

## Genesis 2:10-17

We are in the first toldot of Genesis which is what became of the heavens and the earth and extends from Gen 2:4 through 4:26.

We noted that the first toldot could be divided as follows:

- a. Man in the Garden, 2:4-2:25
- b. The Fall, 3:1-3:24
- c. Cain and Abel, 4:1-26

Last time, we started with the 1<sup>st</sup> section of the toldot, Man in the Garden, and noted that it too could be divided into parts.

- a. The Creation of Man, 2:4-7
- b. The Garden of Eden, 2:8-14
- c. The Edenic Covenant Part 2, 2:15-17
- d. The Creation of Woman, 2:18-25

To review, last week we covered verses 8 and 9. In verse 8 we note God made a special garden, in Eden, and there God placed man to live as the verse says, *Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.* Then in verse 9, we note God plants two trees in the middle of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Note the verse, *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.* Note by being in the middle, they were the center and focus of attention. The garden was designed around them.

We then examined the tree of life. We noted it was provided by God, and had fruit that Adam and Eve could eat daily symbolizing their dependence on God's provision. Much like the manna to the wilderness generation, the tree symbolized Adam and Eve feeding on God daily for their spiritual sustenance. We asked the question in application "what are we feeding on?" In other verses the tree is associated with eternal life and is promised to those who faithfully finish their race (see Rev 22:7 and 22:14). After the fall, we noted that eating of the tree would have fixed Adam and Eve's sinful state (Gen 3:22). Therefore, God in his mercy, placed a protection about the tree to prevent Adam and Eve from eating it (see Gen 3:24), thus ensuring theirs and mankind's redemption.

The other tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This tree also had edible fruit, but God had prohibited its consumption as noted in verse 17. We noted the title given to the tree was a merism, a literary device meant to include the entirety of something and in this case it meant understanding the entirety of moral choices, both good and evil. Therefore having the knowledge of good and evil is knowing the full spectrum of moral choices as applied to a Divine standard.

But it is the how of acquiring such knowledge that is important. I noted there are two ways in which knowledge maybe acquired; rationally (or informationally) and experientially. We can know something without the experience of it. But experience often gives a deeper understanding than intellectually

knowing. I can rationally know what is like to live in a humid state, but I would have a deeper understanding of humidity if I had lived in Florida for a while.

Here is another thing to consider; One type of learning can be better to use than the other for certain categories of knowledge depending on the circumstance. In the case of a touching a hot stove I would rather know (have rational knowledge) that the stove is hot rather than touch it (having experiential knowledge) to find out. On the other hand, if I am playing a sport I would rather learn it experientially rather than have someone tell me how to do it.

This is also true of the world of morality. Some things are better to learn rationally while some things are better to learn through experience. And I gave a general rule regarding this. The rule is this: it is far better to gain experiential knowledge of morally good things, and rational or informational knowledge of morally bad things. It is a good thing to experience the joy of giving, or helping, or extending mercy. But it is not a good thing to experience; the pain of adultery, or fornication, or addiction, or lying, or cheating, or throwing others under the bus; for these things have terrible consequences. I want to know of such things rationally without having to experience them.

Adam and Eve understood the terms of good and evil for God had mentioned them, and most likely they had gained morally good knowledge through experience; they shared food, and helped each other with the chores of the garden, but they did not have a complete informational knowledge or any experiential knowledge of moral evil.

God intended Adam and Eve to learn of the entirety of good and evil through obedience. What do I mean by this? We used the example of a small child and a hot stove. You can tell the child the stove is hot, but the child does not know what hot is. They can learn what hot is in one of two ways; either they can choose not to touch the stove, and with time and maturity they grow into the knowledge that the stove is hot and they can be glad they never touched it; or, against your command, they can learn the stove is hot by touching it. Now they know what hot is and they also suffer the consequence of their curiosity and disobedience. So, it was for Adam and Eve. They did not know what death was. They did not know what evil was. Do they wait patiently and obediently for a time to understand the full spectrum of good and evil and what death is, or do they find out now by eating? The tree was a test and we will see in chapter three how they failed it.

We pick up the rest of the description of the Garden in verse 10,

#### **The Garden of Eden (continued), vs 10-14.**

*Vs 10, A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters.*

In 2:6 we note the earth was watered with springs, and streams. But Eden is watered by a river. We note this river separates into four branches. This would have been a large river to break into four more.

*Vs 11, The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold.*

We learn the first river named is the Pishon. The Hebrew root means to jump to and fro. Rivers do that. We note the river flows through the land of Havilah where there is gold. Havilah is also mentioned as a

descendant of Cush in Gen 10:7 and 1 Chr 1:9. Havilah was most likely somewhere in what is now Saudi Arabia or Iraq.

Vs 12, *(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin<sup>[d]</sup> and onyx are also there).*

Notice there are three material things Havilah is known for, gold, aromatic resin (some translations have bdellium), and onyx. We all know what gold is, the aromatic resin (bdellium) is a fragrant gum resin extracted from a plant similar to myrrh, and is used in perfumes and incense. Onyx is a semi-precious stone.

Vs 13, *The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.*

The second river is the Gihon. The root word means to break out. It is noted to wind through the land of Cush. The land of Cush occupied what is today southern Sudan, Ethiopia, and southern Saudi Arabia.

Vs 14, *The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.*

These two rivers we all know. They now originate in the Taurus mountains of eastern Türkiye, then run south and east through Syria and Iraq into the Persian gulf. Ashur was on the eastern side of the Tigris in what is now Iraq.

In summary, we can say a large un-named river flowed from Eden into the garden, then split into four branches as the Bible describes. But step back a minute and ask yourself, why are these rivers and lands even mentioned? They are specific only to this passage and seem randomly inserted.

At the time when Moses wrote this he describes lands that were geographically known to him and his readers. In other words they knew of Havilah, Cush, and Ashur. They were real places. But if you think about the passage historically or geographically it makes no sense as today, or even in Moses time, as there was no common riparian link between these distant lands.

So how do we explain this? It is best to step back and look at the whole chapter and what God is doing. In chapter 2, God does four important things. First He makes man, then He makes a garden, then He gives some stipulations as to care for it, and lastly God makes the woman.

In verses 10-14 he informs us how He will water the garden He had made. We know it is a garden in the region of Eden. It is filled with lush fruit bearing trees, with two trees in the middle of it. Now in verses 10-14 God informs us He will water it with a great river.

But what happens to this great river after it waters the Garden? It flows out of Eden and divides, bringing life sustaining water to the surrounding lands. Man began his existence in paradise but God had instructed the man and the woman to multiply and fill the earth, which meant they or their descendants would eventually leave the garden, and so God is now ensuring the other lands surrounding the Garden are adequately supplied with water.

It had been revealed to Moses the general direction of the flow of these four headwaters and he now describes them in geographical terms his readers would understand, even though the Pishon and Gihon no longer existed when Moses wrote this, and Cush was a long ways away.

Though geography is mentioned in these verses, the critical point is this, it is not primarily a geographical text, rather it is about man and his life on earth. God intended man to move out and take dominion of the world He created, and all man had to do was follow the course of any of these four rivers to find lands that were rich, watered, and productive.

So what happened to the river that watered Eden and its two headwaters, the Pishon and Gihon? And for that matter what happened to the Garden? The best explanation is they all disappeared after the flood.

### **The Edenic Covenant Part 2, vs 15-17.**

We now come to verses 15-17.

*Vs 15a, The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden*

The first part of the verse notes God specifically placed Adam in the Garden. This gives the impression he was not made there. He was formed in Eden then placed in the Garden. The root word for place means rest. The Garden was to be a place of rest for mankind. He was to take care of the Garden.

Now we come to the second part of the Edenic Covenant which is detailed in Gen 2:15b-17. I explained a few weeks ago there are eight Covenants in the Bible, and the first four are introduced in Genesis. The first is the Edenic found in Gen 1:28-30 and here in Gen 2:15-17. The other seven are the Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New. I noted covenants can be categorized in two ways: they are either conditional or unconditional; and they are either general or specifically for Israel.

To review, a conditional covenant follows the formula if you will, then I will; or in Biblical terms, if I will, then God will. In other words, its fulfillment is dependent upon man accomplishing some outlined responsibility, which if done, means God will then do what He promised. An unconditional covenant follows the formula, I will, and you do not have to do anything. Whatever is promised is to be done regardless of the other parties' actions. In Biblical terms, God unconditionally obligates Himself to bring to pass promises, blessings, and conditions for the covenanted people. It is a unilateral deal secured by the grace of God. Biblically the conditional covenants are the Edenic and Mosaic. The others are all unconditional.

The other way to divide them is whether they are general in the sense they are given to all mankind, or are they specifically made to Israel? Those directed to all mankind are the Edenic, Adamic, and Noahic, while the covenants made to Israel are the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New.

In Gen 1:28-30, we noted the first part of the Edenic Covenant. In it, four provisions are outlined,

- a. Adam and Eve were to *Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth*: Adam and Eve were to procreate and fill the earth with humanity.
- b. Adam and Eve were to *Govern (or Subdue)* the earth. This applies to the material being of the earth. Adam and Eve were to be the rulers of the soil, minerals, waters, and all the other non-living component parts of our world, and use these materials for their benefit.
- c. Adam and Eve were to *Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground*. Adam and Eve were to have dominion (or authority) over all living things on earth.
- d. Lastly, Adam and Eve were to have a vegetarian diet.

The second part of the covenant is an expansion upon the first. Note there are an additional three commands given that were not given before. The first of these is in verse 15b.

Vs 15b, *to work it and take care of it*.

This is the fifth provision of the Edenic Covenant; Adam and Eve were to *work it and take care of it*. The word *work* is also translated as *dress* and has the idea of serving. Man was to serve God by working in the Garden. What kind of work was this? We know Adam named the animals. The domesticated animals within the garden also required care. The trees may have needed pruning. I am speculating, but the important thing to take away is God had given Adam work to do in service to Him. Just like today, work is a good thing and we work to serve the Lord (Col 3:23, *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters*).

The word *care* is also translated as *keep*, and is better translated as *guard*: not in the sense of protecting from outside enemies, but rather in the sense of obeying the commandments of God as pertaining to it. We can see this in operation with Eve in her initial discussion with the serpent in Gen 3:3. *It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat*. Eve is guarding the Garden by recounting God's command regarding the tree. In the same way, we guard, or keep our hearts, when we remember the commandments of God when testing circumstances arise.

Vs 16-17a, *And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,*

This is the sixth provision of the Edenic Covenant. God notes Adam and Eve were to have a vegetarian diet as also noted in Gen 1:30, but with one exception. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We discussed this tree last week and again today.

Vs 17b, *for when you eat from it you will certainly die*.

Now in verse 17 we have the seventh provision of the Edenic Covenant and that is Adam and Eve will die if they eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Next week we will finish the chapter with a further explanation of the formation of Eve.

