

THE GARDEN OF EDEN – PARADISE

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Lessons: Genesis 2

The subject of this chapter is that Garden of gardens, which was called Eden. Everyone knows the word Eden. It is a Hebrew word that makes one think of a garden of the highest delight. Although it is called Eden in Hebrew, in Greek it is called Paradise, and this, too, is a name that is very well known. Once the Lord said to a man who was dying, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." And there is a promise in the book of Revelation to those who try to do what is right: "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (*Revelation 2:7*).

You know that the Lord is Love, and you know what love wants to do. It wants to make others happy. That wish of the Lord's that people shall have happiness, enjoyment and delight, is pictured in the garden with the name of delight - the Garden of Eden.

"The Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden...and out of the ground the Lord 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..." (*Genesis 2:8,9*).

Here is a picture of what the Lord likes to give each day and each night. Do you know that people who lived on our earth long ago were given dreams when they slept, called paradisaal dreams? Even today the angels wish us pleasant dreams, and when we watch a little child sleeping with a look of peace, we can imagine that the angels are giving an Eden-like dream—a little paradise.

Are there gardens in heaven? Of course there are, as heaven is what the Lord wants to give everyone. At the entrance of heaven there are paradisaal scenes of beauty. And there are gardens there, one of which you will learn of now.

What you are about to hear is true. Pay attention as you listen to it. You will notice particularly that in the heavenly garden there is a tree which some call the Tree of Life. Notice that at first the garden itself was not seen. An angel finally told visitors to heaven that they would see it, and when they did, the angels were happy for them. Listen to what happened and to what the angels said:

Then the angel said to them, "It isn't noon yet. Come with me into our prince's garden, next to his palace." And off they went. At the entrance,

he said, "Look! The most magnificent garden in this heavenly community!"

But they answered, "What are you talking about? There's no garden here. We see just one tree, with fruit like gold on the branches and the top of it, and leaves like silver with emeralds around the edges. And there are children under the tree with people taking care of them."

At this the angel said excitedly, "This tree is in the middle of the garden. We call it the Tree of our Heaven, and some people call it the Tree of Life. But go on, and get closer, and your eyes will be opened, and you'll see the garden."

They did so, and their eyes were opened and they saw trees filled with delicious fruit, and entwined with the shoots of vines. The treetops with their fruit were bending towards the Tree of Life in the middle. These trees were planted in an unbroken line that went out and spread into unending circles or curves like a continuous spiral. It was a perfect spiral grove. The different kinds of trees followed one after another according to the value of their fruits. The beginning of the big spiral was separated from the Tree in the middle by a large space, and the space glittered with a bright light that spread out from the first trees to the last, making them all shine. The first trees were the best of all, overflowing with plump fruit. They are called Trees of Paradise. They have never been seen because they do not and cannot exist in the lands of the natural world. After them came olive trees, and then grape vines. Next came sweet-smelling trees, and last of all, trees with wood good for building.

Here and there in this spiral of trees there were seats. The backs of them were made by bending and intertwining the branches of trees, and they were decorated with lots of their fruit. In the endless circle of trees there were gates that opened into flower gardens, and from these into green lawns, laid out in parks and flower beds.

When the companions of the angel saw these things, they cried, "Look! The very picture of heaven! Wherever we turn our eyes, something too wonderful for words flows in from this heavenly garden."

The angel was very glad to hear this, and he said, "All of the gardens of our heaven are representations or models that show where the blessings of heaven come from. These blessings flowed in and lifted up your mind, so you cried, 'Look! The very picture of heaven!' But this paradise just looks like a forest to people who don't let these blessings flow into them. These blessings flow into everyone who loves to be useful. But people who love glory, and not use, don't accept those blessings." Afterwards he explained and taught them what each thing in the garden represented and meant.

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