

# THE GARDEN STATE

GENESIS 2:4-25 JULY 14, 2021

Elon Musk is always in the news for one reason or another. Recently he made headlines on account of the house he lives in while working at SpaceX's facility. Actually, Musk is in the process of creating a new town in the rural area. They call it Starbase, Texas. Musk tweeted, "Please consider moving to Starbase...encourage friends to do so!"<sup>1</sup> His house on the SpaceX campus is a 20 foot by 20 foot, foldable dwelling.<sup>2</sup> No matter. He's not planning on staying on earth anyway. Musk has repeatedly declared his intention to bring humans to Mars. His outlook isn't too cheery. While he considers it a "glorious adventure,"<sup>3</sup> he also says that the first inhabitants there will face danger, discomfort, lack of supplies and other hardships. "Honestly," he says, "a bunch of people will probably die in the beginning."<sup>4</sup> Not exactly an encouraging assessment from the architect of a new world.

In contrast, tonight we'll see God bring His special creation into a Garden. And rather than having to eke out their survival in a wasteland, we'll find that God has provided everything they need lavishly. Not only for man's subsistence, but for human relationships, human purpose and enjoyment in life.

God is our Maker. He is our Sovereign. He is the Decider. He must be obeyed if we want to live and not die. But, make no mistake, He is a gracious and generous Provider. A Giver of extravagant, beautiful gifts that keep giving more and more to us as we receive them. That fantastic generosity is on full display in our passage tonight, starting in the second half of verse 4.

**Genesis 2:4b-5 - At the time that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, <sup>5</sup>no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.**

Genesis 1:1 through 2:4a can serve as a prologue to the Book. Now we zoom in to see more of the specifics of what was presented in the last chapter. Some say, "Wait, I thought the earth had been filled with vegetation on day 3 of the Creation week?" It was. *Now* the focus of the text is going to shift to God's dealings with man. And we'll see the Lord build a special base of operations in a special Garden that He plants in the land of Eden. In verse 5, *Eden* is in view, not the world at large.<sup>5</sup>

There's another important addition here. Previously (in the Hebrew) God had simply been referred to by the word Elohim. Now, He is called "Yahweh Elohim." And we'll see a focus on naming and calling and God's personal interaction with humanity. God is a *relational* God. The Bible reveals that He wants to have a personal, heart-to-heart relationship with you. He knows you by name and His desire is that you know Him intimately as well.

**Genesis 2:6 - <sup>6</sup>But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground.**

It seems that the world was one big greenhouse. Anywhere you went, if you stuck a shovel in the ground and turned it over a few times, water would bubble up. It reminds us of the life-giving Word of God. Turn anywhere in these 66 books and do a little digging, you're going to find water for your

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dallasnews.com/business/2021/04/06/starbase-texas-can-elon-musk-really-create-his-own-city-near-spacexs-gulf-coast-launchpad/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.chron.com/news/space/article/elon-musk-texas-house-boca-chica-16278768.php>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BN88HPUm6j0&t=785s>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.space.com/elon-musk-mars-spacex-risks-astronauts-die>

<sup>5</sup> *CSB Study Bible Notes*

soul. You'll find all that you need for life and Godliness, that you might cultivate your heart and bear spiritual fruit. In Isaiah 58 we read that, as the Lord leads us and directs us, He makes our lives like a well-watered garden.<sup>6</sup> He provides all we need to be strong and satisfied and never dry.

**Genesis 2:7 - <sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.**

Man was a special project in God's creation. The term used is one that describes the delicate, artistic work of a potter.<sup>7</sup> Here, God is pictured as coming down Himself, to hand-craft a human being, getting close enough to breathe His own life into the nostrils of Adam. This is no withdrawn, far off God. This is a God *with* us, near at hand.

Scholars point out that the term used for "breath" is one the Bible applies to God and humans, not animals.<sup>8</sup> We are *not* just another animal. We are made in the image of God. With intellect, morality and capability of critical and abstract and spiritual thought. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

**Genesis 2:8-9 - <sup>8</sup> The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed. <sup>9</sup> The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

Eden means paradise,<sup>9</sup> or pleasantness<sup>10</sup> - garden of delight.<sup>11</sup> It was going to be man's home, his temple, and his workplace. Naturally, he'd be able to venture out if he wanted, but this was his base of operations. It would be here that he would begin to cultivate and administrate the planet. Meanwhile, we see that God stocked it full of fruit trees. Adam wouldn't have to wait to eat until he grew the grain himself. All that he needed on a practical level was supplied.

At the same time, the Garden wasn't just a utilitarian place. It was a place of pleasure and aesthetic beauty. The fruit trees weren't just for eating, God wanted Adam to enjoy *looking* at them too.

This idea that true Christianity means living in a burlap tunic, out in a hut somewhere with no pleasure, no enjoyment, no delight, that's not what God wants. Obviously God doesn't want us to worship material things or obsess over food and clothing. But He gave us these things for our enjoyment. Being an ascetic monk does not make you spiritual. In fact, in many ways it makes you an ingrate. Enjoying and creating beauty in this world is important and it's Godly. Beautiful music, beautiful stories, pure and beautiful works of art. These are expressions of the image of God.

What's a way of applying that if you're not a creative person? Well, for one, guys - let your wives decorate your house! I know money can get tight and sometimes people fall into the Pinterest trap of comparison and discontent. But there's nothing wrong with a beautiful home or a beautiful church building. In fact, it can reflect the work of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 58:11

<sup>7</sup> NET Bible Notes

<sup>8</sup> T. C. Mitchell *The Old Testament Usage of Neshama*

<sup>9</sup> DBL Hebrew

<sup>10</sup> CSB Study Bible Notes

<sup>11</sup> TWOT

There were two trees in the middle of the Garden. It was a reminder that all of life is to be centered on a relationship with God who made us. A relationship in which we enjoy His abundant provision and submit to His perfect direction and allow Him to define reality.

We'll never eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But you and I *will* eat from the tree of life (that is, if you've been born again). In Revelation 22 we're told that, in the New Jerusalem, these trees are lining the river of life which flows from the throne of God. They will bear twelve different kinds of fruit, producing one each month. Now, that's just downright fun!

**Genesis 2:10-14 - <sup>10</sup>A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers. <sup>11</sup>The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. <sup>12</sup>Gold from that land is pure; bdellium and onyx are also there. <sup>13</sup>The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.**

We don't know where Eden was. The truth is, earth's geography was undoubtedly *very* different before the flood. But, remember, Moses is speaking to a real audience somewhere in the wilderness of Sinai. And, even though we can't be sure the rivers listed still existed, it's clear that the general direction was somewhat known to the children of Israel. He said, "It would've been east of us. Over near where the Assyrians are and near these other regions."

There's a lot of speculation, we just don't know where to put the pin in the map. But here's what's more important: This is a record of places which were actual, geographical locations. Now, Peter said in 2 Peter 3 that the world as it was known before Noah perished with the flood. And we see here that verses 11 through 14 speaks in the present tense. This gives us indication that it is *Adam* writing the account which has been delivered to Moses. But, the important thing is that this is clearly not meant to be read as a *myth*, but a *report*. It talks about certain places and directions and deposits of minerals and the *quality* of the minerals there.

Speaking of which, that clues us in to the idea that Adam and Eve understood something about the mining and refining of gold. How to access gemstones. These weren't cavemen. They were incredibly intelligent, astute people.

**Genesis 2:15 - <sup>15</sup>The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.**

It's exciting to see here is how God brought man into this special place. It reminds us of those moments on shows like *Fixer Upper* where they bring the family home and reveal the splendor of the build and then say, "Welcome home, it's all yours!" In ancient Israel, there would be a time of betrothal between a man and a woman. The man would go, for quite some time, and prepare a home. Then one day he would show up again to lead the bridal procession and show his wife the home he had prepared. We see this personal, romantic element in God's actions toward man.

Of course, we know the same thing is going to happen for us, but in an even *more* glorious way. The Bridegroom has been away, busy preparing a place for us, and He will return and we will be brought home to paradise where we will be with the Lord forever, in joy and worship and service.

The terms used for “work” and “watch” are the same used later in serving God and worshipping Him. Though man has been driven from the garden, we’re still to work and watch for the Lord. Meanwhile, God watches over us and works on our behalf.

**Genesis 2:16-17 - <sup>16</sup>And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, <sup>17</sup>but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”**

We know the story, but let’s look at this command for a moment. It opens with liberty. “Here is My command: You are *free* to eat of *any* tree!” Those who picture God as an angry, withholding, rule-making accountant do not know the God of the Bible. He begins by commanding Adam to enjoy freedom and abundance and the many delights of what God had provided. But then there is a limitation given. Of the multiplied thousands of trees, there is just *one* that they must not eat from. Why? So that man could choose whether he would trust God or not - whether he would obey God or not - whether he would reciprocate selfless love toward God or not.

Perhaps Adam asked, “Wait, what’s ‘evil’?” We know what evil is, thanks to Adam and Eve’s failure. They had “good” all around them. God had pronounced creation very good. So if Adam were to say, “what is good?” God could answer, “All you see around you.” If he asked, “What is evil?” God would say, “You don’t need to know what evil is, only that it is the most dangerous thing imaginable.”

A fish doesn’t need to know what air is, only that being out in the air will kill it. Same with Adam and Eve when it came to evil. The boundary God was giving them was a *good* thing. It was a necessary thing. They *must* not eat it because if they ate it “dying they would die.”

The same choice is still presented to human beings today. There’s not a real, physical tree of the knowledge of good and evil anymore, but we’re still presented with the option: Will we trust God and obey His commands which show us how to have a full and blessed life, or will we go another way? Moses would later put this choice before the Israelites and say, “I’m setting before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life! Love the Lord and obey Him...for He *is* your life.”<sup>12</sup>

**Genesis 2:18 - <sup>18</sup>Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”**

It’s not that God *forgot* to make a companion for Adam. Rather, in the creation of woman, God wanted to show just how perfect she would be for him, that there was *no* other, better way.

At the same time, we see that God was providing for Adam that which would allow him to fulfill his purpose. God had told man, “be fruitful and multiply, fill the whole earth.” But, at this moment, it was *impossible* for Adam to fulfill that command. God did not say, “Figure it out!” Instead, He Himself provided all that was needed so that man could do what he was being asked to do.

**Genesis 2:19-20 - <sup>19</sup>The Lord God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup>The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him.**

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<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Adam was the first biologist. It is astonishing to read, ‘Whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.’ God gave true ownership and authority to man. At the same time, the Lord was showing man how unique he was and how hopeless he was without God’s intervention. Adam could *not* create a companion for himself. He could not fulfill his purpose without the Lord accomplishing it. And he would have to *wait* on God’s timing and God’s provision.

**Genesis 2:21-22 - <sup>21</sup> So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.**

The word used for “rib” here is never translated as “rib” in any other passage.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it speaks of an entire side. It seems that a big chunk of Adam was taken out. Why put Adam to sleep? There’s no pain in the garden. Well, this action accomplishes a lot of things. It pictures the death of Christ thousands of years later, whose wounded side led to the creation of His Bride. It demonstrated to Adam that God still exerts His power and will over the physical universe. It also shows that, in some things, there is nothing that man contributes to the work of God. Yes, man would contribute cultivation and dominion. But *this* act was all God.

The aftermath would also give Adam a lot to think about. He would go through life with his side unprotected. In some sense, it would be best for him to keep his wife close to his heart as a shield and a help.

God fashioned this woman and then brought her as yet another gift to man. It was God’s *greatest* gift to Adam. We can see how excited and involved and personal God was about all of this.

**Genesis 2:23-24 - <sup>23</sup> And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man. <sup>24</sup> This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.**

Adam was also the first poet! He agrees with God here that man was not made to be solitary. Lots of animals out there are. They cruise around, only interacting with others of their kind every now and then. Not humans. And certainly not the people of God. God made us to be in community and to live with one another and to interact in significant ways, truly living life side by side.

The primary way we do so is in a marriage relationship. That is the *first* relationship God established for human beings. Now, listen, Adam *had* to have a wife, otherwise there is no human race. This text is meant to be a general explanation, not a universal mandate. As we read the rest of Scripture it becomes clear that God directs some of His people to remain single. And, if that is the case, you are not more or less human or more or less Christian. But, generally speaking, people get married. And the standard for what that is has been established from the beginning of human history. Marriage as God intended, which leads to a meaningful and fulfilled life, is one biological man and one biological woman living together in a unified, monogamous relationship. That is the standard and the ideal. Sin has ruined that in many, many cases. But this is the design we’re seeing. Two people, unified together in a special way that trumps every other human relationship.

But what does this mean for us? Time only permits me to speak to those who are not married. If

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<sup>13</sup> Henry Morris *The Genesis Record*

you're not married, here's what this means: First, seek God on whether He wants you to get married. Adam didn't go out and find Eve, God *brought* her to him. If God's will is for you to get married, then He has a *specific* spouse in mind for you. It is *very* important that you allow Him to bring *that* spouse to you. If He does, that person will be a believer, of the opposite gender, who is ready to commit their lives to you and vice versa. Together, you are meant to bond in affection and understanding and spiritual pursuits and on every human level.

**Genesis 2:25 - <sup>25</sup> Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.**

Unsullied by sin, they were completely open and uninhibited. They had no need to feel vulnerable because there was no threat.

Look at all God had provided for this couple! The place they were in, the provisions for their life, the purpose He gave them, the partnership found in one another. They had it all.

Now, for some application as we close. If you're like me maybe you thought, "Well, shoot. These people had everything *perfect* and they *still* messed everything up. How can I hope to live up to God's want for my life?"

It's true, sin has fouled up a lot. Our world is ruined by it. Our minds and hearts are infected with it. But God is still the same. The generous, caring love He had for our first parents is the same He has for you and me. He has provided all we need to enjoy everlasting life, life more abundantly. He sets it all before us in His word. We can still choose to go His way. Or we can choose to die.

Going God's way has become harder now that sin is in the picture, but God still gives all the power and provision we need to receive the life He's made for us. It won't be without difficulty. But His provision and tenderness has not been cheapened in any way. Instead, knowing how intricately He wants to be involved in our lives and how much He has provided, we should allow Him to bring us into the places and relationships that He desires and then we should seek His will in our jobs, our marriages, our interactions with this world.

"But I want to do my own thing." You *can* do your own thing. It's just going to lead to death and ruin. God's commands are for our good and so that we can lay hold of the incredible, lavish gifts He wants to give us. Along the way, He uses our homes, our words, our relationships, our efforts to bless us, to bless this world, to beautify whatever corner of the Garden in which He's placed us. And we look forward to that day when He finally brings us to our forever home, a place with no more shame, no more pain, no more shortcomings. Where *at last* all will be made right and perfect and we commune with God face to face.