And so, God gave him the option to disobey. He was first told all that he did have. He could eat of every tree of the garden. Everything he needed was there. He even had the Tree of Life. Soon he would have the perfect spouse, custom designed for him. (Genesis 2:18) He only had one prohibition. ¹⁷ *but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.* "Adam, you've got it all. I just ask one thing of you, for your own good, so that you will not die, don't eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."

Commented [notes13]: 18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."
Gen 2:18 (NIV)

Just what was this tree? If Adam ate of it, he would know good and evil. At the present time he only knew one thing, the good. Everything God made was good. The whole of creation was very good. There was no evil in it. Adam couldn't know evil. But if he chose to rebel against God, he would instantly know evil. Later we will see that this desire to rebel came from a desire to find wisdom apart from God's will and ways, knowledge without morality. The word of God had given him a wisdom that was safe and life giving. The temptation would come to doubt the heart of God in His expressed Word and usurping God's authority, being his own god and master.

Remember that where we see a thing first in Scripture we see identifying characteristics that apply to it in the future. When you are tempted, the very same thing happens to you. You have a choice, the Tree of Life, or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. You can choose the One who said He is Life or you can choose to be your own god. You can choose the One who said, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) Or you can choose to disobey and eat the forbidden fruit. One results in life, the other in death.

Commented [notes14]: 12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
John 8:12 (NIV)

It never appears quite so clear as that, unless we sit down and take our temptation to the Word of God. The Word of God takes away all the luster of evil and reveals it for the death dealing temptation that it is. Jesus showed us the way when He said that He lived by every word that comes from the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4) He always chose the Tree of Life. What will we choose? Our postmodern culture encourages us to please ourselves. It points to all kinds of things, all of which are centered around having your way, being your own god, or as one commercial says, "master of your own domain." It neglects to tell us that that is the way of death.

Commented [notes15]: 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"
Matt 4:4 (NIV)

As I was thinking about our text a thought came to me that I believe was from the Lord. Eden means pleasure or delight. Eden is an old Hebrew word. The more common word used for delight is the word *ratsah*. A number of times the Psalmist tells us to delight ourselves in the LORD, our eternal covenant God and in His commands. (Psalm 37:4; 119:16, 24, 35) In Psalm 35 verse 9 he even tell us that he delights in Yahweh's Yeshua! ⁹ *Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in his salvation.* (NIV) It is translated as salvation, but it is the same name as that of our Savior. Then it hit me. Jesus is our Eden. He is our delight.

Commented [notes16]: 4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalms 37:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 16 I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.
Psalms 119:16 (NIV)

I once thought that entering the New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God where the Tree of Life will once more be in our midst was returning to Eden. That is certainly true, but that misses the present reality that we should be experiencing in

Christ. The first Eden was a place that God had placed Adam. Remember that Adam is the same word for man or mankind. And where does God place us? If we are willing, if we let Him have His way, He places us in Christ. (Ephesians 1:13)

In Eden there is every good thing; Adam did not lack anything! Can't the same be said of us in Christ? I recall a verse that says that in Him all my need is supplied. (Philippians 4:19) There are springs in Eden that are always watering the ground. Jesus said that if we let Him live in us He will be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:14) In Eden, Adam was given authority, and in Christ Jesus we experience an authority that sets us free from sin and gives us a dynamic power that we did not have before we came to Him. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18) Adam walked and talked with God in Eden. Well, if you are in Christ, He walks with you and talks with you. Amen? In Eden you can take of the fruit of the trees in the garden that were beautiful and tasty. And in Christ Jesus you are always invited to partake of the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23) Tell me that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are not beautiful and delicious! And in the middle of Eden, our Lord's heart, is the Tree of Life. We still have a choice don't we? Even when He is our Eden we can choose to partake of Him and His life, or turn to our own ways. He still gives us freedom to choose. Remember the temptation comes when we see Him as that stogy old tightwad instead of the gracious and generous covenant God. We start to think that way when we get out of fellowship with Him.

This Eden has one great difference. When you succumb to temptation to turn to the knowledge of good and evil, when you grab hold of something that looks and tastes good but is forbidden, God doesn't cast you out of the Eden we have in Christ. (John 6:37) Did Jesus have Eden in mind when He said, Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away? Why wont He? Because our sin was nailed to the cross with Christ and is no more. (Colossians 2:14) That isn't a license to rebel. It is a motivator to yield our hearts and to continually choose life. If you continually succumb you must ask yourself if you have truly been set free, or if you've just come to freedom's door. (John 8:36)

Everyone here today has an invitation to spiritually enter Eden, if you have not already done so. Jesus can be your delight. He can meet the needs of your heart and the just demands of a righteous God. All you need to do is accept what He's already done. If you are already in the Eden of Jesus, are you partaking of the Tree of Life? Are you enjoying the privilege we have here to walk and talk with our covenant God who has breathed into us the breath of life?

¹⁴ "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Revelation 22:14 (NIV) If you have come to Christ to receive what He did for you on the cross, your robes are washed. You have His righteousness. You have a right to the Tree of Life, and you may go through the gates into the city of God. Enjoy the Tree of Life today and every day!

Commented [notes18]: 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, Eph 1:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Matt 28:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Gal 5:22-23 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. John 6:37 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. Col 2:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36 (NIV)