

5598U

FLORIDA BIBLE SCHOOL - 1993

THE GARDEN OF GOD

Speaker: Bro. Barry Van Heerden

Study 1: Eastward in Eden before the Fall

Reading: Genesis 2

Good morning my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord. Good morning!

I had an urgent meeting with the committee last night, and I wanted to know why when I first came out here, I took the first class, and now I come out 2 years later, and I'm now taking the 3rd class? and they explained to me that it was very simple, that when I came out the first time they considered me to be a first class speaker; how does that feel, brother Tec? My advice is don't come back a second time!

Dealing with the garden of God, b&s, last time I was out, I was speaking to a number of brethren and sisters and I know a lot of you are very keen on gardening and so am I and I thought this was a nice common theme that we could share together, this theme on the

garden of God. Of course, a well kept garden, when you look at a well kept garden, it is a place of great beauty. It is a place of tranquillity especially if you look at a park, it is a place where man and God work together, it is a place where God and man come together; man plants, man waters but it's God that gives the increase. Who of us wouldn't marvel at a neatly kept lawn? and I know from the brethren here, that a lot of you sweat over your lawns. Who of us wouldn't marvel at a beautiful rose? When in the early morning as you walk around, just a dew drop hanging on a twig, and when we walk around creation, how we marvel at God's handiwork. Is it any wonder, b&s, that the book of all books, starts off with a garden? the garden of Eden, and as we go through scripture together, is it any wonder that when man went out from the fellowship that he had with his Maker, he was driven from the garden, into a waste howling wilderness, and there he was to wander around! Is it any wonder, b&s, that the second Adam had to tramp His way back to the garden of God, in the garden of agony, in the garden of Gethsemane? Is it any wonder that when we see that picture of the risen Lord and His bride, that they're in the garden of Joseph of Arimathea? and when we pray for the kingdom of God, is it any wonder, that we'll meet with our Lord in the garden of love, and finally to live in paradise restored forever?

So woven into this incredible tapestry of the garden of God, we find the Lord Jesus Christ, starts His teachings so many times, rooted in the scene of the garden. He says,

'A sower went forth to sow; some seeds fell by the wayside, some in rocky places, others amongst the thorns and some in good soil'; and again, He would say, 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he came seeking fruit thereon'; and again He would say, 'the kingdom of God is likened unto a grain of mustard seed which a man took and cast into his garden and there grew and became a tree, and the birds of heaven came and lodged in the branches thereof'. Time and time again, in the teachings of the Master, He draws on this great theme, the Garden of God. So when we come to look at a beautiful garden, a beautiful park where man and God are in perfect unison together, in harmony together, we see there a vision of the kingdom of God. A vision of the paradise that we look forward to! but of course, when we see a garden that is unkept, when the weeds are growing high, and the garden is neglected, we are reminded of when man is out of fellowship with God and man no longer cares!

So I bring you to Genesis 2, and we'll look at this garden eastward in Eden, a place that was set apart from the rest of creation. This was a **special place**, this was a **holy** place. Of course, as parents prepare for parenthood, we in our natural ways prepare the environment for the child that is to be given to us graciously by God. We prepare the crib, we prepare the room, we prepare the draperies, the room is kept clean, all the diapers are ready, and so it is the same when we come to looking at our Creator. He created the whole environment, the heavens and the earth and the everything that we see and when everything was prepared, so the most important part of His creation, that which was created in His own image and after His own likeness, was then placed in the place prepared for us.

Genesis 2 verse 7, 'The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'. He was created outside of the garden, and later on, he will be brought into the garden. Of course, this is one of the things the Lord Jesus Christ picks up in the New Testament, **things that happened outside the Land, outside of circumcision, outside of the covenant, and then brought into it.**

So He introduced to us the method by which God created the first Adam; and when we see this in its incredible simplicity, we wonder and we marvel, how that men who study the bible cannot come to the same conclusions that we do? Just look at the simplicity of what we have read together. 'The LORD God formed man from the **dust** of the ground', this is the Hebrew word 'aphar' (6083), and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul'. Now just look at the simplicity of the teaching! this is the first of all first principles, and that is the mortality of man. Dust + the breath of life = living souls. A living soul - the breath of life = dust; how beautifully simple are the words that we find in the book of Genesis, this book of genes, this book of beginnings.

So you notice the processes: dust + the breath of life = a living soul, a living soul - the breath of life= dust. Simple and yet profound, here then is one of the great first principles, the mortality of man. This incredible specimen of humanity was as physically perfect as any man ever was. But this wonderful God that we worship, was not satisfied

with this beautiful being to just wander around in this great universe, in this great world which He had created, everything was very good, NO! He was going to make a special place. So in verse 8 it says, 'And so the LORD God **planted**', God is the first gardener, there He is, the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; this didn't just happen! This isn't just some lesson on evolution, **God did something, God planted a garden**, eastward in Eden. Although the LORD God had made the heavens and the earth, although this Almighty Creator of ours, had created all things. So there was created the heavens and the earth; there was light and darkness, there was the firmament; there was the seed; the herb bearing seed of its kind; the sun, moon and stars; for signs and for seasons; for fish and the fowl and the beasts; and finally man. Although there was all that, there was in it a special place called **Eden**.

Does anyone know what the word 'Eden' means? (I don't have any brownie points, I'm not going to get caught up with Noddy badges this time; brownie points, anyone for a brownie point?) It means 'delight' (5730), and that's exactly what it was, it was a place of 'delight'. So within Creation we see this special place of God's delight, and **in that place to the east**, we see this special **garden** enclosed, hedged about, a garden set apart, holy unto the LORD, this garden which the LORD God had planted. It is a **seed within a seed**, it is almost a reconstruction of the tabernacle, there we see the tabernacle with the Outer Court, with the Holy place, but here we see, the Holy of Holies.

Continuing in verse 8, 'And there (in the special place, in the Holy of Holies) there He, that is God, put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food'. So first of all, from that verse we see, that **God planted the garden**, God was the first gardener; the second point is that **God put the man in it**, and the third point that we learn, is that **God made the trees and they were all beautiful to look at, and they were all good for food**, well in this particular case. So all the trees were living, moving, breathing sculptures of beauty, and not only that but they belonged to the eco-system, that when we breathe out, that they would breathe in what we breathed out; they are part of our environment, they cannot be separated from Creation, they are part of our eco-system. So they're not just a dead sculpture, they are living, moving, breathing sculptures of beauty and are to teach us profound lessons. All the trees satisfy the eyes, some trees satisfy the flesh because they had fruit, but there was only one tree that was desired to make one wise.

Verse 9, the middle of the verse. 'The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'. So we know that Adam had free access to the tree of life, there was no restrictions placed on him to the tree of life. Only the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, so then we come to look at the **tree of life**. What type of tree was it? I'm going to suggest to you that it was an **almond tree**, and the reason why I'm going to suggest that to you, is because there are a number of passages in scripture that would suggest that the tree of life related to an almond tree. First of all, if you look at point 3 there, the very first tree that comes to life in Israel in the

springtime, is in fact, the almond tree. Going to point 2 (we're going to do this back to front) Aaron's rod that budded which was clearly a picture or a prophecy of the raising of Jesus in the tomb, when Aaron's rod, the Branch, 'behold, the man whose name is the Branch'; that Branch was laid before the LORD and what did it blossom? it blossomed and produced almonds, that's number 17. Of course, in a slightly different way, when we study the lampstand in Exodus 25, you'll see the description given of the lampstand there is a symbolic tree, because we have a shaft, a centre shaft, we have three branches growing out the one side, and three branches growing out the other side, and of course, when you add all the almond buds and flowers together on that 7 branched candlestick, you will know that there are 22 buds of almonds. Of course, 22 ties us back to the Hebrew alphabet and for those that want to come to the talk on the Hebrew alphabet, that's the little hook that I'm going to put in your jaw to bring you down there. 22 buds and flowers in the 7 branched candlestick, 'thy Word (22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet) is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path', you'll find that in Psalm 119 verse 105. The tree of life, the descriptions given to us, first of all, Proverbs 3 verse 18, 'wisdom and understanding is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her'; Proverbs 11 verse 30, 'The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life'; Proverbs 15 verse 4, 'a healing tongue is a **tree of life**', so we see, that all these descriptions that we find in the Proverbs relate to the tree of life. It's almost as if we have the tree of life and we have different visions or different interpretations of that tree of life: **wisdom, understanding, the fruit of righteousness, the healing tongue**, here we have 4 different visions of the same tree. It's almost a picture of Jesus, isn't it? in the gospels, this tree of life, and we have 4 portrait painters who paint for us the tree of life there in the New Testament, through the gospels there of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Just returning to the garden now in Genesis. The tree of life then, was no ordinary tree. It was a tree that was designed to sustain and refresh, both natural and spiritual life that had been infused into man at his creation. It was the apostle Peter that said that the Lord Jesus was hanged on a tree; it wasn't a tree at all, it was **a dead, cruel stake that stood on a hill outside Jerusalem**, that's what it was! But here's the paradox, out of that dead cruel stake of wood, came **life**; out of death comes life, is it any wonder that in Genesis we find the words '**the evening and the morning were the first day**'? We would always say, 'the morning and the evening (in South Africa we do that, I don't know what they do in the northern hemisphere, but certainly back down in South Africa that's what we say; we would say that the day begins with the morning, but not in God's sight. No! the evening, out of death comes life, the evening and the morning was the first day, and of course, Jesus said, 'it is finished; into thy hands I do commend My Spirit' and that which was now dead, came to life again. It began a process of not natural life but spiritual life, immortal life, life that would never end. Dead wood became living wood; a dead tree became a living tree, it became the tree of life which buds and flowers and bringing forth fruit, just like Aaron's rod. Whereas Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in the New Testament we are commanded to eat; 'take, eat, this is My body which is given for you'.

Come into John 20 in the New Testament and we'll recall as we move from this garden,

we're going to look at another garden now, and you'll remember that the tree of life was **in the midst** of the garden. We just want to show how this term '**midst**' is used in the New Testament. 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I **in the midst**', just recall the words of Jesus in the New Testament as He opens His teachings He says, when you see people think about trees, and when you see trees think about people. He says, 'you'll know a tree by its fruits, because a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruits, and an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. You'll know a tree by its fruits! And Jesus is not talking about trees, He's talking about people, and He's talking about people that are going to bring forth fruit, meet for repentance; these are the fruits of the Spirit. Now when you go out into creation and have a look at trees, you don't see too many fruit trees growing wild. Fruit trees are orchards, they are well organized, they are in rows; just look at what we have before us, we have the rows of an orchard before my very eyes, very easy for me to see, but you might not see it so clearly. The rows, they're like rows before me, this is the garden, it is well organized and of course, for an orchard to bring forth fruit, that orchard doesn't only have to be organized, it has to be watered, it has to be tended, it has to be guarded against bugs and animals; you have to fertilize, you have to water, you have to care for them, and then, of course, the tree will bring forth abundantly.

That's the garden we need to look at here, as we look at John 20 and here in verse 19 and I'm taking it from the RV, this is after the resurrection, after Aaron's rod had budded and had come to life, that is to say, after the resurrection of the second Adam. Verse 19, 'When therefore it was evening (Genesis 1, 'the evening and the morning were the first day') when therefore it was evening on that day, the first day of the week (this is the beginning of a new creation) the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and **stood in the midst**, and said unto them, Peace be unto you'. Just move down to verse 26 and we find almost a repetition of what we found in verse 19: verse 26, 'And after eight days (again, resurrection) again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then Jesus cometh (notice again) the doors were shut (and again) He **stood in the midst**, and said, Peace be unto you'. So we see the tree of life here **in the midst of the garden**, bringing peace, why? because He is our Peace, because He is the King of Peace! The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life, but the **work** of righteousness, according to Isaiah is peace. So we see here, **peace and righteousness** in the tree of life in the midst of the garden. This precious garden, this orchard, this well organized garden, Jesus and His disciples.

We come back now to Genesis 2 and we'll look very briefly at the **river** that went out of Eden. Genesis 2 verse 10, again I'm reading from the RV: 'And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became four heads'. So you see, there was one river in the Garden of Eden, and as it comes out it departs into 4 heads: 'the name of the first is Pison, that which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is much gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. The name of the second river is Gihon: the same is that which compasseth the whole land of Cush' (which is Africa - Cush means 'black'-3568) and the name of the third is Hiddekel, that which goes towards the east of Assyria (if you look in your

margin it will tell you that's the Tigris) and the fourth river is Euphrates'. In the paradise restored in Revelation 22, you'll find a description there given 'a pure river of the water of life clear as crystal', and clearly that allusion would come from the Genesis record. There is then, **a river of life** as well as **a tree of life**, but notice that in the garden of God there was a **single river, the river of life**. Outside of the garden, it parted into 4 heads, and there's a beautiful little exhortation there, that **within** the garden there was **no division**, division only occurred outside of the garden, and something I don't have the time to develop, but if you'd like to just develop it for yourselves, and that is this little principle of 4 heads. When it divided it divided into 4 heads, and of course, there's a whole load of different allusions to the 4 faces of the cherubim, the 4 beasts that come up out of sea in Daniel 7, the 4 heads, and there are some beautiful little studies that you can look at for yourselves, in relationship to these 4 heads of the rivers. But more of that in discussion! The prime purpose of the river here in verse 10, was to **water the garden**, but notice also that the earth was also **watered by mists** in verse 6: Genesis 2 verse 6, 'There went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground', perhaps the mist was drawn from the river and through the process of condensation, watered all the plants roundabout. Perhaps that's the way it worked! if you go and look at this Manatee River here, early in the morning, you will see a soft gentle mist coming off the river; beautiful sight to watch a calm river, early in the morning, and you can see a mist rising up off the river, and hopefully when you see that again, you'll be reminded of the Genesis' record. It must have been an incredible sight to watch that mist coming off the river.

Genesis 2 verse 8, it tells us that the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and **there He put the man** whom He had formed. This is repeated almost verbatim in verse 15 with one or two differences. In verse 15 of Genesis 2, it tells us 'that the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of delight (Eden) and there he's given a task to do: **to dress it and to keep it**'. Going back to verse 8, the word 'put' there is the Hebrew word 'suwm' (7760) and it means literally 'to put, to place, to set in place'; but when we come to verse 15 and we're told there that the LORD God took the man and 'put' him into the garden, that's a very different Hebrew word altogether, and I'm going to say it and I'm going to ask you what it reminds you of: the Hebrew word here is 'nuwach' (noah) very good, very good, another brownie point to you! And what does 'nuwach' mean? it means 'comfort, to be comforted' (5117), excellent! 'to rest, to set down, to be comforted' this is the same Hebrew root word, so here in Genesis 2 verse 15, 'The LORD God took the man and rested him, comforted him in the garden of delight, to dress it and to keep it'. So here's the exhortation that the work that was given to Adam to dress and to keep the garden, was to be **a work of pleasure, it was to be a work of comfort, it was to be a work of rest!** Sweat was something that was to happen later after he had broken the commandment, but here, the work was pleasant, the reward was sure! Of course, we have that beautiful little hymn that we sing, 'Come, labour on, because the toil is pleasant and the reward is sure', so that the work that we do in the truth, the work that we do with our brethren and sisters is work that is pleasurable, it brings us comfort, or it should; if it's to be a drudgery, like those 2 onyx stones that the high priest had to wear on his shoulders who was balanced by what he

had on his heart; you'll remember that the names were engraved on his heart as well as on his shoulders, and if they are engraved on our hearts, the work that we do in the service of the truth should always be a pleasure.

Come back to verse 16 of Genesis 2, 'The LORD God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat thereof: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die', and the margin renders that as 'in dying thou shalt die', in other words, you would start the process of dying. There are two points that I'd like to bring to your notice here in verse 16, the first one is that **man was the first creature that God had made with His own will and the test of abstinence** was the second. The simple test of obedience that God laid before His prime creation, man, was the simple test of **abstinence**, to say 'no' to human desires, to say 'no' to fleshly desires. That is the very first test, it is the test of abstinence, and not only that, but it is a very good thing to learn to say 'no' from time to time. I know there's a lot of brethren and sisters that say 'yes', 'yes', 'yes', 'yes' until such time as they have no energy left at all, and sometimes it is wise to say 'no'. They had access to the tree of life but not access to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but in paradise restored we find these words Revelation 22 verse 2, 'that on other side of the river, there was a tree of life which beared 12 manner of fruit, yielding her fruit every month and the leaves were for the healing of the nations'. In brother Harry Whitaker's book he draws our attention to this, and wonders whether (and I'll put this to you) whether in fact, they took of the leaves of the tree, which sustained their mortal life. If they ate the fruit, brother Harry Whitaker suggests that the man and the woman would have broken the commandment within the first month, because the fruits of the tree were based on the monthly cycle; but I'll leave that for you to ponder about. But it is important for us to notice that the **first** commandment was not the negative commandment; the first commandment was the **positive commandment** to dress and to keep. The second commandment was the negative commandment and that is, 'this tree, not that tree'. In Christ, everything is 'yea' not 'nay, nay'; the Old Testament was, 'thou shalt not, thou shalt not, thou shalt not', in the New Testament when the lawyer comes to Jesus, he said of all the law and all the prophets what's the most important? '**thou shalt**', what was negative now becomes positive; thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, this is the first and great commandment and the other is like unto it, '**thou shalt** love thy neighbour as thyself'. Of course, that's imbedded here for us in Genesis, the first commandment was the positive commandment, **to dress and to keep**, and the word 'keep' (shamar-8104) there means 'to guard, to protect'.

Verse 18, 'The LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; so I will make a help meet for him', those words are stark, profound and simple, as all the words in Genesis are. In the midst of this most incredible environment that God had created for this first human man, this first man made in His image after His likeness, even with the animals Adam was still alone. Men usually are lonely, you'll notice that in life that men are usually more lonely than women; women can get along with us and without us a lot easier than we can get along without them! Man was lonely, man was alone! The

second point arises from the first and that is, **from God's point of view, it is not good that man should live alone**. Of course, the opposite is true, it is good, that a man should have company; it is good that man should have a friend, it is good that man should have a mate. In our Proverbs the other day, 'he that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing', it doesn't say there anything about husbands, does it? 'he that findeth a wife, findeth a good thing'. But the most important thing about this is, that although the man should have company, he should have a friend, he should have a mate, the most important thing here is **fellowship**, and I believe that's the issue here. Because bracketed between the word 'help meet' in verse 18 and the word 'help meet' in verse 20, we find God brings the beasts of the field and the fowl of the air before Adam to see what he would name them! and whatever he named them that would be the name thereof. So although man had the company of the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, although they were his friend, he spoke to them, there was no fellowship with one of his own kind. The word '**help meet**' here, the word 'meet' in Hebrew carries with it the meaning of 'answering to' in fact you'll see it in your margin, if you have a RV margin; this word '**meet**' means 'answering to, corresponding to, a reflection of, a meeting of the minds, a meeting of each other's person, and in all of this we see **fellowship**'. So this special creation was designed by God so that man should not live alone, that man should have perfect fellowship with one of his own kind. Significantly the same and yet remarkably different, and thank God for that! I'm so pleased that God designed woman the way that He did! I often think that He had a great stroke of genius when He designed woman; I love woman! I'm married to a very beautiful woman and I have 3 daughters, so you can see I'm caught between a rock and a hard place there!

So they were made of one flesh, to be one flesh, to produce one flesh; so in verse 21, 'The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept: and He took one of His ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, **build He woman**'. There's the margin, He builded the woman and He brought her to the man'. The little word 'rib' there is the Hebrew word 'tsela' (6763) and if you want to follow it up you'll find it in Ezekiel's temple, time and time and time again, that little word 'tsela' in Ezekiel's temple. He **builded** (1129) the woman as the ecclesia was to be builded from the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He slept on that cruel stake in the ground, and God will bring Christ's bride to the ecclesia, to the man. Adam was created from the **dust of the ground**, she was **builded from his side**, and there's a beautiful little exhortation here for us as well. She was builded from his side, to be at his side; she was not created from his head, to be his domineering fish wife, the dictator in the home; equally she wasn't created from his foot to be his doormat; she was created from his side, to be at his side. In Greek we find these different words for **love**: there is 'eros' which is erotic love, it's face to face love; we find 'phileo' (5368) which is brotherly love, and it is side by side love; and from these two loves, we have 'agape' (26) love which is sacrificial love which grows from that. Can two walk together accept they be agreed? They cannot! If one is walking to Rome and one is walking to Jerusalem, sooner or later, you're walking back to back. It is impossible that we should accept the doctrine of marrying outside of the faith, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? what communion hath light with darkness? what

concord doth Christ have with Belial? what part hath the believer with the unbeliever? **Fellowship** in Genesis is what, I believe, is the underlying principle of what we're looking at here. Fellowship is the most precious thing in this life, fellowship with God and His Son; fellowship with our wives. That's why the Lord hates putting away! you can see all of those lessons here in Genesis, it's a negation of what we believe, it's a negation of the first principles of what we find in Genesis; fellowship with our wives, fellowship with our families, fellowship with each other in this garden of God, this orchard bringing forth fruit, fruit meet for repentance! Fruit of the Spirit,-love, mercy, longsuffering, kindness, goodness; fellowship in Christ is the mortar that binds us together as living stones; it needs to be dressed, it needs to be kept, it needs to be guarded so that the predators, the insects don't come in and take over a fellowship. Our fellowship, Christ's fellowship, the fellowship that's so precious to us, we need to keep the garden and to guard the garden, to protect it. It is the compost that binds the roots to the trees, these living trees, it is the compost that binds us together, it just nourishes us and feeds us so that at the Master's coming, there will be a garden of goodly trees bringing forth the fruits in their seasons, whose leaves will not wither and whatsoever they do, shall prosper.