

'IN THE BEGINNING'
(The Origins of Everything Coming to Pass in These 'Last Days')
Studies in Genesis 1-11

'Paradise'

'Paradise' is an ancient word meaning *an enclosed park*. The Garden of Eden was exactly that. In fact, the name **Eden** comes from another ancient Babylonian word *edenu* which means *oasis*, a place of extreme beauty, pleasure, and delight. Other definitions say *paradise* is a state of mental bliss or extreme happiness.

In the beginning, the Garden of Eden was paradise. Christ also referred to the location of OT saints after death as *paradise* (**Luke 23:43**). And upon Christ's resurrection, the souls of deceased OT saints were transported to heaven (**Matthew 27:52-53, Ephesians 4:8-10**), and *paradise* is now found in heaven above (**2 Corinthians 12:4, Revelation 2:7**). The word can be summed up, to say that *paradise* is a perfect place of God's presence, blessing and righteousness, where sin and wickedness of any kind is never to be found (**Revelation 21:4-7**).

'Paradise' can also be a state of being that born-again Christians experience whenever they live in obedience to God's Word, are filled with His Spirit, and walking in His grace apart from the world. It is a spiritual condition of the heart and mind that is experiencing God's good, acceptable, perfect will for them (**Romans 12:1-2**). Someday we will actually move on to heaven, *the paradise of God* (**Revelation 2:7**), but now in this life, a personal paradise is possible for *Spirit-filled* believers (**Ephesians 5:17b-21**) who live totally unto God and separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil (**1 John 2:15-17**). The Lord Jesus Christ, in His first coming, lived a perfect, sinless, righteous personal life in this sin-cursed world. Set apart unto God and holiness and maintaining a cordial, holy distance from sinful society, Jesus set the example for a *paradise lifestyle* in this decadent, broken, hostile world (**Hebrews 12:1-3**). The *paradise lifestyle* of the Lord is possible for Jesus' followers (**1 John 4:17**). Just as the Garden of Eden was *paradise* despite the fact that temptation was present, the devil was on the prowl and Adam was lonely, and yet it was perfect. As long as these challenges were being overcome, not succumbed unto, it was still paradise.

Paradise was lost for a few simple reasons; the same reasons that believers can lose their personal paradise of walking with God each day. Adam and Eve listened to *'the lie' of the devil (that God's Word isn't 100% true, that disobedience has no consequences and that you are 'god' of your own life / Genesis 3)*. And even after they partook of the forbidden fruit, Eden was still paradise. But when the first sinners were given opportunity to confess and repent, they wouldn't do it. Instead the first couple blamed each other and the serpent and Satan. Thus, God, as He had warned, punished them for their disobedience, lying, blaming and overall evasion of responsibility for their sin. The *curse* upon them, the serpent, and the environment was imposed - 'Paradise was lost'. And after providing atonement for their sin, God evicted them from the Garden of Eden *paradise*, blocking access to the *tree of life* and imposition of their *death* sentence began (**Genesis 2:17**).

Christians also lose the spiritual *paradise* of close intimate fellowship with God when we believe *the lie* of the devil through the godless world system or our own covetous flesh (**1 John 2:15-17**). In daily life, it really is a simple as that. Paradise is not just dwelling in an environmental oasis – it includes a believer overcoming *'the lie'*, making right choices and if we fail, being Spirit-filled in repenting, admitting our sin, and confessing to God and one another (**James 5:16**).

The Lord Jesus says, ***"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him (or her) who overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"*** (**Revelation 2:7**). Although this is a future prophecy about the *tree of life* fruit in the coming kingdom of God, overcomer believers get a taste of it now, whenever they're filled with *the fruit of the Spirit* (**Galatians 5:22-23**). The **Holy Spirit** brings *paradise* to a Spirit-filled believer's heart and soul, then to his or her family, their church, job, and community, here and now, even in this fallen world. **PtL**

'In a Perfect World'
(Faith, Hope & Love – The Abundant Christian Life)
Genesis 2:8-25

The Perfect Location

(God's predestination is always best)

*"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden... **there He put the man** whom He had form-ed. 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 and **the tree of knowledge of good and evil...**" 2:8-14*

- God **put** Adam where He wanted him to work and worship Him. It was the most pleasant, good learning place for Adam.
 - Do you believe that God is in sovereign control of where you are, how you got here, and wherever you should be in the future?
- **Read Acts 17:24-28** – Discuss to what extent God's predestination of our lives goes in controlling our lives.
 - Why does He graciously orchestrate (most, some, or all?) of our lives?
 - How does this knowledge affect your view of life and what's happening to you presently?

The Perfect Vocation

(God's placement is always best)

*"Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to **tend and keep it**. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden **you may** freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil **you shall not** eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." And **the LORD God said**, "It is **not good that man should be alone**; I will make him a helper comparable to him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and **brought them to Adam to see what he would call them** ... **whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name...**" 2:15-20*

- What spiritual factors determine your life vocation?
 - What other factors can detour finding what God made us for and what will be most fulfilling to us? (*Romans 12:1-2*)
- According to this account of the first marriage, what are God's primary purposes for marriage?
 - How can you tell if God has brought just the right person to you for a life together as husband and wife?
 - How important is marrying the right person or staying single to having a *nearly perfect* life from God?

The Perfect Companion

(God's partnership is always best)

*"...**for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him**. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and he slept; (God) took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then **the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman**, and **He brought her to the man**. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man." **Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh**. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were **not ashamed**." 2:21-25*

- Discuss the way God made Eve for Adam's spouse. Why didn't God shape her from the ground as He did Adam?
- Discuss last two sentences God had Moses write about biblical marriage. (Discuss Jesus' quotation and addition in *Matthew 19:4-6*).