

**Humankind:**

- **What was meant to be**
- **What was lost**
- **What God wants to give back**

God puts humankind in an area called Eden, in which is a garden. The story tells us what man and woman were meant to be, and what mankind lost, **and what God wants to give us back in Jesus.**

God plants a garden in the east, in an area east of Israel. In the picture-story of Genesis it was a beautiful place, well-watered and fruitful, a lovely place with pleasant tall trees<sup>☞1</sup>, among which is a tree called 'the tree of life'<sup>☞2</sup>. Verse 10 tells us of a river which began in Eden and flowed into the garden. The one river went into the garden then divided into four, and the four became the sources of four great rivers flowing out of the garden into the wider world beyond Eden.

☞1 see Ezekiel 31:9, 16, 18

☞2 Genesis 2:9

**A delightful garden**

- **Great pleasantness**
- **Great beauty**
- **Purity and innocence**

The name 'Eden' means 'delight' or 'place of delightfulness'. Psalm 36:8 uses the word when it refers to the '*river of your delights*'.

We must not try to work out the geography of the garden of Eden. The story deals with real facts but it is told in a very picture-book fashion. Its teaching is more important than its geography.

The garden is a place of great pleasantness. The Greek word '*paradeisos*' which means 'garden' was used later on, and the word 'paradise' came into many of the world's languages. The garden was 'paradise', a special garden of great beauty and in which there was purity and innocence. The rivers which flowed in it and from it give us a picture of life and fertility. Much vegetation grows alongside rivers. The rivers have names<sup>☞1</sup>. They cannot be identified with four known rivers. Tigris and Euphrates were the names of the two largest rivers in the ancient Near East. The writer uses their names because it gives us the impression of large and mighty rivers. Actually the rivers Tigris and Euphrates do not come from one source, but the writer uses their names for two of the rivers that went out of Eden. The other two names (Pishon and Gihon) are invented names. 'Pishon' comes from a Hebrew word meaning to 'spring up'. 'Gihon' comes from a word meaning to 'bubble up' or to 'burst out'. The names give the impression of lively springs, welling up to give life<sup>☞2</sup>.

☞1 2:11-14

☞2 see John 4:14 for a parallel.

**Four Rivers**

- **Life**
- **Fertility**

The rivers water enormous countries. Cush (later used for what we now call Ethiopia and Sudan) and Assyria were watered by these rivers. The writer is still using picture-language, using the names of well-known spacious countries from later times.

- **Valuable metals & minerals**

The land in which the garden was to be found is described as being rich in valuable metals and minerals.

**5 things that God likes and intends for man**

The picture of the 'garden of Eden' gives us an idea of what God wants for humankind. God wants man to be in a place of abundant provision. When man was right with God he was amazingly and abundantly supplied.

There are some things here that God likes, and that are part of His intention for man.

- 1. **God likes beauty and desires beauty for the human race.**

1. **God likes beauty and desires beauty for the human race.** The garden in Eden was a very beautiful place. It was pleasing to look at<sup>☞1</sup>. Christians ought to like beauty and ought to help make this world a beautiful place. Heaven will be beautiful. The new heavens and new earth of our final glory will be a very beautiful place.

☞1 2:9

**2. God likes material provision and desires abundance for the human race**

**2. God likes material provision and desires abundance for the human race.** The garden in Eden was richly provided for. There was plenty of food<sup>□1</sup>, there was water, there was gold and there were minerals. 'From every tree you may freely eat', said God<sup>□2</sup>. God wants us to be abundantly provided for. Adequate provision is good and right. Sin in the human race has led to poverty. I have no interest in greedy religion, or with people whose motive in church-going is wealth. Provision comes to us as a side-effect of godly living. And there are no rules about guaranteed wealth for the Christian – as the story of Job makes plain. Yet long-term godliness in a people produces prosperity. In the resurrection paradise will be restored; abundance will come to us once again. Meanwhile, whatever our calling is, it is God's will that its needs should be abundantly met.

□1 2:9

□2 2:16

**3. God likes spiritual liveliness.**

**3. God likes spiritual liveliness.** In the garden was a 'tree of life' <sup>□1</sup>. Man was to eat from it and stay alive for ever<sup>□2</sup>. There was no natural immortality for men and women. Immortality came to him by his staying obedient to God. But God's intention was that man would stay alive with a God-given liveliness and enjoy fellowship with God <sup>□3</sup> forever. You could say that man and woman were created with a kind of 'eternal life' already.

□1 2:9

□2 see 3:22

□3 see 3:8

**4. God likes psychological satisfaction.**

**4. God likes psychological satisfaction.** Man had a sense of purpose when he was in God's garden. He had work to do for God<sup>□1</sup>. It was happy work, easy work, and would have given him great satisfaction. Genesis 3:17 tells us of how this went wrong, but man was intended to have employment and a sense of worth and of purpose.

□1 2:15

**5. God likes companionship**

**5. God likes companionship** <sup>□1</sup>. Man was not intended to be alone. At first there was something missing in him. Man is a social creature. He is made to enjoy other people. God desires friendship and satisfying companionship for the human race. Man tried to get companionship from the animals, but eventually something greater was given him. The human race became man and woman. Man and woman need each other, both one-by-one and community-by-community. Man was made to be a social creature, and not an isolated individual.

□1 2:18–25

**• Blessings given back in Jesus**

This was God's intent. Men and women have lost these blessings, but all of them are given back to us in Jesus.



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