

GOD PLANTED A GARDEN

Genesis 2:4-25

Key Verse: 2:8

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.”

Genesis chapter 1 proclaims that God is the Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth. He created all things for his own glory. He created man in his own image and it was very good. Man is the crown of his creation. So in chapter 2, the author looks again at the sixth day of creation and gives us deeper insight into the mind and heart of God the Creator. He not only created all things for his own pleasure and glory, but he also created a world in which man could be happy. God who planted the Garden of Eden is God who wants mankind to be happy. Many people don't know how to be happy. As we study this chapter, we can discover what we really need in order to be happy.

I. GOD FORMS MAN (4-14)

Look at verses 4b-6. This is a more detailed explanation of Genesis 1:1-2. The heavens and the earth were created, but no form of life was yet found. The earth was covered with thick mist and water. The world was still sleeping, waiting for God to make a man to take care of it.

Let's read verse 7. “And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.” The author does not go into detail about the creation of vegetation, animals, and others. Instead, he jumps right to a detailed account of the creation of man. Verse 7 teaches us important truths about man's basic nature.

First, man is made of dust. God made man out of the dust of the ground. In Hebrew, the word “Adam” means “man,” but its original meaning was “dirt” or “soil.” Men are indeed dust. They are weak. Man's body came from the dust and it will return to dust. Even the body of a Mr. Universe becomes a part of dirt in the ground when he dies. They say that a human body is mainly consisted of chemical elements such as carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, and sodium. Water makes up about 65 per cent of the body. The chemical components of a human body all together are worth only a few dollars. We have nothing of which to be proud. We must stand humbly before our God. Once Abraham stood before God and prayed, “I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes” (18:27b). We have nothing valuable in ourselves to boast about.

Second, man is a spiritual being. The same verse (7) also teaches us that we are valuable. God himself formed us out of the dust of the ground; God breathed his breath into the man and man became a living soul. God breathed his own breath, his Spirit into

us, so we are living souls. We have physical life and we have God's life, spiritual life. He made us a little lower than God and crowned us with glory and honor (Ps 8:5). We must live our lives on a higher level, on a spiritual level, in fellowship with God.

When God made man, he made him with a physical body; he also gave him a spirit or mind and he gave him a soul. There is a very close relationship between the mind and the body. When the body is sick, one's mind becomes tired. When one becomes tired in his mind and spirit, his body becomes weak. But the indestructible soul is not affected by these things. When the soul becomes sick, it has no feeling. Sickness of the soul is like leprosy.

Man can never be satisfied with only those things which satisfy his physical desires; he has or is a soul. His spiritual life must be nurtured and satisfied. He must know God and have fellowship with him in order to be really alive. The joy of the soul is real joy.

We are living in a fallen world. Because of our sin, the image of God in man is marred and his spirit died. Only the physical body lives about 70 years or so and returns to dust. That is why Jesus came to restore God's image in us and to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. But many people today look at man as mere physical being. Some zoologists (Desmond Morris) call man "the naked ape," existentialists volition, Hugh Hefner sensuous creature, and others a machine. Karl Marx said the essence of man is in his labor, what he does. But all these arguments only look at the physical side of man. When we consider ourselves as only physical beings, we cannot but become fatalistic. We struggle so much all through our lives only to find that our destination is the grave yard. We cannot find any meaning or purpose of our lives. But verse 7 teaches us that God breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and we became living beings. This is the reason Jesus said to Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit" (Jn 3:5,6).

II. GOD PLANTS THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Look at verse 8. "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed." The important point of this verse is that God made paradise *for man*. He put man there because he wanted man to live there and be happy. In planting paradise on earth, God made very clear his second purpose in creation: He wants man to be happy.

Let's read verse 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."

The paradise was beautiful. The Garden of Eden was made of pure gold and all

kinds of precious stones, such as onyx, and aromatic resin (2:12). Perhaps there is no one who can adequately describe the beauty of Eden. The apostle John received God's revelation and wrote the book of Revelation. He saw Eden--the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. He said, "It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal" (Rev 21:11). "The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass" (Rev 21:21).

Also in Eden were trees good for food. People must work hard to make a living in this world. Sometimes even beautiful young girls, who should be treated like angels, must find jobs and work like factory laborers. But in Eden, there was no worry about how to make a living.

The Garden of Eden was a perfect place for man to be happy. Man could enjoy delicious fruits and salads. He could roam around the flowery hills, singing about the majesty and beauty of the Garden. He could enjoy a game of hide-and-seek with fawns and lion cubs. He did not have to worry about air pollution, nuclear waste, traffic jam, or gang violence. There were no pains, tears, disease, or death. It was a utopia!

But there were more to the Garden than physical abundance. God knew man would not be happy only because his stomach was full and lacked no provisions of life. God knew that the paradise had to be a place where both physical and spiritual life of man can be fully satisfied. Look at verse 9b. "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God made the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These trees had to do with man's spiritual life. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had no meaning until God gave instructions concerning it, but we can know that man's spiritual life is essential to his happiness.

The tree of life was in Eden. There are many sorrowful and tragic things. This is because all men despair before the enemy death. He leaves no room for hope. In Eden, i.e., paradise--the new heaven and new earth--there were no tears, no death, no suffering, no pain (Rev.21: 4). Why? Because the tree of life was there (2:9b).

So, in the beginning, God gave man paradise. Man cannot live without paradise. Men seem to have many wants and desires, but we can put them all together and say that man wants paradise. Many people have sought to recover paradise by building a utopia on earth. But paradise is a gift from God.

The river which watered the garden divided into four headstreams--the Pishon, the Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates. These flowed out of Eden, the source of life and blessing, to all the world. It was God's desire that the happiness of Eden fill his earth.

III. ADAM'S BIBLE (15-17)

Look at verse 15. God put man in charge of the garden to work it and take care of it. Here we can verify the fact that God is the owner and master of his world and that men are stewards whom he has set over his world. God created man for mission, now he entrusted his mission to man. Man needs mission to be happy. A man without mission is miserable, for his life is meaningless. God gives to every person his own small garden to take care of. It is the garden of his own life. It is the garden of his home and his working place. God wants mankind whom he created to live as responsible stewards of the garden he made for them.

God also gave us his word of command. Let's read verses 16 and 17. "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 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.'" These words are called "Adam's Bible." This command in the original language is given as an absolute command. There is nothing relative about the words in verse 17, "You will surely die." God's command to Adam is not relative. It demands obedience. When it is obeyed, man lives in eternal blessedness. When it is disobeyed, the result is death. Some people who enjoy sinning complain about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; they ask why God put it in the garden. But there are two very important reasons why God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden:

First, he wanted to establish the order of love. God created this world with an amazing and mysterious order. Basic to this order is the relationship of God, man and material things. When God created the world, he brought order out of chaos. He made everything to exist and move according to the inner order which he put there when he created it. Mountains act like mountains; the sea acts like the sea. The seasons come and go in their created order. If the mountains acted like the sea and the sea acted like the mountains or if rocks grew legs and walked, then the world would be so confusing that we couldn't live in it. The greatest mystery of the universe is this amazing order. It is this order in the created world that makes all scientific research and technological progress possible. Man can begin to understand this world because the world is created in an orderly way, and God gave man a rational mind with which to understand it.

But there must also be order in the relationship between God and man. God created the world by his word. He appointed man the steward of his creation. Then he gave a word of command to man. If man obeys the word of God, then the right order of relationship between man and God is established. When this order is destroyed, man's happiness is also destroyed. So it is right to speak of this order as the "order of love." Our happiness depends on how we look at this command which God gave Adam. How we look at this command is a measure of our faith. Our view of the world depends on how we view this commandment. God gave the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a sign of this order. And this order is the order of love.

Second, he gave man freedom. The Lord God commanded, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;” This seems to be an unnecessary command, but it is not. It reminds us that the garden belongs to God. The beautiful and delicious fruit are a gift of his grace. He wants us to know this so that we can be thankful. He does not want us to take his blessings for granted; he wants us to be thankful. It is God’s will for us that we rejoice in all things, that we pray without ceasing and that we be thankful in all circumstances (1Th 5:16-18).

There is not only a positive command; there is a negative one as well: “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” (17). Many people complain because God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden: “Why didn’t he only put there trees that are pleasant to look at, and whose fruit is good to eat?” “Why did he have to put that tree of the knowledge of good and evil there and force men to spend their lives in the torment of the conflict with temptation too great to endure?”

Such people don’t know much about life. Perhaps they want a life that offers plenty to eat and no problems. But a man who lives only to eat and who has no problems cannot really be called a man. Even though a lion in the zoo has a peaceful life and plenty to eat, he cannot be called happy. In the jungle, a lion must hunt for food. Sometimes he goes hungry. Sometimes he must fight for his life. But a lion is really a lion when he is living as the king of the beasts roaming the jungle, not when he is sleeping with a full stomach in a cage. A person who has no ultimate freedom of choice is like a lion in the zoo. So God gave man the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and commanded him not to eat from it. When he freely obeys God’s command, the order of love is established in his life; he has a right relationship with God and a right relationship with all created things. He can be truly human and truly happy.

Third, The Holy Commandment. Look at verses 16 and 17 again. “And the Lord God commanded the man, `You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 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.’“

This is a holy commandment which establishes a right relationship between God and man. God is the one who commands; man is the one who obeys. Man the creature can meet God the Creator only on these terms. A man’s relationship with his horse is normal and right when he climbs on its back and rides it. It just wouldn’t work the other way. When man the creature begins to take his relationship with his Creator lightly, sin comes into his heart (3:7). He loses contact and communication with his God.

Furthermore, this holy commandment in man’s heart becomes a fixed point from which he can find direction for his life. It is an unconditional commandment. In this commandment is the power to maintain the order of the universe as God created it. Man has unlimited freedom because he has freedom of choice to obey or disobey this

commandment. On the other hand, man is a lump of clay. He is weak. So men need a fixed point in their hearts. Peter compared this fixed point to the morning star. Long ago man had to cross the ocean without a compass. So the morning star became the fixed point by which sailors could set their courses and find direction. So this holy commandment is the morning star by which men could find the way of life. It was God's act of love that put the tree in the middle of the garden and gave the command; man could see the tree everyday and be reminded the word of God.

IV. GOD ESTABLISHES THE FAMILY (18-25)

Look at verse 18. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Eden was beautiful; it seemed to be a perfect paradise. But God looked and saw one thing that was not good. Man was lonesome. So God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." So after Adam had worked hard one day, doing God's work, he fell into a deep sleep (19,20). God took one of his ribs and from it he made woman, and he brought her to Adam.

God created a woman to help the man fulfill the mission God had given him. She was to be his companion, his friend. She, too, was created in God's image, out of Adam's rib. So she was a part of him, a continuation of God's creation of man. No suitable helper could be found for Adam among animals because the animals could not share man's spiritual life or his mission. They could not think or reason or communicate with him on his level, and they could not help him produce children in his image.

The man was not so concerned about his lack of a suitable helper. God was concerned. The man welcomed the animals God created and brought to him. He gave them names. He was their shepherd. God was the one who saw man's need and understood it and filled that need in his own way at the right time. God knows us better than we know ourselves, and he is ready to give us the best co-worker, and lead us into the most fruitful life.

The man welcomed the woman God brought to him. God himself united them into one flesh and thus created the first family. Adam was very happy as he worked with his co-worker to take care of the Garden of Eden. He was so happy that he made this confession of love: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man" (23). We can see from this confession that man and woman are not separate entities. They are united into one body. A home is built on this confession of love and on this union of personalities.

Jesus commented on this first marriage by saying, "What God has joined together, let man not separate" (Mk 10:9). Verse 25 implies that they were free and innocent and uninhibited in their relationship with one another. There were no artificial barriers and no competition between them. They joyfully served God and loved

each other and were happy.

God created the family and showed us that man is basically a social creature. The family is the first building block of society. It is a part of God's perfect creation. The family was not created to be an end in itself, however. When a man leaves his father and mother and makes a life-long commitment to his wife, it is so that he can be an independent and responsible servant of God, working together with his wife to fulfill his mission and glorify God. God gives man happiness as a gift and a blessing.

In chapter 2, we learn that man longs for paradise, and God wants him to have it. The Garden of Eden helps us to understand how man can be truly happy. In Eden, there was beautiful and harmonious environment. There was the word of God; order of love; and mission from God. There was a co-worker with whom man could fulfill his mission. Above all, we learn that God is glorified and man is happy when the basic creation order is established and kept.