

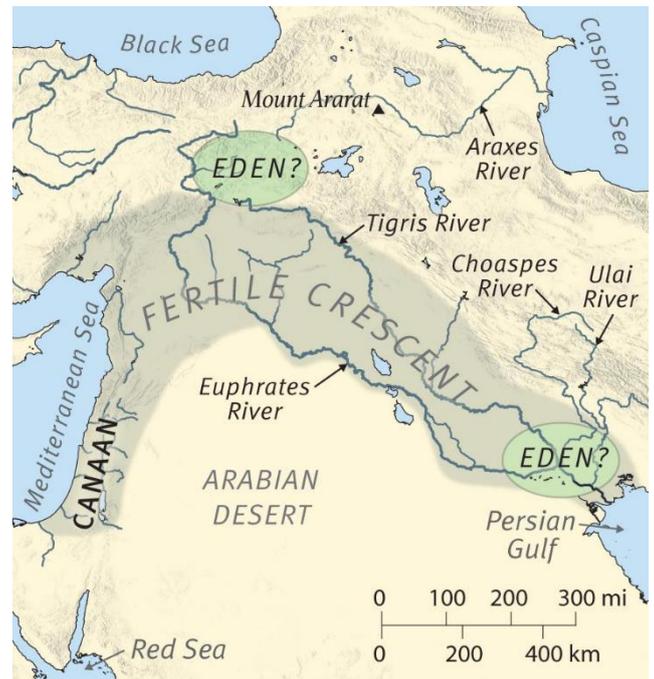
Genesis 2.8-14: The Delight of Eden

The **Delight** of Eden [vv.8-14]

v.8: After describing the creation of man in additional detail (v.7), the *environment* into which he was placed is depicted. It was a divinely planted place of *adornment, nourishment, enrichment* (v.9) and *refreshment* (vv.10-14). In the garden Adam would find *employment* (v.15) and *commandment* (vv.16-17) as well as receiving a *complement* (vv.18-25). The language suggests the garden was a particular and special place planted in the wider region of “Eden” (cf. v.10). The Hebrew root for “garden” means ‘to be enclosed’ or ‘fenced-off’. This was a separated place where God was uniquely present and enjoyed communion with the crown of His creation. The garden appears to have been a magnificent *paradise* (LXX renders Eden as *paradeisos*), or *oasis* populated by fruit trees. It is further designated as “the garden of the LORD” (cf. 13.10; Isaiah 51.3) and “garden of God” (Ezekiel 28.13-16; 31.9) though this may refer to heaven. In fact, given the language of Revelation 22.1-3, the garden may have been modelled on heaven itself (as the tabernacle, Hebrews 9.23). Into this garden, God put Adam. “*Adam’s first knowledge of his Creator thus would be of one who loved him and carefully and abundantly provided for him*” (Henry Morris). Many applications from this garden can also be made to the local assembly, which is God’s “husbandry” or ‘cultivated field’ (1 Corinthians 3.9).

The garden was planted “eastward in Eden”, either eastward from the perspective of the land of Israel (the point of reference for Bible directions) or located in the eastern portion of Eden itself – a larger territory in which the garden was situated. The east is the way of the rising sun, and thus associated with *life* and *light*. It is also the direction from which the *glory of God* will fill the future temple (Ezekiel 43.1-5). “Eden” means either ‘delight’ (pleasure), or ‘place of much water’. In any case, it was a scene in which everything ministered to the natural happiness and satisfaction of innocent mankind. But, tragically, he sought something more for himself.

Gardens play an important part in the story of redemption. Bible history begins with a paradise in which mankind sinned, but ultimately ends with a glorious garden city in which there will be no sin (Revelation 21-22). What brought about the change? Two gardens in the vicinity of Jerusalem where Christ contemplated death and rose again (John 18.1; 19.41).



v.9: The garden was characterised by richness and variety, being full of “every tree” that was attractive to the sight and yielding fruit that was good to eat. Adam was therefore without excuse for sinning – there was no need to eat of the forbidden fruit! There were two special trees in this garden which will be central to the narrative of Genesis 3: the “tree of life” and “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. These trees were located “in the midst” or ‘within’ the garden, not necessarily the exact centre (cp. 18.24; 23.10). The “tree of life” is an *objective genitive* meaning a tree that *produces* or *sustains* life (3.22). This was a real tree, with real fruit, that was not forbidden to eat. Partaking of its fruit may have been a means of preserving and extending physical life. “*The fruit of this tree would, if eaten regularly, have enabled even mortal, dying men to live forever*” (Henry Morris). Regular access to the tree could therefore, theoretically, extend life indefinitely. Indeed, in Proverbs “tree of life” is a figure of speech denoting healthy, longevity of life rather than immortality (3.18; 11.30; 13.12; 15.4). The “tree of life” is further mentioned in Revelation 22.2 where the “leaves of the tree” are for the “healing” (or ‘health’) of the nations. The Lord Jesus also speaks of the tree of life in a promise to the overcomers at Ephesus (Revelation 2.7). This tree, and its promise of the full enjoyment of life in heaven, is set in contrast to the sacred date-palm situated in the heart of a sacred garden area of the Temple of Artemis (Diana). The fact the “LORD God” caused this tree to grow suggests that life, ultimately, comes from Him. As such, the “tree of life” is a picture of the Lord Jesus – the true source of eternal life (John 3.15). Sadly, mankind chose death not life.

The second tree was the “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. Though not mentioned here, it was forbidden to eat of this tree (v.17). Adam already had experiential knowledge of **good**, having learned it from God. To eat of this tree would also have given him the knowledge of **evil** – since evil can be defined as disobeying God. “Good and evil” is a *merism* (a rhetorical device in which a combination of two contrasting parts of the whole refer to the whole) indicating the *whole range of knowledge*. It enables a person to make discerning, responsible, and judicial decisions (cf. Deuteronomy 1.39; 2

Samuel 14.17; 1 Kings 3.9). Eating of its fruit would give mankind the power to decide for themselves what was in their best interests and what was not – to be gods of their own lives and exercise independence of the true God. Hamilton says, “*This interpretation also has the benefit of according well with (Genesis) 3.22, ‘the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil’. Man has indeed become a god whenever he makes his own self the centre, the springboard, and the only frame of reference for moral guidelines. When man attempts to act autonomously he is indeed attempting to be godlike.*” These two trees are brought together at the cross. There we see Christ as goodness incarnate – displaying the love, grace and holiness of God. We also see evil, with mankind and Satan conspiring together to crucify the Christ. “*But the good in God has triumphed over the evil. The whole question is settled now, and the One who has settled it has become the Tree of life*” (CA Coates).

v.10: This verse forms the beginning of a parenthesis to v.14. It describes the richness of the world which God had created for mankind to inhabit. Whilst *two* of these rivers are known to us today, it must be remembered these verses are describing a *pre-flood* (antediluvian) world. These two rivers may have resumed their course after the flood, but this is unlikely given the tectonic upheavals and likely widespread changes to topography. It may be, rather, that some rivers in the post-flood world were named after familiar pre-flood rivers by Noah and his sons. **If** the Tigris and Euphrates have maintained their rough pre-flood location, then the approximate location of Eden is known. “*It was between the Euphrates and the Tigris in Mesopotamia, in the areas of ancient Assyria and Babylonia or what is today modern Iraq*” (Fruchtenbaum).

A river “went out” (rose) in Eden – the region being the source – and watered the garden, before parting (dividing) into *four* separate branches, flowing out to irrigate the four corners of the earth. Geographically, this is rather unusual given that smaller rivers normally confluence into a larger, single river. For example, there are 38 main tributaries which feed the *River Thames*. This was likely a huge subterranean watercourse that rose to the surface in Eden (cf. v.6). In a typical sense, with the question of good and evil settled at the cross, blessing is now free to flow unrestrained to the world. The restored millennial earth will have such an abundant water supply that deserts will become blossoming gardens (cf. Jeremiah 17.7-8; Ezekiel 47.1-12; Revelation 22.1). This water, whilst literal, surely represents the blessing of God, ministered to His people by His word and Spirit. At the present time the rivers find their answer in the gospel going out to the world in the power of the Spirit.

The Four Rivers of Genesis 2.11-14

River	Verse	Meaning	Additional Notes
Pishon	11 12	To <i>increase</i> or <i>spread abroad</i> To <i>multiply</i> or <i>freely flow</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where this river is today is unknown, but in rabbinic tradition, this was the Nile River. Havilah (sandy land) is used later in Scripture for the regions of Arabia and Egypt (25.18). Havilah was a rich land containing pure <i>gold</i>, <i>bdellium</i> (aromatic resin) and <i>precious stones</i> (onyx).
Gihon	13	To <i>break</i> or <i>burst forth</i> <i>Valley of grace</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not to be confused with the name of a spring on the eastern side of Mount Zion in the Kidron Valley. Gihon passed through Cush, probably referring to the land east of Mesopotamia (and the Tigris), although the northern Upper Nile region is not impossible.
Hiddekel (Tigris)	14	To be <i>swift</i> or <i>rapid</i> <i>Sharp words</i> or <i>sound</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hebrew name for the <i>Tigris</i> (Daniel 10.4). Runs on the east side of Assyria, likely the ancient capital city of the empire (Asshur) in modern-day <i>northern</i> Iraq.
Euphrates	14	<i>Fruitfulness</i> or <i>fertile</i> <i>Sweet waters</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located in ancient Babylonia (modern-day <i>southern</i> Iraq). The Euphrates is mentioned x21 in Scripture and has an important role to play in the future (Revelation 9.14; 16.12).

If the tree of life is a type of Christ, the rivers may indicate the blessings of the work of Christ that flow freely and liberally to us by the Spirit of God. Psalm 36.8 reads, “*They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures* (Heb. ‘*eden*).”

The language of Ephesians 1 is expressive of such abundance: “*all spiritual blessings*” (1.3); “*according to the riches of His grace*” (1.7); “*he hath abounded toward us*” (1.8). Such blessings have made us spiritually rich (**Pishon**), providing *divine righteousness* (gold), a *sweet fragrance* (bdellium, cf. Numbers 11.7; 2 Corinthians 2.14-16) and *eternal security* (onyx, cf. Exodus 28.9-12). CA Coates interprets the type as, “*Grace flowing out in divine righteousness – and the gold would speak of this – confers everything on man that he needs. It ministers righteousness to him, and food to sustain him (linking bdellium with manna) in the wilderness pathway, and secures to him the support of Christ as Priest. Indeed, God graces man with all that Christ is.*” All these blessings are received on the basis of grace (**Gihon**).

The remaining two rivers suggest the impact the indwelling Spirit should have on our lives. We should be swift to speak the word of God – a sword which is able to pierce even to the soul (**Hiddekel**, Hebrews 4.12). The proud Pharisees and reasoning Sadducees often felt the keen edge of the Saviour’s words and had to retire. But we should also be swift to find Christ in all the Scriptures for it was here, at Hiddekel, Daniel received a glorious vision of Him (Daniel 10.4-6). The revelation of the gospel is *sweet* to our taste (**Euphrates**). Those who live in the good of its truth will not only be full of the fruit of the Spirit but should become a source of blessing and refreshment to others. Christ “drew the thirsty of earth to Himself; whether the outcast in John 4 or the unsatisfied Jew in John 7.”