

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

Part VIII

Last issue, I said we would continue to talk about the process of man's creation and the interaction which was already taking place between God and man. So, we pick up at chapter 2 verse 8 of the book of Genesis, and continue our journey.

As we look at verse 8, we find, God planted a garden to put Adam into. This emphasizes the fact, man is special. As God created the animals, He did not place them in any specific spot. The animals were created from the ground and the water, and they started from wherever they were brought forth. However, man was placed not just in a specific spot, but in a garden planted by God Himself. God did not just put us in a field somewhere or on a mountain top. He took the time to plant a garden and placed man there! So, keep in mind, God may have formed man from the dust, and He may have given man a place from which he can trace the beginnings of his journey on this planet, but man does not come from the ground or the water, nor does he come from the Garden of Eden; but all this was done to show man, he comes directly from the hand of God.

Those who teach evolution would have us believe, we are not special, that we simply evolved from the animals. This is an interesting view from people who have such high-minded thoughts of man and his abilities! Of course, they are looking for a way to take all the credit for their "accomplishments." If they believe there is a God who made us, then they will be forced to realize the things they can accomplish in their short life spans are only baby steps, at best. Human accomplishment could be equated to a child who just learned they can grasp things, and that does not set well with the arrogance of men! Beyond that, we have done some very bad things with our new found grasp! We'll equate those things to a child who uses it to pull mommy's china off the table!

Now, we can talk and debate for a very long time as to where the Garden of Eden actually

existed, but in the end, we can do nothing more than make an educated guess! Verses 10-14 of chapter 2 tells us the names of rivers, and the Tigris and Euphrates are mentioned. However, since the flood of Noah's day would have drastically affected the landscape, we do not know how accurate the naming of the rivers, we know today, are. It could be, these rivers reminded Noah and his sons of those two rivers or that they simply wanted to call them that. It's possible political reasons far after Noah's day were to blame for the names. We may never know.

The flood and the fact, God put cherubims and a flaming sword at the garden, after the fall of man, to guard the way to the Tree of Life, really lessen our chances of ever knowing where the garden was. This brings us to a most interesting fact, and that is the fact, man has never stopped looking for the way back to the tree. This fact actually gives us some clues as to where the garden may have been, or at least where post-flood man believed it was! Through the Book of Genesis, and the entire Bible really, there is a tendency for man to migrate back to an area we call the Fertile Crescent. This is a portion of land running from around the land of Israel on the Mediterranean and stretching to the east in a crescent shape to the top of the Persian Gulf. [[See Map 1](#)] This area of land has been termed as the Fertile Crescent, and others refer to it simply as the "Cradle of Civilization." It would seem from the Biblical account that calling this area the Cradle of Civilization is very appropriate. The area of land around and between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers seems, by all Biblical and archaeological evidence, to truly be the place where man began his civilization. Keep in mind, civilization is a human idea and not God's.

Through the Biblical account, the area around these rivers is almost always a hot spot for man. So, the idea that this was because they hoped to find the Tree of Life again, and they had reason to believe it was in this area, seems to be a logical one. Even

today, we find man still looking for a way to have eternal life without God! Every time someone comes up with a new pill or substance they believe will extend life, it seems they can make a fortune! Many people follow very strict diets in the hope they can find longer life, if not figure out how to cheat death altogether. Longer life is an obsession with man. Many people have children because they feel it's an extension of their life. Today, longer life, if not eternal life, is sought in many forms; but there are stories in man's history, not too long ago, which illustrate the direct concept of looking specifically for the Tree of Life.

When Europeans found out there was a whole other landmass that they were not aware of, there were those who were literally obsessed with the idea of finding something which would grant life eternal, in that land! Probably the most well known is Ponce De Leon who was looking for the "Fountain of Youth"! If you've ever played the gossip game, you can clearly see how the tree may have become a fountain! As information is passed from one person to another, it's astounding how much a story can change. So, many of the people living on the American continent were just as ignorant about the land across the ocean as Europeans were about the "New World." To many native Americans, it was not a new world. To them it was the world. So, they had their tales as to where the Tree of Life was; but instead of a tree, it was a fountain, for some. Instead of being in the Fertile Crescent, it was in a place we now call Florida. Of course, Mr. Ponce De Leon did not find eternal life - fountain or otherwise - just as no one ever has, but that has not kept men of all generations from going to great effort trying!

Now, the land around the rivers was likely the place where Noah built the ark. After the flood, the ark landed on Mount Ararat, which is to the north of the Fertile Crescent, and yet it would seem, man journeyed back to the area around the rivers to begin again. It would seem, somewhere in this area man built the Tower of Babel. It's likely, without the confounding of languages which took place at the Tower of Babel, man would have continued to concentrate himself in this area for a very long time.

It was in this area, Abraham was born and his family lived. God called Abraham out of this area to a strange land where God could build a new place to walk with man. It would seem, at the very least, man believed the area around these rivers to be a place of power. Definitely, men who built empires preferred it time and time again. Even Alexander the Great, after defeating the Meads, stayed in Babylon! [[See Map 2](#)]

So, all we can know is, there was a place God prepared to put man. At the same time, we know this was a starting point, a home - if you will - because God tells man to subdue the planet and have dominion over it. It was obviously God's design from the very beginning that man spread out across the planet and enjoy the fullness of His creation. Genesis chapter 1 verse 26 not only says, God made us in His likeness, but uses the wording, "...and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea..." and so on. It was obviously God's intent, before He ever created Adam, there would be more than just one human. So, the verses in chapter 2 give us more detail as to how this would happen; but before we talk further about that, we want to talk more about the garden God planted!

Chapter 2 verse 8 tells us, God "planted" a garden. All of creation was good and perfect, but God illustrates to man, he can enjoy it! Having dominion over the planet meant - sin or no sin - many people would still have enjoyed growing and grooming gardens, even in a perfect world. I also believe men would have enjoyed breeding animals, not for food, but for pleasure. Most children love to play with clay, but that is only the beginning steps to the joy this planet had to offer!

Verse 9 tells us, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil were both in the garden. However, an interesting fact about this verse is that the wording emphasizes, they were created the way the other trees of the planet were. This verse takes the time to tell us, right off the bat, both trees were pleasant to the sight and good for food. It's important to understand, neither of these



trees were ugly looking, with bad tasting fruit. There was no reason for man to say, "I don't want to eat of the Tree of Life, it's ugly and the fruit tastes bad, I'd rather eat from the Tree of Knowledge instead!" Nor was there reason to go in the opposite direction and say, the Tree of Knowledge was too beautiful to resist! There was nothing physical to draw or deter man from either of these trees any more than would be common of all the trees! God gave man a simple choice. He did nothing to sway man one direction or the other. Remember, those things which can take us away from God's side, most of the time, do not come with horns, wearing a red suit and holding a pitch fork!

Children like to say, "God made dirt and dirt don't hurt." However, God made the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and that did hurt! As we walk this life, we must remember the words which Jesus spoke to Satan as Satan tempted Him to turn the stones into bread. Jesus told Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:3-4 (Deut. 8:3) What should have been important to Eve, the day Satan tempted her to eat of the tree, was not whether it was good to look at, the fact the fruit was good to eat, or that God Himself had made the tree; only the fact that God had told them eating of the tree would have bad consequences, mattered! The same is true in our lives. We can not make decisions about how to live our lives based on what seems good or what feels good. We can not believe we understand what true love and care for our neighbor is unless we are willing to listen to the voice of God!

Chapter 2 verse 15 tells us, after God planted the Garden of Eden, He placed Adam there to dress and care for it. Note here again, even though man did not have to work by the sweat of his brow to eat, he was given responsibilities. Where Adam went with the garden was up to him, but it gave him a starting point, and it's my belief, this was a way of showing Adam that it was OK to do something with the planet. Adam was not under any obligation to leave nature just like it was. He could be creative!

It's important to understand that this garden God planted was more than just a starting point. It was pivotal in the existence of man! It was the fact, man was made in the image of God, which made him special. Once again, not that we were or that we are going to be gods, but the fact we were given creative minds capable of learning and doing amazing things. What man would do with the universe, and where man would go, was up to him. That free will to do things was what made our existence interesting, but the Garden of Eden would always be a place which was special. Here was a place that was not started by us. The garden was a place God planted! In this garden was the Tree of Life as well as the other tree, which showed us just how much God had given us a free will. As long as man did not turn from God and take of the tree He told them not to, they would always have this place to return. There would be no doubt as we traveled the universe where to return if we felt we wanted to bask in the presence of God. God would always be watching over us, and His presence would always be felt; but even before the fall, God was not going to force Himself upon us. It was always up to us to come to Him. The garden gave us that place. After Adam and Eve took of the fruit, they hid from God, but they did not leave the garden. That is why God called for Adam. There was a part of Adam and Eve that was afraid, but there was also a part which desired God's help! It could be said, what we truly lost at the garden was the garden itself! God would always be with us, but we lost the ability to come and walk with Him in the way man did in the garden. People always ask why God does not show Himself in the physical. The answer is that from the beginning it was not so. The garden was the place to come and actually walk with God, and we lost that!

As you go through the Bible, you find God trying to give us back the garden experience. It would not be easy amongst sinful man. We would not be able to walk with God in the cool of the evening, but we would know where to go to find the presence of God. So, God formed a nation and gave them a law. If they would follow that law, it would create an environment where God's presence could be. Moses was instructed to build a tabernacle and

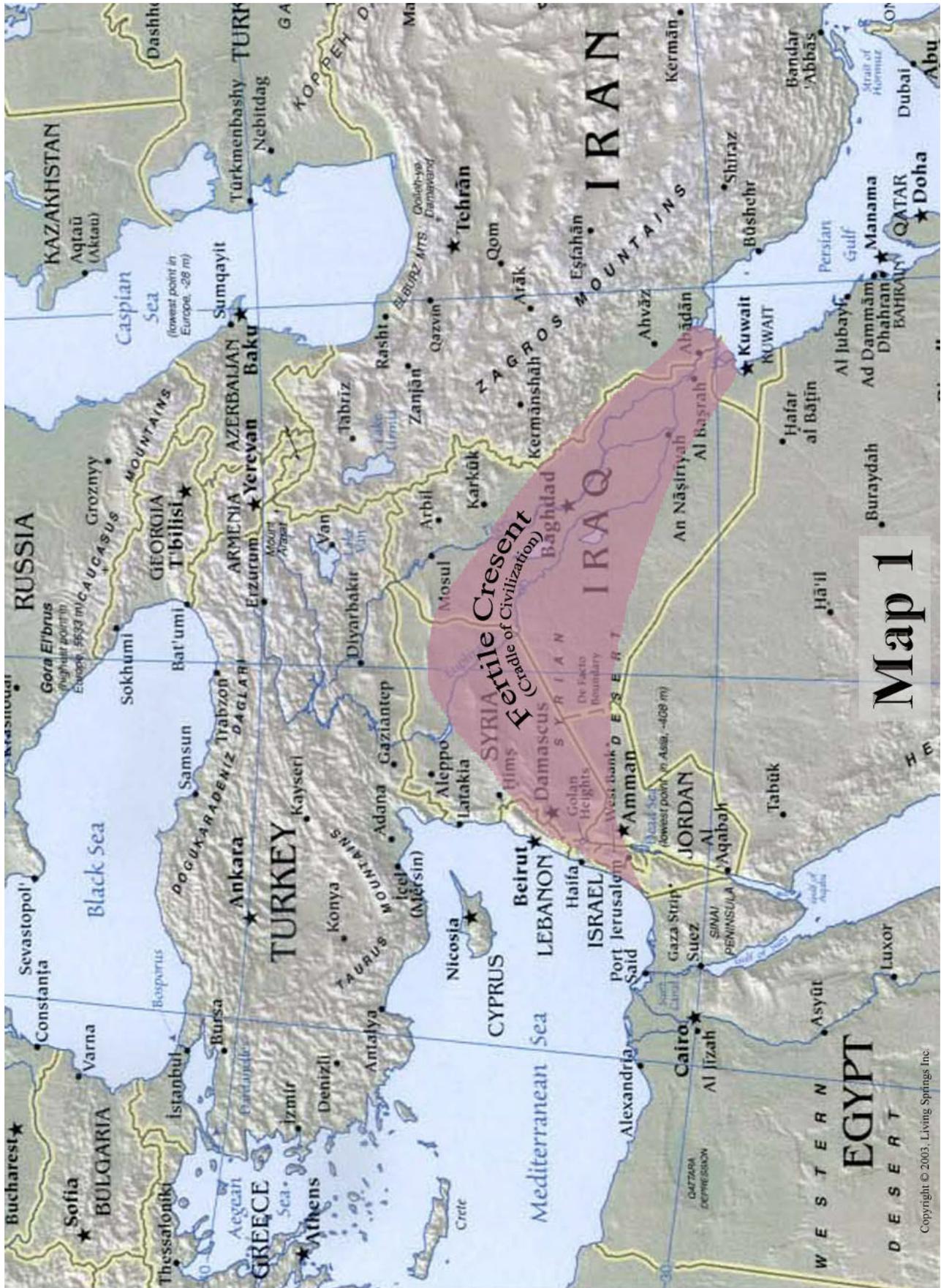
an ark. These items would be placed in the midst of those people, and God's presence would come down in their midst. He said He would choose a permanent place to put His name once the Jews entered the land of promise. (Deut. 12:1-7) It took some time because of the struggle with sin, but eventually, a place was picked. That place? Jerusalem! It still took years before the temple was built, but when it was, God's presence descended!!!! (II Chron. 7:1-4) Through the years, because of sin, God's presence lifted from the temple. The temple was destroyed and rebuilt once, but after that, God sent His Son, in the flesh, who dwelt amongst us! (Matt. 13:13-17) However, when He entered Jerusalem one day, to take his rightful place in the temple (Matt. 21:6-16, Luke 19:33-48), it angered the religious establishment of the day. Jesus was eventually put to death! Because Jesus was without sin, God The Father raised Him up, and He lived again. Before Jesus left this world, He promised He would return and take all who believed to a place He would prepare. In that place, man would, once again, have the kind of access to God which he had at the garden, and more! (John 14:1-3) Further, there would never again be anything which could take that access away! (Rev. 20:10-21:8)

Now we go to verses 16 and 17 of chapter 2 and find a very simple commandment given to man from God. He makes clear that there is nothing wrong with any other tree in the garden. So, there was no complication to this issue. There was one thing which could separate them from God, and that was to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told them, in the day they ate of it, they would die. Many people like to point out that Adam and Eve did not die the day they ate from the tree, and this shows just how man looks at life. As Jesus walked this earth, He said He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly! (John 10:9-10) This was His way of trying to get it through to us that the life we are living on this planet is not really life at all! There is no point in the life most humans lead. We can accomplish many things, but what does it matter? As Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matthew 16:26 Jesus also said,

if we would lose this life we would find life, but if we seek to gain this life we will lose our lives. (Matt. 10:38-39) The references go on and on, but what is amazing is that many people professing to believe in the Word of God say they understand this point! However, many times, our actions do not reflect it. Many of us waste far too much time living this life and ignoring the things of God!

The Native Americans used to hunt buffalo by getting what amounted to a stampede going in the direction of a cliff. When the herd got to the cliff, some of the buffalo would fall off and plunge to their deaths. All the people had to do then was go down and collect the carcasses. The interesting thing about this method is the fact, native people were not wasteful like the Europeans. It was never the native hunter's intent to take more than he needed. This being true, native people knew when to stop driving the herd before they got to the cliff, and then only a few buffalo would fall off and not the entire herd! So, we find even buffalo have the sense not to go over a cliff just because someone said, boo! As we look at human life on this planet, we find this is where we are headed. We are born and then we start that steady march to the grave. It's the devil's intent to get us to go right off that cliff, without God, and **he is** interested in killing the entire herd! Why is it that even those who say they believe the Word of God, do not seem to possess the intellect of a buffalo, and just keep charging for that cliff even though God has removed the power of the one who would drive us? (Rom. 8:1-15)

We will talk more next time about the commandments of God and the creation of man, but the question I leave with you, is this, "will you choose to be smarter than a buffalo?" Let's walk each day remembering, it's our choice to make, and I'll see you next time!



Map 1

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