

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO EDEN?



No. Not that one!

I'm talking about the real one where Adam and Eve lived. Crosby, Stills, and Nash sang about it in their song, "Woodstock." They said, "***We are stardust, we are golden, and we've got to get ourselves back to the garden.***"

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Every human heart longs for that. When we hear of environmental extremists preventing gas pipelines from being built or legislation promising affordable healthcare to every American, we're hearing cries for a return to the Garden. Nothing wrong with that. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "If I find in myself a desire for something that this world cannot provide, then it's safe to assume that I was made for another world."

We were, and we need to realize it. We were made for Eden! Unfortunately, if we try to find it in this life, we're going to miss it both here and in the world to come. Thomas Moore

wrote about an island paradise, where justice and human kindness ruled and no greed or crime could be found. But it turned out to be a satire about man's impossible dream to live in such a paradise, for the name "utopia" actually comes from two little Greek words—*ou* meaning "no" and *topos* meaning "place" = "no place."



But the fact is there was an Edenic paradise in the beginning. The Bible even gives us its coordinates. Genesis 2:8 says it was located at the headwaters of four rivers—the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Gihon, and the Pishon. The trouble is only the Euphrates and the Tigris still exist, making those directions useless to us today. Something catastrophic must have happened. The catastrophe was when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law and were exiled from the Garden. The Garden didn't cease to exist at that point. Man was simply barred from its entrance. And to ensure that we weren't able to get back in, God stationed cherubim at its gates, who acted like holy "bouncers" guarding its entrance.



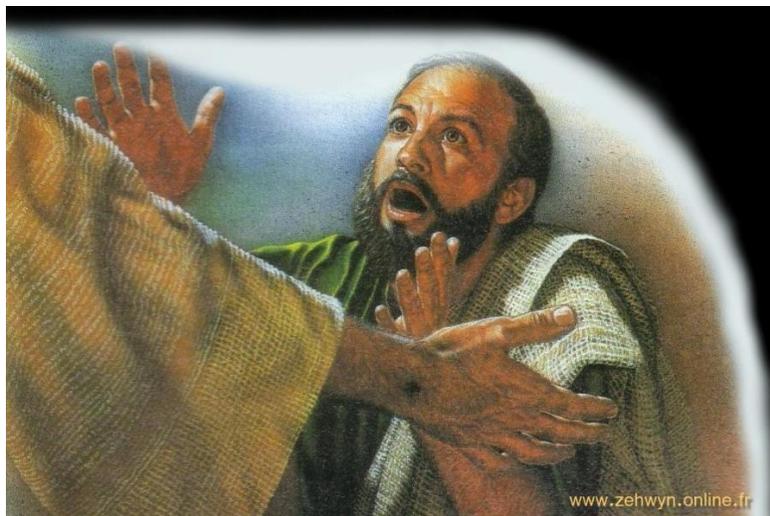
Of course, it is doubtful that Adam and Eve ever ventured far from the Garden. After all, that was their original home and the place where God dwelt. It was Cain, not his parents, who was driven from the face of God and made to wander East of Eden. Adam and his wife likely set up camp just down the street from Eden in a world that was still glorious enough that they were able live to the ripe old age of 900!



So what happened to Eden? There are two possibilities. Read on in Genesis, and you will find that because the thoughts of men's hearts were only evil continually (Genesis 6:5), God destroyed that world in a Great Flood of water. (By the way, worldwide judgment is coming to this planet again for similar reasons. However, this time it will not come in the form of water, but fire (See 2 Peter 3.). A second, even more likely possibility, is that God transplanted His Garden to Heaven where it has been blooming ever since. For when we read the last page of the Bible, Revelation 22 reveals a glorious garden serving as Central Park in the New Jerusalem. In it will be the Tree of Life growing along the esplanade of the River of Life, all of which will one day be transplanted back to the earth one day.



Any chance we can live there? Every chance in the world (not this one, but in the world to come). How do we get there? Jesus gave us directions: “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions. If it Twere not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:1-2) That place is the Holy City, New Jerusalem, with God’s garden paradise in the center of it.



Jesus then continued, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the

way you know.” But Thomas the Doubter worried, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” For the benefit of all of us who doubt, Jesus explained to him, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me.” So quit worrying about how you’ll get there. If you love Jesus and believe in Him as your Lord, He will make sure you are there to join Him.



I also advise you to stop worrying about how you’re going to take advantage of every opportunity in this world and make sure you live up to your potential. Because no one ever does. Nor does life ever turn out the way we hope. But it can turn out better than we hope if we live for the next world instead of this one—developing a Christ-like character so we fit in with the culture there and doing all that we can to attract others to that place.



One more quote from Lewis' Mere Christianity before I stop. He said, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this." So think of Heaven as often as you can and look forward to returning to that Garden from which we once sprang.

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