

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

The Story: *Primary*

When we see the beautiful world and remember how the Lord made it for us and gave it to us to be our home, it seems as if it ought always to be a very happy place. And it is happy when people are good. The Bible tells us of a garden, the Garden of Eden with beautiful trees and a river, where people lived and were happy. They were very near to heaven in those days, and lived like good children loving each other and the Lord. That time has been remembered as the Golden Age. They knew that the beautiful things were the Lord's, and that they were using them and caring for them for him.

The good people of those days lived in simple homes, by families and tribes, and did not want many things and money—which make us so much care and trouble. They loved to think about the Lord and heaven, and they loved the beautiful things of this world because each one taught them some lesson of the Lord's love. People in those days showed their good thoughts and feelings in the expressions of their faces. Angels were near to them, and they often saw and talked with them. Angels taught them from the Lord, for they did not have a written Bible in those days. It is interesting to learn about the good people of the Golden Age, and to think how much like them we can be today in the same world. We must read about the good people and the garden (Genesis 2).

Junior

Did you know that each one of us has a garden—even those who live in the city? The Lord gives them to us to take care of and enjoy. There are weeds to pull up, and seeds must be planted and tended before they will bear good fruit. Bad thoughts that spring up and lead to unkind words and deeds are weeds. Good thoughts that we have learned from our father and mother and teachers and kind friends are good seeds that grow and bear the fruits of kind words and deeds.

Remember the parable of the sower, and the parable of the wheat and tares (Matthew 13). The story of Eden tells about the garden in the minds of the good people of the Golden Age. "Eden" means "delight," for their good thoughts were filled with delight. There was one special thought that stood as a tree in the midst of the garden: the thought that everything belonged to the Lord, and that all their life and power was from him. This is the happiest, strongest, most peaceful of all thoughts, and the Lord wants us to enjoy it. There was another tree that it was forbidden to eat from. That was the thought that all things were their very own, and that they could do good by themselves. If they ate of that thought, it would spoil it all.

Read first of the garden in its beauty (Genesis 2:8–17). "Bdellium" is believed to mean pearl. Some of the names of rivers and of countries we shall meet later in the story. I would not try just yet to find them on the map. The people who first loved this story did not have maps, but thought of the names in a spiritual way. In the same way they thought of the place of the garden "eastward," the most holy quarter, and near to the Lord, and of the trees and the river of the garden.

We are told in *Arcana Coelestia* lovely things about the good people of the Golden Age. Their home was in Canaan, between the Euphrates River and Egypt. They lived in simple houses and in a simple way; they spoke by delicate expressions of the face; they were taught by angels and by wisdom that came to them without study from the Lord. These lovely thoughts are especially meant by the trees of the garden that the Lord God made to grow, and by the river. Remember the man in the first Psalm, like a fruitful tree by the river.

1. Where does it say that the garden was? Who planted it? What grew in it?
2. What tree was in the midst of the garden? What other tree is named?
3. What was Adam to do for the garden? What charge was given to him?
4. What gardens have we to care for?
5. What name of the Lord is used in the second chapter that is not used in the first?

Spiritual Study: *Intermediate*

Again I assume that we have our volume of *Arcana Coelestia* open. We must have a general thought of what the Garden of Eden represents, and must single out a few points for more careful study.

In general, the Garden of Eden is the picture of the Most Ancient Church in its prime. The story of creation tells of the steps by which that church was brought to this beautiful state, and the chapters that follow tell of its decline. A tree or a garden represents especially the intellectual side of a church or of an individual life, contrasted with a flock and shepherd, which represent its affectional side. Notice how the two figures run throughout the Scriptures. Remembering the kind of intellectual life of these celestial people, what are represented by the trees of their garden? What by its river?

For more special study, notice at Genesis 2:4 the change from the name “God,” to the name “Jehovah God”—for “LORD” in small capitals in our Bibles stands for the name “Jehovah.” While all divine names in the Scripture refer to the one only God, each name brings forward some particular attribute of the Divine. “Jehovah” refers to the divine love, and “God” to the divine truth. The name that prevails in a chapter shows the chapter to be of a celestial or of a spiritual character; it speaks of the Lord’s love or of his truth working for us. This opens a wonderful study in the Psalms. In Genesis 1 and 2 the name “God” is used through the steps of labor in creation, and the name “Jehovah” when we reach the love and peace of the Sabbath. Watch the divine names in our coming lessons. Let them add to our enjoyment.

Who can explain the spiritual meaning of the east and of the other quarters?

To consider more carefully the trees of the garden as types of the perceptions of wisdom of those Most Ancient people, what is represented by trees pleasant to the sight? And what by trees good for food? The most precious perception, the tree of life, was the perception that all life and blessing is from the Lord. And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the appearance that we live from ourselves. At first the tree of life was at the center of the garden, but later the other tree.

The first verses of the chapter tell us that the work of creation was finished, and the Sabbath rest had come. It is describing a heavenly character in which love for the Lord and one another rules, and makes it easy and delightful to do right. It is called the “celestial” character. The garden with its trees describes the intelligence of such a life. It is not gained by laborious learning, but the Lord gives a perception of truth to an innocent, loving heart. That is meant when it is said that the Lord God planted the garden and made the trees to grow. The trees pleasant to the sight are thoughts beautiful in themselves; those good for food are thoughts that lead directly to useful deeds (*Apocalypse Explained* #739).

The garden was “eastward” in Eden. What does it tell about the character of those good people? What quality of character is associated in the Bible with the east? The most innocent character, most open to the Lord’s love. Angels look toward the Lord in the east, and in the old times people turned toward the east in worship because they knew its meaning. The tabernacle and temple opened toward the east for the same reason. A garden eastward means the heavenly perceptions of an innocent heart open to the Lord’s love (*Arcana Coelestia* #101).

In the first chapter, the Lord was called God; now he is called Jehovah God, Jehovah being represented in our Bible by LORD in small capitals. All the divine names mean the same Lord, but some particular divine quality is expressed by each name. “God” means the Lord with reference to

his divine truth. “God is our refuge and strength.” “Jehovah” means the Lord with reference to his divine love. “Jehovah is my shepherd.” The name Jehovah is added in the story of the garden because the “celestial” character is being described, which is led not by truth only or chiefly, but by the Lord’s love. When the creation of men and plants and animals is mentioned again in the second chapter, it is not a repetition; we are reading now of similar developments to those described before, but on this higher, “celestial” plane (*Arcana Coelestia* #89).

What is the river that waters the mind’s garden? Water that cleanses and refreshes represents teaching of right and wrong, and of what is good and wise to do. Heavenly water is such teaching from the Lord himself. Remember the words of the Psalm: “His delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.” The four divisions of the river mean truth from the Lord received in different ways, to reach the more interior and more external things of life. The first river, associated with good gold, means the inmost perception; the other rivers mean intelligence, reason, and knowledge—truth in lower forms (*Arcana Coelestia* #121).

Bringing the beasts to Adam and his giving them names means something very like the giving man dominion over all creatures in the first chapter. The creatures are again all the faculties of one’s own mind. Giving them names is recognizing the quality and use of each one; for a name spiritually is not a mere word, but the true quality of a thing (*Apocalypse Explained* #453; *Arcana Coelestia* #10217).

There are deep and holy lessons in the last verses of the chapter. They teach that marriage is of the Lord’s plan from the beginning. It is most sacred, to be kept faithfully by those who are married, and to be spoken of and thought of by everyone as holy. What is said about the rib is again a parable. When we read that a rib was taken from the man, and a wife was brought to him, we can see in general that the Lord would have us give up selfishly loving ourselves and gain an unselfish love for another. Something of this lesson must be learned in every true marriage (*Arcana Coelestia* #147, 155).

Compare the picture of the garden in the beginning of the Bible with the picture of the Holy City at the end. There is the same river of life and the same tree of life. Does it not suggest that with all our growth and development, we may still learn from the Lord and bear fruit from him as innocently and happily as the people of the Golden Age?