

### **The image of God in the eternal garden**

**Gen. 2:7** – “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” God made man in His own image. We have discussed what that means. What would man be like without being made in God’s image? What would the world be like if this were so?

As believers, we must move forward in faith that God made us in His image for a purpose. A good analogy is marriage. We go into marriage with the faith that it is forever. Otherwise, why would we enter into it. Can you see the similarities with faith and marriage? God created the first truly human place of habitation:

**Gen. 2:8-10** – “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.”

“The garden is the optimal human environment.” Paradise – pairi daiza means “walled garden” and Eden means well-watered place. Have you ever thought of Eden as the well-watered walled garden? What is God telling us by creating this environment?

Do you have a patio or back yard that you maintain to create a peaceful environment for you and your family and friends? Why?

### **Pride versus the sacred moral order**

**Gen. 2:15** – “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”

God commands Adam and Eve to tend to the garden and replenish it in order to keep order in the world. He also commands them to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But human nature is emersed in the sea of pride. And it is this nature that drives Adam and Eve to disobey God. The striving of independence from God comes from pride. Can you see this around you?

**Matthew 7:24-29** – Jesus said: “...But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”

What is Jesus telling us about following God and putting His words in practice? Why is Jesus telling us this and why did God tell us to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? What do we have and not have faith in?

### **The incompleteness of Adam and the arrival of Eve**

Why was Eve created? Why did Adam need a help meet?

**Gen. 2:21-22** – “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

“The sacred image of woman is woman with child.” Why do you think this is? What qualities make woman different than man?

“Men...benefit from an expansion of their self-consciousness, and then consciousness, under the pressure of women’s heightened sensitivity, while bearing the brunt of the harsh evaluation and rejection that is part and parcel of that gift.” What does this mean?

### **The eternal sins of Eve and Adam**

In **Gen. 3:1-7**, the serpent lies to Eve and tells her she will not die upon eating from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And they both ate the fruit from the tree. “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.” Why was this the reaction from Adam and Eve?

“The union of the capacity to categorize and order with the necessity of attending to that which is still outside and lost constitutes the complete human spirit, most accurately reflecting the spirit of God.” Can you put yourself in Adam’s place and understand his motives for wanting the knowledge of good and evil? How does his nature compare to the nature of God? How does Adam’s motive compare to Eve’s? How are they different?

### **The eternal serpent**

“Satan is the psychological or abstract equivalent of the concretely predatory and venomous; the worst of all conceivable snakes; the eternal meta-snake.” If the Garden of Eden was perfect, why was Satan there? How did he get there?

**Rev. 12:7-9** – “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

“To know good and evil is not merely to possess the knowledge of what is moral, as both Adam and Eve already know the rules.” It is “the complete mastery that would allow for what is good and evil to be fashioned, altered, and defined by human design.”

What does this mean? Can you think of examples of this around you today?

### **Naked suffering as the fruit of sin**

**Proverbs 16:18** – “pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” What does this mean to you?

In life, we hope to find challenges we can conquer. We search for “dragons of precisely the size we can slay”. Why do human’s feel the need to use their own assets and abilities to complete their lives by overcoming obstacles? What are we building on?

The relationship between self-consciousness and suffering describes human personality. Psychologist say personality is made up of five dimensions:

Extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. The second dimension, neuroticism or “negative emotionality”, is the most useful when considering the awareness of self. Those high in this are more prone to anxiety, pain, depression, guilt, shame, disappointment, frustration, anger, disgust, and others. To combat this, they are more likely to participate in self-achieving activities in order to build themselves up. Hence, pride sets in. Do you see this around you?

**Loss of Paradise and the flaming sword**

Adam and Eve cannot return to the Garden of Eden unless they can withstand the sword of flame that carries judgement.

But we know as God as our guide through the texts of scripture, He can lead us. “This is as unbearable a burden, although a noble burden; certainly a challenge; possibly the ultimate challenge; possibly the secret to life and of the return to Paradise itself.”