

A figure



Eden Means More Than a Place on the Map

Genesis 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Moses packs a lot of information into this one verse. Most of it gets overlooked. Here are some things you may not have noticed:

- Did you notice that God is the only one doing anything?
He plants the garden, and **He** puts the man **He** formed into the garden. The garden and the man are simply recipients of God's activity. God does it all.
- Did you notice the two-part name used for God?
Moses didn't just write God's the personal, relational name: **LORD (Yahweh)**. Nor did he simply write the more impersonal name that refers to God as Creator: **God (Elohim)**. Moses combines both names, implying that God is acting as a relational creator who involves Himself personally in His creation. Yahweh Elohim is a God who cares.
- Did you notice the words "towards the east"?
What might have led Moses to write these "towards the east"? There must have been some reason because Hebrew literature contains no extraneous language. Every word is deliberately used. As I read, I got curious. What does "east" imply?

In the Bible, the word "east" can carry either a positive or a negative connotation. After Adam sinned, God sent him and Eve out of Eden to the **east**. The cherubim guarding Eden's entrance were at its **eastern** border preventing re-entrance. Cain settled in the **east**. The **east** represents the fallen world.

Positively, however, the temple entrance was on its **east** side. The Magi came from the **east**. The sun rises in the **east** and turns darkness into light. Can these uses of "east" foreshadow God the Son?

"East" occurs a lot in Jesus' life. Jesus lived and died in the marred land **east** of Eden. He brought light into that dark world. The women discover that Jesus had risen from the dead as the sun rises in the **east** (Matthew 28:5). Is Moses unknowingly foreshadowing Jesus' resurrection? I think perhaps he is.

- Do you know what the word "Eden" means?
We think of Eden as a place name and say it much as we'd say "Cincinnati" or "London." The word Eden, however, is more than a geographical title; it has a very specific meaning. Eden means delight. Adam was placed in the midst of delight.

Edens through the Ages

The Genesis garden is a prototype of other Edens to come. Remember the Old Testament "promised land"? What is that land but a reminder of Eden?

In the New Testament: God brings people into His kingdom and places them in Himself. (See Colossians 3:3.) He offers Himself as our place of delight. Eden means more than a place on the map. God is our Eden.

At this very moment, God is finishing the final Eden, a home in heaven that will never be destroyed or distorted or lost. (See John 14:1-3.) That final Eden lasts forever. Who lives there? Anyone who wants Jesus to be their source of delight. Eden means more than a place on the map. Heaven is our Eden to come.

God's creation reveals God's unchanging character. What do we learn about God's character from Genesis 2:8? We learn that God not only creates delight, but that He creates delight *for His people*. We picture God's creation in many ways – full of power, vast, with astounding variety – but a creation designed for delight? That's not our first thought. We should reconsider. God not only designs delight, He places His people in its presence.

A Few Questions

- Do you believe that God wants to delight you?
- Do you think that God (in our "east of Eden" world) provides physical as well as spiritual delights?
- How might your attitude towards God change if you trusted that He provides delight this side of heaven?
- Are you in the habit of noticing ways that God currently gives us foretastes of the heavenly Eden to come?
- Read Galatians 5:22-23. Does the Spirit use His fruit to fill you with delight When?

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