

The Garden of Eden

Genesis 2.

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The full act of creation under God's hand is detailed in Genesis 1. The work of creation is again given us here, but much more succinctly; the narrative soon passing, the general action confines itself to Eden, or to the garden of Eden, because there the scene of the great action about to be tried was laid, and all here is under the hand of the Lord God in a character of covenant relationship to man and the creation. The garden is shown us very particularly; it is described as the place of every desirable production, and as the source of those fruitful rivers which were to go over the whole earth; and Adam himself is put there "*to dress it and to keep it.*"

Now all these were so many characters of the man's happy estate. He had provision of all desirable things, he saw his habitation a spring of blessing to the earth around it, and he himself made important to that garden from which he derived his enjoyments. He was made to *give* as well as to receive, and all these were but different features of a happy condition to a well-ordered mind such as Adam's. All this was surely so, but with advantages of so high an order it was needed that he should be told that he was but a creature still, and that the divine Planter of the garden alone was supreme. Accordingly the voice of a *Sovereign* is heard in the garden; a commandment goes forth, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." But this voice is not a discord. It is all unison in the ear of an upright creature; for, act in what way or sphere he may, God must be, and will be, God — filling the chief room, and not giving His glory to another. A creature of a right choice must therefore rejoice in any witness of God's supremacy as in its own blessing. All this is but harmonious and consistent happiness; for in the command there is nothing beyond the necessary thing. There is no laying upon Adam any other burden. One command is needed, and only one is given. And this is therefore only another item in the great account of his happiness. There the Lord God, to fill out the scene of this happiness, celebrates for Adam a coronation-day, and a day of espousals; but here I must linger for a moment or two. The order of the passage is this (vv. 18-22) -

The Lord God first takes counsel with Himself about Adam's espousals.

He then introduces him to His dominions and sovereignty.

At last He celebrates his espousals, presenting Eve to him.

This is the order of his coronation and of his marriage, and it is an order which has its meaning. I believe the richest purpose of joy is the first in counsel, but the latest in manifestation; so in the substance. The Church was in the election and predestination of God before the world began; but other ages and dispensations took their course ere "that mystery hid in God" was made known. (See Eph. 3.) There is something of peculiar beauty and meaning in the order of this passage. It is not the mere progress of the narrative of independent facts; it is the design of a Great Master who knew the end from the beginning.

But not only so. It is not only the design of a perfect mind, but the well-known way of love also. The Lord God's first thought was about Adam's *best* blessing. The helpmeet at his side was to be more to him than the subject creatures under him. The day of his espousals was to be dearer to him than the day of his coronation. Accordingly the Lord crowns him; but that is done at once, and put out of hand.

But that which was to be *chief* in his enjoyments was the fondest image in the mind of his Lord. His Lord pondered it. He made it familiar to His thoughts; spoke of it to Himself, because it was to be the dearest to Adam. This was the way of love. We understand it to be so. We like to think of the materials of a loved one's happiness; we turn it over in our thoughts, and thus is the Lord God represented here as engaged for Adam. The manner of forming the plan or taking the counsel is thus beautiful, and the plan itself was wonderful. It took the highest aim, "It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him an helpmeet for him."

Jesus the Son of God has found this to be so. His joy is provided for in the very way in which the Lord God here provides for Adam's. As we read, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son." How excellent a purpose therefore was this! It was making nothing less than the divine enjoyments the standard and the measure; it was saying to the creature, "Enter thou into the joy of *thy Lord*." And not only in the *plan*, but in the execution of the plan. The divine original is copied. Adam sleeps a deep sleep, and out of his riven side a rib is taken, of which the helpmeet is made. As the Lord's helpmeet comes forth from His toil, His sorrow, and His death, and He felt and valued all this. He saw of the travail of his soul, as it were, and was satisfied. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," said his satisfied heart, surveying the fruit of his weariness and of his mystic death, and this again is *divine joy*. There is Another, we know, who will thus see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. It is the rest of the *labouring* man that is sweet. It is the bread eaten through sweat of *brow* that is pleasant. Adam had not helped in the forming of any beast of the field. They had not been quickened through any sleep of his. But Eve was taken from his riven side. She had been the fruit of his death-like slumber, and he therefore prized her. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." Not only as his helpmeet, his companion, but because he had *been so necessary to her did he prize her*; she was *out* of his side as well as for His side. The execution of the plan bound his heart to her as well as the result.

And this was divine joy, this is the joy of Jesus. This joy in His Church is His chief joy; she is both for His side and out of His side. Angels are not of the travail of His soul. But that which His toil and sorrow have won for Him, and which is prepared for the fellowship of His thoughts and His affections — this will be the dearest. The whole redeemed thing in heaven and in earth will surely be to Him the rest of the *labouring* man, and the bread that is eaten through *sweat of brow*; but the Church it is which is destined for His *side*, like Eve, as well as *taken out of it*.

Finally, we see here the unshamed nakedness of the man and the woman — happy expression of innocent intimacy. No familiarity which such hearts could indulge *would* be rebuked, and so will it be between the true pair in the heavenly garden; no fear of being bidden away, and no shame in drawing intimately near. Innocence was the security between Adam and Eve, and all the virtues of the new mind will be the necessary, instinctive, essential protection of the ways of the redeemed Bride of the Lamb, in company with the Lord, while indulging her heart in His nearest affection.

Beautiful, wondrous chapter! I would ask myself, Are such the materials of my happiness? Adam *communicated* as well as received; Adam was *subject to God* as the creature was subject to him. And all these were but different parts of his happiness. Do we know this kind of blessedness - the blessing of imparting to others, and of being subject to God? and do we enjoy those mysteries which so tell out the ways of Christ and the Church?

All this is a picture of perfect happiness; but it is such happiness as God could sanction or impart, and Jesus Himself could share. J. G. B.

