

Philippians 10-06-11a

This is Friday the 11th of June 2010. We're going to do something a little unusual tonight, depart from our normal study in the book of Philippians to do a special. We haven't done a special in a while, and I just felt a special forming inside me and thought I'd just go ahead and bring the thing forth tonight.

So we're going to do a special. We'll begin with a word of prayer and then we'll dive right in. Father, we're so thankful for your grace and your provision for us, not only in rescuing us from a lost and hopeless condition and giving us eternal life and a spiritual identity and an eternal future, but in granting to us the blessings that we enjoy in this life, even though we're in the fallen world that is controlled by the forces of darkness to a large extent.

You have created for us a place of restoration and of up-building and of encouragement, and you have turned these negative factors into something that is good, that is useful for our growth and our edification. We thank you for the scriptures that we will study tonight, and we ask your blessing on us as we spend time in fellowship and in seeking to improve our understanding. We ask all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. I was at the Crystal College earlier this week and was chatting with a good friend of mine, Dr. Jim Sibley, who was a missionary in Israel for many years, learned modern Hebrew over there, and he's really a great guy. I have a hard time getting out of his office any time I go in there because we get to talking about one thing and another.

And we were looking at some books that he had out on his table, and one thing led to another, and we got to talking about an investigation that he had done some years ago, and I asked him to send me his notes. I had seen some allusions to this topic before, but I had never really investigated it, and he had done about two weeks' worth of intensive work on it, and he forwarded his notes, and I found them very fascinating, and I thought I would share the substance of those with you tonight and supplement it with a few other things that I have gathered that pertain. But it has to do, oddly enough, not with Philippians, not with Isaiah, not with anything we're currently studying, but it does connect to some of our studies in the past.

Specifically, it is a study of the Garden of Eden. We have had references to Paradise. We've, going through Genesis, seen the description when we went through Ezekiel, and it talked about the Garden of God and the realm of Satan's former responsibilities when he was the guardian cherub of God's throne room and so on.

We've seen allusions to this hither and yon, but I thought it would be a great time to just take a break and do a one-night special. So I have Jim's notes here, and he titled it, Where on Earth Was the Garden of Eden? The conclusion of this particular study I'll give you at the beginning, and then we'll look at the support to see if these things are so. This goes back to some ancient

traditions in both the Jewish world and in the Arabic-Islamic world, that the Garden of Eden was not located way over by the Tigris or the Euphrates, but was in fact at Jerusalem.

It might sound like kind of a startling idea, but the more you look, the more convincing the evidence is. So I thought I would share with you some of these evidences, and I'm going to more or less follow Jim's outline, because he has organized it pretty well. And also share with you some additional scriptures and things that I've put together here.

But even if you look at the Wikipedia article on the Garden of Eden, you will find a one-line reference that says, Several religious traditions identify the location of the Garden of Eden with the city of Jerusalem, in particular, Gihon Spring. And the spring, Gihon, is associated with this. And the more you think about it, the more fascinating it gets.

Initially you would say, well now wait a minute, I remember the geographical description talking about the Tigris and Euphrates, and that's not even in Israel. So let's begin by looking at what scripture does say about the Garden of Eden. Back in Genesis chapter 2, we have some very specific and rather detailed descriptions here.

In verse 8 of chapter 2, the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground God made every tree to grow, that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon. It is the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

The gold of that land is good. Delium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon.

It is the one which goes around the whole land of Cush. You know where the land of Cush is? That's generally thought to be down in Ethiopia, North Africa. The name of the third river is Hiddekel.

It is the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates. And the Lord God put the man and put him in the garden to tend and keep it, and so on.

So if you look at a map, and you may have one in the back of your Bible, and you can certainly find a map of the Middle East, just find one that's got the larger area showing the Mediterranean with the Caspian, and the big view, the big satellite view of the whole region there, showing the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, probably the south part of the Black Sea, perhaps the Persian Gulf, and even the Caspian Sea in the upper right. If you find one of those, and you look over in the region of Iraq, modern-day Iraq, you'll see the Tigris and the Euphrates way over there on the

eastern side. And when you look over just in from the Mediterranean, where you know Israel to be, you'll see the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

And just west of the tip of the Dead Sea is where Jerusalem is. And you say, well, how on earth could there be any connection between the Tigris and the Euphrates, which is basically the Hittikal I think we've identified as the Tigris, and you've got the Euphrates listed, with Jerusalem? Well, here's the thing. First of all, the Bible says that God planted a garden eastward in Eden.

When you look at what is the point of reference, if you're going to say something is east, you have to have a point of reference. Eastward of what? And if you go forward at Genesis 11, verse 1, right after the flood, you have the reference to the whole earth. Of course, we know that the landscape of the earth was greatly changed because of the flood, probably largely obscuring some of the geographical markers that existed beforehand.

But it says the whole earth had one language and one speech. But where is the whole earth at that time? There in the plain of Shinar, right? The land of Shinar. And so the idea here is that you find the city of Babel, and the people who dwell in that land move eastward and settle in the land of Shinar.

So rather than saying they journeyed from the east, they actually journeyed toward the east. So they had to be somewhere west of Shinar to travel east and end up in Shinar. So where did they travel from? Well, we know the location of Ararat in the area of modern-day Turkey and so on.

So basically the conclusion here is that the land being spoken of that they have traveled east from is the land of Israel, what is now Israel, what was later to be Israel. And they went east and ended up at Babel. They went east and ended up in the plain of Shinar.

And the place where they originated, when the whole land, the word Aratz here is the same word that's used today when they talk about Aratz Yisrael, that's the land of Israel. The whole land had one language and one speech. And they journeyed to the east and found a plain in the land of Shinar and dwelt there.

So this would indicate that they had earlier been in the Aratz, capital A, the promised land, the land of Israel. So that's the implied geography here. And the land, by way of implication, is the promised land.

And so you've got some geography here that points to Israel as an origination point. Secondly, when you look at that geography that we saw in Genesis chapter 2, you notice when you read it carefully that there was one river that came out of the garden and then split into four. Remember that? A river flowed out of the garden and then became four rivers.

And this, of course, is not the case when you look at the Tigris and Euphrates and any other rivers today that they flow out of any one river. But back then, a river went out of Eden, verse 10,

to water the garden, and from there, essentially after it leaves the garden, it divides into four riverheads. And this is where it gets interesting.

These rivers, the four rivers, are basically given in pairs. You have the Pishon and the Gihon, then you have the Tigris and the Euphrates, or the Hittikal and the Euphrates. And these rivers seem to be associated.

And today, of course, you have the latter pair, the Tigris and Euphrates, that still exist. But the former pair seems to be unknown. We don't know what happened to the Pishon or the Gihon.

Today, the Tigris and the Euphrates have headwaters that seem to be located somewhere up in Armenia, and so people have thought, well, that must be where the original garden was. But let's look at these four rivers more closely. First, let's talk about the Gihon.

In Genesis 2.13, the Gihon says it flows around the whole land of Cush. This is modern-day Ethiopia. And if a river formerly flowed down what is now the Red Sea Basin and southward toward Africa, that's where it would end up.

Right? Looking at your big map. To get down to Ethiopia, you could have a location beginning at the north end of the Dead Sea and traveling down to and through what is now the Red Sea and heading down into that Ethiopia area. So that's not out of the realm of possibility that the Great Rift Valley that you see there, going down through Israel, and this is why they talk about the West Bank and so on, that rift would be the former riverbed of the Gihon.

Everybody with me so far? It's not perhaps without some significance that the spring right there in Jerusalem is the spring Gihon. This is where the Hezekiah's Tunnel brought water into the city of Jerusalem. Secondly, you've got the Pishon.

2.11 and 2.12 says the name of that first river is Pishon. It flows around the whole land of Havilah where there is gold. The gold of that land is good and so on.

Flip forward in Genesis to chapter 25. Let's see if we can find out something else about this river Pishon. It says it flows around the whole land of Havilah.

It would be nice if we could locate that land. If you go to Genesis 25 and you look at the genealogy of Ishmael, beginning in verse 12, it starts talking about his sons. When you get down to verse 18, it says, These sons of Ishmael, by their towns and settlements and princes according to their nations, dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt, as you go toward Assyria.

Here we've got another reference to this lost land of Havilah. You also find that Havilah is the name of one of the sons of Cush, mentioned in Genesis 10.7, also in 1 Chronicles 1.9. Also listed as the son of Joktan in Genesis 10.29. What you derive from all of this is that Cush and Havilah are closely related. This goes along with the idea that if the Tigris and Euphrates were a pair of

rivers, that the Pishon and the Gihon were a pair of rivers.

Where the Tigris and Euphrates, the Hittite-Gelon-Euphrates, went off toward the land of Assyria, these other two both went down toward the land of Ethiopia or Cush, Havilah, down in that direction. You've got two of them heading north and two of them heading south from this one river that exits the Garden of Eden. That's very interesting because that necessarily moves that headwater, that original headwater, further to the west and over toward the land of Israel rather than way off in Armenia someplace.

There has been a recently discovered fossil river or dry riverbed that apparently marks the course of an ancient river that runs from the western mountains of Saudi Arabia. Look at your big map again. You know where Saudi Arabia is.

You can see the western mountains that eventually border the Red Sea. This ancient riverbed runs from the western mountains of Saudi Arabia toward Kuwait. You remember where Kuwait is from the 1990s and the whole Saddam invasion and so forth.

Desert Shield, Desert Storm. This riverbed would be a different one than the rift that runs through the Dead Sea and down through the Red Sea. But this thing has been identified and there is speculation that this may mark a portion of the ancient Pishon's course.

It has been dry now for thousands of years. Whether or not there is any validity to this speculation, it is clear in the biblical account that Pishon is said to have been associated with the land of Havilah. With the Tigris and Euphrates originating out of Armenia today and the Gihon and Pishon running down what is now the Red Sea basin, where would you find a common source? What brings these proposed rivers of Genesis 2 together is the great rift system.

The Pishon and Gihon would have followed this rift down through the Dead Sea and the Red Sea with the Gihon continuing into Africa and the Pishon turning eastward in the Western Arabian Peninsula, possibly even crossing it. The only way these four rivers could have had a common source would be if their source, and thus the Garden of Eden, had been neither in Armenia nor in Mesopotamia but somewhere near present-day Israel. This is consistent with the implied geography from Genesis.

So that's a stimulating thought at least. It's somewhat tentative, somewhat speculative, but certainly a possibility. Another point of interest is, and this gets back to our Ezekiel study from a few years ago, scripture seems to create a link between Satan's presence in the Garden of Eden in the form of the serpent and his presence in Jerusalem.

You look at Ezekiel 28, verses 12-15. Let's turn there. 28.12 says, Take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD, You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty.

You were in Eden, the Garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering. And you remember these breastplate of the high priest type stones that we talked about when we went through? He seems as though there was an angelic priestly function.

These stones are very similar to the description of the breastplate of the high priest. The workmanship, and we went through that workmanship of the timbrels and pipes, the function that he had of granting or denying access, very similar to the priests who monitored access into the precincts of the tabernacle and later the temple for those who would worship and those who would bring sacrifice. They were the arbiters and the purveyors and sort of the mediators of access with God.

You were the anointed cherub who covers. I establish you. You were on the holy mountain of God.

So on the one hand, he's in the Garden of God. And on the other, he's on the holy mountain of God. Well, this suggests, implies, it's at least speculatively possible that these two things were co-located.

The Garden of God and the Mountain of God. The Garden of God spoken of in verse 13. The Mountain of God in verse 14.

Walking back and forth in the midst of the fiery stones. The holy mountain of God in its earthly form, of course, is Mount Moriah. The place where Abraham would sacrifice the ram in place of Isaac.

This is why you've got the Dome of the Rock up there today. They think that that's the spot. So that's interesting.

Now, it gets quite a bit more interesting at this point because our next topic is the presence of the temple itself. The imagery of the tabernacle and later the temple was designed to suggest what you might call paradise lost. The menorah suggests the tree of life.

Remember, it's got branches and that undying flame involved there. When you look at Exodus 25, 32 through 36, and we've been through Exodus, it talks about the construction of the menorah or the seven-branched lampstand. Make the lampstand of pure gold, hammered work.

It's got branches and bowls and flowers. Three branches on one side, three branches on the other. It's got bowls like almond blossoms, knobs and flowers.

All of this is organic. It makes it look like a tree. It's a symbolic or an ornamental tree.

Wouldn't it be interesting if, with the establishment of the temple on that mountain? Remember, the tabernacle was just temporary. They could travel with it, and it was designed to be temporary. God said, until I establish a place for my name, until I take you to that promised land.

Once the temple is established and built by Solomon, now you've got this giant tree standing, perhaps, in the very same locale where the original tree of life once stood. You have this order of priests who are robed in garments that ensure their purity and their ability to approach God. Remember, there's the word, by the way, that is used for the garments that God made for Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.21, when it says they were trying to do it with fig leaves, and He provided them with garments.

That very same word is used throughout the books of Moses to describe the priestly attire. It's called tunics. It's kind of a specialized word, and it seems to evoke a connection there between Adam and Eve leaving, wearing these tunics, and the priests returning to those precincts in these tunics.

It suggests, it's evocative of a connection. In both the tabernacle and the temple, as well as the Garden of Eden, you have the gateway or the entrance facing east. Remember how Jesus could sit up on the Mount of Olives and look down and look right in the eastern gate and see the eastern-facing entrance into the holy place, which led directly to the veil that led to the Holy of Holies, and all of those faced east.

We studied that glory of God leaving, heading toward the east and going right over the Mount of Olives and out to the nations. Well, the entrance to the Garden of Eden faced east, and that's where the cherub was posted, the denied access back in. You can't get back in until some provision is made.

So, not only did the tabernacle and temple suggest the presence of God, which is now where it used to be freely accessible. God would walk in the garden in the breeze of the day, and Adam and Eve had unrestricted access, but they were removed from those precincts. Well, there is also the suggestion that someday that access is going to be restored, and God is going to dwell among men.

Of course, the ultimate fulfillment of that is the kingdom of the Father, but it's foreshadowed in the tabernacle and in the temple because you remember in Ezekiel 43, the Millennial Temple, God is the Shekinah. In Zechariah 14.4, His presence is spoken of. And this is the Lord Jesus.

He is the way through the veil. And Romans 5.12-21, Jesus is the second Adam. Jesus is the last Adam.

What did God say about eating the fruit? In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Who ultimately paid that penalty? And where was He when He paid it? If Adam's original sin took place in Jerusalem, wouldn't it be an interesting symmetry that the Lord Jesus also was nailed to a tree to pay for that sin and all of the sins that have stemmed from it in that very same location. And in between, you have the altar of sacrifice picturing and foreshadowing that ultimate payment for that original sin and all of the contamination and defilement that it brought to the human race

since then.

The co-location would seem to be so significant. The original tree of life was in the Garden of Eden. It would make sense when the Lord makes all things new, the future tree of life would be restored to its proper place.

Where is the tree of life going to be in the new heaven and the new earth when the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven? Where is the tree of life? It's in Jerusalem. Where is God's throne that Satan is said to have walked back and forth before? In the new Jerusalem. Where is the river that flows out and gets deeper? Remember when Ezekiel was trying to wade in the thing and he starts at his ankles and goes to his knees and goes to his waist and goes to his chest and gets too deep for him to go in? It comes out from under the throne of God.

This idea starts to possess the properties of that kind of symmetry that we have seen so often in our studies. How interesting it would be that this is where the garden was and all of these trees are in the same place and all of these sins and their remedies are in the same place and the source of these rivers is all in the same place. It just really starts to get interesting the more you look at it.

Of course in Revelation 21 and 22 you have Jerusalem depicted as Eden, freed from the effects of sin with the tree of life growing beside the river that flows from beneath the throne of God and of the Lamb. When John describes the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 he says its length and width and height are equal. This was also true of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and the temple.

So the tabernacle and later the temple provide important symmetries here that the Garden of Eden was located where the city of Jerusalem is located. When you look at Solomon, and this is kind of an odd reference that Jim included in his notes, if you look at Ecclesiastes 2-5, Solomon speaks of his efforts to beautify the palace in Jerusalem by planting all kinds of fruit trees and making gardens. The word for gardens is translated in the Septuagint as paradisos.

You may remember when we were talking about the kinds of trees and things that the Queen of Sheba encountered and described in her diary. I think David Rohl makes some mention of this as well. These trees that Solomon planted, he in many ways restores Jerusalem to an Edenic state by planting all of these trees.

He makes it much like the garden. And in that regard, take a look at Genesis. I hope I haven't lost my place on this.

Genesis chapter 13. I didn't actually find my note, but it's in my memory. Look at Genesis chapter 13.

And it is in, let me find it, verse 10. This is the story of Abram and Lot. Remember they're

traveling together, but their flocks get too big, and Lot wants to go his own way.

And so in verse 10 of Genesis 13, Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like what? Like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go towards Zoar. So Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and he journeyed east, and they separated from each other. Well, what's interesting, the point that Jim makes here, this seems like kind of a casual reference.

Like Lot knew what the garden of the Lord looked like, and how well watered it was. And this is just like it. What an odd place to put in a reference to the Garden of Eden, but in the days before the destruction, there's kind of a significance to this, in the sense that in the days before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, this area was like the Garden of God, kind of like before the fall.

And you can see that it almost foreshadows Lot's coming failure, and foreshadows the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, much as God is going to destroy the earth with the flood, and all this well wateredness is going to go away, and you're going to end up with the Salt Sea, the Dead Sea, where once there was this beatific, peaceable kingdom type of situation, with all the grass and the bounty. So the verb used in Genesis 3.8 of God walking in the garden, is the same verb used of God's presence in the tabernacle, in Leviticus 26.12, Deuteronomy 23.14, 2 Samuel 7.6 and 7. The use of the terms cultivate and keep, that described Adam's occupation in the garden, in Genesis 2.15, cultivate and keep it, Genesis 2.15, those are the exact same terms that are used for the Levitical duties, in caring for the tabernacle, in Numbers 3.7 and 8, and Numbers 8.26, Numbers 18.5 and 6, and these are the only two places where those two verbs are used together. Cultivate and keep are used in Genesis 2.15 of Adam maintaining the garden, and they're used in Numbers 3.7 and 8, Numbers 8.26 and Numbers 18.5 and 6, those pairs occur again for the priestly maintenance of the tabernacle.

The word used to provide the covering, the tunic, I already gave you. So, it seems like a conscious effort to link these concepts, the garden and the tabernacle, which foreshadows the temple, which foreshadows the restoration of God dwelling with man. So, the planting of all these trees by Solomon is interesting, and of course, this brings you ultimately to the cross.

Evidence from the geography of Genesis, from the location of the rivers, from what scripture says about Satan, from the tabernacle and temple, all support a location for the Garden of Eden in the city of Jerusalem. And I'm giving you Jim's comments here. Now, if this were the case, consider the possibility that Golgotha was also in the Garden of Eden.

In the Garden, Satan tempted Eve and persuaded her, and later Adam, to sin against God. Genesis 3, 14 and 15, God delivers a message to Satan. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, more than every beast of the field.

On your belly you will go, dust you will eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head, you will bruise his heel.

If Jerusalem is the site of the Garden of Eden, then in the same vicinity where this message was delivered, Abraham was told to offer Isaac. His only son, Genesis 22. Solomon was told to build the house of the Lord, 2 Chronicles 3, verse 1. And oceans of sacrificial blood were spilled in the centuries that followed, at the altar.

This is also where Satan tried to tempt the seed of the woman, in Matthew 4, verses 5-7. Remember, where did Satan take Jesus? For one of the three temptations? To the pinnacle of the temple. Though he, unlike Eve and the first Adam, did not succumb to the enticements of Satan, Satan thought he had finally won when this son of man, literally son of Adam, was crucified nearby.

But with the resurrection, Jim says, Satan was dealt his death blow, for God offered his only son, Messiah Jesus, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Revelation 13, 8, Genesis 3, 21. Through faith in him we find atonement for sin, we gain fellowship with God, and we receive an invitation to live in paradise regained. So that was his conclusion from looking at all of these pieces of evidence.

He has a little addendum, which is not so much scriptural evidence as traditional thinking. And because he spent so much time in Israel and is familiar with a lot of these rabbinic traditions, he threw this in. Of interest also are the many Jewish traditions about the stone upon which the temple was built.

It is called the foundation stone, Eben HaShetiyah, and is believed to have been the stone which became the foundation of all God's creation. Midrash Tankuma sums up the centrality of and holiness of this site in Judaism. As the navel is set in the center of the human body, so is the land of Israel the navel of the world, situated in the center of the world, and Jerusalem in the center of the land of Israel, and the sanctuary is in the center of Jerusalem, and the holy place is in the center of the sanctuary, and the ark is in the center of the holy place, and the foundation stone is before the holy place because from it the world was founded.

According to the sages of the Talmud, it was from this rock that the world itself was created, being the first part of the earth to come into existence. In the words of the Zohar, the world was not created until God took a stone called Eben HaShetiyah, and threw it into the depths, where it was fixed from above till below, and from it the world expanded. It is the center point of the world, and on this spot stood the Holy of Holies.

Sometimes these traditions are completely without merit, other times they contain or preserve a little bit of truth, and it wouldn't surprise me at all if in fact the former geography prior to the flood

made it such that the garden was right there. And this is the reason God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, out of the region of Assyria and beyond Babylon to come back to the land that He would show him. And even though it is obscured, even though it is altered, even though after the flood it doesn't resemble its former self, it's the spot.

Why do you think Shem is sitting there as King of Salem? Shem was in the land before the flood. Shem well may have seen the angel and the whirling sword. He knew where it was.

Figured out after the flood with all of that altered geography where it had been, went back there. Abram ends up sharing bread and wine with Melchizedek, the King of Salem, at this very spot. Time and again the Bible returns.

Time and again God has His people return to this particular spot. And it just seems to make a lot of sense to me that there would be a reason why that would be the case. And that it being the site of the original garden.

And can you imagine the Lord Jesus, with what He knew, sitting up there on the Mount of Olives, looking at that mount, looking at that spot, looking out over Jerusalem, weeping over it? How often would I have gathered you as a hen gathered her chicks? How often would I have restored the beauty and the original provision of God, the perfection of that garden? But you wouldn't have it. So, anyway, I thought that was just really interesting. I thought I would take a little time here and share it with you this evening.

We'll take our break now, and when we come back we'll pick up with our study in Philippians chapter 2.