

## Imagining The Garden Of Eden (Part 2)

Setting Up the Scene

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As you may recall from last time, I began with a very long introduction on the subject of imagination. We discovered that imagination is an integral part of our thought processes. In fact, it is the creative, artistic, and inventive side of our minds.

Even though we may think that we do not have a very good imagination, or a very active imagination, we have one nonetheless; we are employing it all the time. We often use it without realizing that it is our imagination. In fact, we slip into a state where we just let our imagination go wild while we are mostly fully awake. That is called daydreaming. It is just our imagination taking something that may have recently happened, or heard. Or it may be just some stray thought that just wandered through the mind, and we go off on it like a herd of horses letting our minds blissfully see where it all ends. Then we "wake up" a moment or two later realizing that we had zoned out. (Then we wonder, "How did I get here without being cognizant of the fact I was driving the car?") Daydreaming is our imagination at work.

We can define imagination as a basic human capacity to create images, fantasies, or thoughts not in the immediate environment. If we can picture ourselves riding a horse across the prairie, or being poled on a gondola in the canals of Venice, or being strapped into the cockpit of an 850-horsepower stock car, or jet plane, then we are using our imaginations. All of these are fantasies that are not part of our immediate environment. If you went off on any one of those you just *imagined* yourself in those situations. And I know that they are not a part of our immediate environments, because I have never heard of folks listening to a sermon and doing any of those things.

We begin using our imaginations quite early in life. It is easily seen if any of you have had children. Children pretend play at a very early in age. Do you know that most children begin pretend play at about 18 months? That is only a year-and-a-half old! Most of us think that they are not above the glub-glub state at that point, but really their minds are going, working, and active. I am sure that if you have watched a child closely, you will see just how active their mind really is.

What this shows is that at an early age—before the age of two—the human mind has the ability to transcend thinking about the world as it is here and now, to a world that does not exist, or the world as it might be. Even little toddlers can use their imagination to enter a world that no one else has ever thought of before. They have their own

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imaginary friends and such. Have you ever watched a child pretend to be a princess, a fireman, a nurse, a policeman, a cowboy—this is a child using pretend play, using their imagination.

Of course, their imaginations are not very complex because their life experiences are so limited at that point; they can only really imagine spin-offs of what they already know. But their imagination is already at work, and they are using it to entertain themselves.

Dr. Jerome L. Singer, a psychologist from Yale University, says that children who engage in imaginative play show a richer more varied vocabulary, an increased ability to show empathy to others, and an increased ability to entertain themselves. So their imagination should not be stifled. It should actually be somewhat encouraged, for it helps the child to become more creative, inventive, thoughtful, and artistic.

They can even be empathetic. The reason they can empathize better is because they seem to be able to put themselves into other situations—they can put themselves somewhat in their shoes. So if they see a person crying, a person with a vivid imagination could use it to understand why they are crying, and to feel empathy for the person.

Dr. Singer adds that children who engage in aggressive imaginative play, like little boys often do, are actually less likely to be aggressive when they mature. That seems counter-intuitive, but the way it works is that they are better able to understand and moderate the harm of aggression. To put it another way, they can put themselves in the other person's shoes, and realize how they would feel if it were happening to them, and pull their punches. It is all part of the human imagination being used for good.

Now in adults, pretending often comes out in a negative sense in such things as lying—pretending to be somebody else, or that the situation is different. Another negative sense is sarcasm. You see that all the time. It is a major part of today's humor. Another negative use by adults is the manipulation of people's opinions and desires that we see in such areas as politics, pretending to be somebody he is not, or pretend to believe something he does not believe; or in advertising, where a company creates a scenario to get you accept something that is not real. Almost no product lives up to the advertiser's claims. So, they are making you imagine yourself using their wonderful product, while it does not quite live up to the claims. They have used their imagination to deceive us.

Now, it does not have to be negative. It can be useful in visualizing new products, especially in the inventive mind. You can use your imagination not only in coming up

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with the idea, but also in how to make it work. This is also effective in creating new approaches to old problems. Let us say you are stuck on the side of the road, broken down, and you do not have the tool that you need to fix the car the proper way, but with a fertile imagination, you might be able to come up with a way to actually "fix it"—hold it together—until you can get to a place where you can get it fixed more completely at a mechanic's shop. That, too, is using your imagination.

Or maybe it is a more efficient way of doing something. Instead of using your clothesline, you invent a machine where inside this box it blows hot air through a rotating barrel tumbling wet clothes to dry them. Somebody's imagination was at work.

There are also ways you can use your imagination to visualize how things might work out. Let us say you are going to a job interview, and you know that there will be certain questions asked of you, so you might enjoin your imagination to visualize or even hear the interview taking place. And you then put in your own responses, trying to move the interview into a certain direction that might be advantageous to yourself. Or if you have to run a meeting, and you have a bunch of people who are rather fractious, you probably run those things through your mind to make sure that you can work things out to get things done.

There are a lot of good uses for your imagination. My purpose is to harness the power of the human imagination to shed new light on Scripture as we study things out. I suppose all of you too use your imaginations in other ways, but certainly I want to get us to think of using our imagination (more) in terms of our Bible study.

Obviously we have to keep our imaginations in check, because we have seen that it has a dark side that we must keep under control. And we do this by sticking to only what the Bible says, what it reveals, basing our speculation—our imagination—on sound doctrine and good reasoning. We cannot just let our imagination run wild like a daydream, and think that is what God meant, but we have to make sure it is hedged in by what is revealed by God to us.

We will get into this at a later time, but I will ask here, what is the character of God? How does that shape what we imagine things were like at that time in Genesis 2? We could imagine God doing things that were blasphemous if we allow our imaginations to go too far. We must keep our imaginations contained to what has been revealed to us about God's character. Nevertheless, if we put ourselves into events and situations recorded in the Bible, and imagine how things were at the time, we can get a greater appreciation and understanding of what God is trying to teach us.

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There are many times where people think that Bible study is a very dry thing in which people rely on other people's opinions and commentaries, or something else, to patch things together. But, it does not have to be like that at all.

These things we read in the Bible were real situations. They really happened as stated. They were real people. Balaam's ass was real, and she did speak to him, just to use one example. The serpent was there, and he talked to Eve too. It really happened. Can we imagine what happened—what was the expression on Eve's face when the serpent talked to her? We will eventually get into things like this. Did Balaam nearly fall off his donkey when that happened? He might have.

However, just put yourself in there, and think, "Okay, my donkey just spoke to me. How would I have reacted?" You should start using your imagination to think the thing through. And it might be really funny, or it might be really shocking and startling, or even horrifying. But you have to use your imagination to do that.

**Genesis 2:4** This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

We saw there that this verse shows that the first chapter of Genesis records the creation from the angle of a cosmic universal heavenly power. Here was God, saying a word, and things were popping into existence. It is a setting of grandeur, power, and wonder all on a universal scale.

But then, we get to chapter 2, and things begin to turn. Chapter 2 literally brings the creation down to earth. We start with God creating the heavens and the earth, and now it ends with Him making the earth and the heavens. The first place has changed. It went from heaven to earth, unto earth to heaven. And some have even said that the second heavens do not even include the great reaches of space, but just the firmament—the atmosphere. And so, it has brought it down from the stars down to the land and the air, things we are intimately familiar with.

We went from an overall view, to the view of one actually standing upon the earth witnessing this from very close up. So, it is from macro to micro, as I put it, narrowing our focus down to earth.

We also saw that Genesis 2:4 introduces us to another aspect of God Himself, and that was that chapter 1 reveals Him as Elohim, and that is the only name used to describe God in that chapter. He is Elohim, He is God, He is limitless, and possesses fearful

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power. You do not want to get on His bad side. He is all-powerful. He could make you into a speck of dust with just a thought. If He can create all the universe and everything in it with just a few words, how powerful does that make Him? It is beyond our imagination!

Genesis 2 introduces Him as YHWH Elohim. This adds a personal name to it. Mr. Armstrong always taught us that Elohim was like one's surname, that there is the Father God—Elohim, and then there is Jesus. They are both God, and have the same last name, but they are individuals.

Well, this adds a name to the One we know as Elohim. And, this new name we learned in Genesis 2:4 that this God is self-existent; He is the I AM THAT I AM; You cannot describe Him except by describing Him! So, He is self-descriptive, and self-defining. But, this name is also a personal name. He is a personal God. He is person able to be known—knowable. He is not some remote God out there with all the power of the universe, and stays on His throne in heaven, but He also comes down to earth, and stands next to us so we can have a relationship with Him. He is not only a powerful and intimidating Creator, but also a faithful, loving, knowable Being.

Later, this name is used to describe the God of the Covenant. This is the same God that made the covenant with Israel, and He is also the same God who makes the covenant with us.

So, He is not remote and austere like some think the God of the first chapter appears to be. But, He is near to us, and compassionate. We will see this as we go through the chapter, and the series. He feels for us, and does things for us, so that we can be successful in our lives.

Another thing we could have done is to go through some of the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and seen God with them. God came down and spoke to Abraham, and ate with Abraham. He showed Him things personally. They walked towards Sodom together. They did things together even to the point of God asking Abraham to kill his son, and then meeting Him there, and Him giving him the ram as a substitute.

All of these things, including Isaac and Jacob as well—Jacob wrestled with God! He was that close to him so that he was touching Him, and wrestling with Him all night long. So, we see that He has a personal intimate relationship with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was near. He was with them constantly, at least in terms of what we think—we never see Him bodily in action among us, and we know better. He is spiritually active among us. But to them, they saw Him, they touched Him, they

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conversed with Him across a fire. He was very personal and near to them in that way.

Let us look at this nearness for a moment. In Deuteronomy 4 Israel is going into the land, and He was very near unto them too, because He had appeared to them several times. He appeared to them all the time in the pillar of cloud, and fire so that all they needed to do was look up and see Him there. And then too, in the manna, and everything that He had done for them, He had showed Himself to be a God who is near to them.

**Deuteronomy 4:5-7** "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LOORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LOORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?"

Here was a people that was defined by their nearness to God. They were the people of God. They were called Israel—prince, or prevailer with God. Their name showed everyone else that this God was their God, and He was going to defend them, and fight for them. But of course, notice why I started in verse 5, because the nearness of God was balanced by the fact that they were at that time doing what He said to do. And, when they would start to sin, He would go far away. His nearness, then, was conditional—He was near when they were obedient. And, He stayed near for a long time after they had become disobedient, but eventually they pushed Him away, and He had to go far away, because He would not abide sin.

So, we see this correlation beginning here between obedience, and God's nearness.

Turn to Jeremiah 23, skipping over many years of history; this is just about the time that the Jews were going to be exiled to Babylon.

**Jeremiah 23:21-24** "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings. Am I a God near at hand," says the LOORD, "and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the LOORD; "Do I not fill heaven

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and earth?" says the LOORD.

That is how near He is. He is omnipresent! He is a God who is near, and all they needed to do was call upon Him and turn to Him, and He would have forgiven them, and these things would not be coming upon them. He says that even these false prophets, had they actually turned the people back to God, He would have been satisfied with that. But they did not.

So, here we have God pleading with them to return to Him, and be near to Him, but they would not. They would rather listen to the false prophets who prophesied lies.

Go now into the New Testament and see just how close it really gets, and turn to John 14. This passage is part of the news that He brought to His disciples, because they were worried. They had been near to Him His whole ministry. They had walked around the land with Him. They had seen all His miracles. They had watched Him cast out demons. They had heard His preaching. They had been there night and day through all the things they had gone through.

**John 14:19-21** "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Even though He was going to go away, and physically not be with them anymore, the relationship was going to go on. And this relationship was based upon this covenant between the two, this agreement that if they would obey Him, and keep His commandments, He would remain near to them. And it goes on.

**John 14:22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

That is a legitimate question. He could not figure it out. If He was going to go away, and not be seen anymore, how could they keep this relationship going? How could they know that He was there?

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**John 14:23a** Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; [Notice how He repeats what we need to do. He repeats the terms.] and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

So, He is saying, "I am not just going to be next to you, or just a call away, but I am going to be in you!" And we know that is through His Holy Spirit. He has become so near to us that we are in Him, and He is in us. He says as much in John 17 in His famous prayer. The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in us. And, we are all one together. It is just amazing the amount of nearness there is here—they are so near, that they are in us! You cannot get much nearer than that! How intimate!

So, going back to Genesis 2:4, what we see here with this change of perspective from the cosmic to the personal, from the Elohim God of great power, to YHWH Elohim the same God of great power who is also a personal God—all intimations of nearness. God suddenly goes from macro to micro, as it were. We go from looking at Him from a long way off like through a telescope, to seeing Him very closely as if by microscope. We are beginning to learn about God, not at a distance, but close up and personal. We are not seeing Him as this great Power, necessarily, but as a great Person. And all of that is in this transition from chapter 1 to chapter 2 of Genesis. It is not something that we can see clearly until we start thinking about these little changes that Moses shows us, that turns our attention to them.

Here, then, is the first intimation of what later occurred in the covenants—that God brought Himself near unto us, and brought us near unto Him too. This is the idea that God is eager to be in fellowship with us. Think about what is going on here. This is the record of God creating the heavens and the earth. And where does this lead to, but the creation of mankind.

What we are seeing is that we are being led to this wonderful meeting between God and man in the creation of Adam. And not only that, we do not quite see it here, but of course, this leads us to the New Covenant that this nearness should last for ever. It is not something that happened on this day, when God created Adam, but would be something that would never end.

So, if you want to look at it this way, and it is very easy to do, the nearness that He reveals in Genesis 2, specifically, is the same sort of intimacy that He offers us under the New Covenant. In a way, under the New Covenant it comes full circle to His original intention of making Adam and Eve, putting them into the Garden of Eden—into His

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garden to be in constant fellowship with Him.

Now the contact that we have with Him will not be as physical as it was between Himself and Adam and Eve. However that distance will be done away with in the first resurrection, because we will be literally with Him face to face all the time. What is the promise of the firstfruits? It is that they join the Husband—the Bridegroom—and they are with Him always and forever. We never leave His presence. That is the kind of closeness that we are talking about here. And it all begins so very early in the Book.

**Genesis 2:4-6** This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LOORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LOORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

These verses, specifically the last half of four, and all of five and six, set the stage for the main topics of the chapter. This is the setting. God is setting things up. The main topics are (1) the creation of mankind, and then (2) his life in the garden under God, and (3) the union of man and his wife. These are the three main points of this chapter.

God wants us to understand just how early these events took place. That is the whole intent of these verses. He wants us to imagine how early in mankind's history this was, going all the way back to the very day that he was created. This nearness and covenant that God wants to have with mankind was not an afterthought of creation. It was forethought. Everything is leading up to the meeting of God and man, and their intimate relationship. And so God through Moses uses the physical attributes of things to show just how early this took place. So He gives a description of the way things were.

These events that we are going to look at took place on the sixth day of (re)-creation, the day that God made Adam. And what He wants to show us here is just how raw, new, and uninhabited the earth was. It was *the beginning*.

Now, it is very difficult for us having lived in this world all our lives, having seen the things that we have seen, even the wild places of the earth, to imagine a world before mankind touched it. And that is what Moses is asking us to do. He is saying that there was a time—a very short time in the history of the earth—when nature was completely unspoiled, when only the hand of God had touched it. Nothing had grown as we know it to grow. It had been created and put into place by God, but nothing else had happened.

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All was primeval we could call it. It was perfect in its own way. God had said it was all very good.

Now, verse 5 implies that as the action begins in verse 7, no shrub or tree had been planted in the fields of the land, and no herb, grains, or vegetables had sprouted. I said it in this fashion for a reason. Read that again, and see if you can catch the difference, because what I am going to tell you is basically the intimation of what Moses wrote in Hebrew. "As yet no shrub or tree had been planted in the fields of the land, and no herb, grain, or vegetables had sprouted."

What is Moses saying? He is not saying that those things did not exist, but rather he is saying that there had been no cultivation—no agriculture. Nothing like this had started yet.

That is another thing hard to realize, to think about, or to imagine the time when earth was before any sort of agriculture activity, because we are used to seeing things growing. Maybe we could imagine the dead of winter, but that is not even close, actually. This was like perpetual springtime the way that God had created it. There are those who think of it as perpetual autumn, and that is certainly possible with all the mature plants and fruits, and such. Who knows? It does not say that.

But it is interesting to try to think about the time of this earth when not anything had ever been done to the earth. God had created the plants on the third day of creation but they had not yet been put to their intended use. And the last half of the verse verifies this where He said that no rain had come to water the earth. And it also says that there was no man to till the ground.

So, what Moses is talking about is the fact that there had been no agriculture of any sort yet. It was a raw, primeval landscape. Moses uses the word "field" here, twice. This does not mean wilderness. Some folks think of hunting deer out in the field, but this does not indicate wild land. In most cases in the Old Testament the term field means either a place for grazing domesticated animals, or a place for the sowing of seed for food crops or animal fodder.

So, the way that Moses is describing this is describing farming and agriculture—human husbandry. He is saying that this event took place before any of that ever happened. This was before an implement of some sort ever opened the ground. Mankind had touched nothing yet.

This, apparently, was before the plants God had created had a chance to drop their

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seeds and sprout from the earth. Moses is asking us to go way, way back and try to imagine the earth as it was, totally unspoiled and untouched, unworked and untended by man. It was all *very* good. But it was uncultivated. And, remember he said that there was no man to till the ground, it would soon become unkempt and wild since it was mankind's job to exercise dominion over it. Right? Is that not what He said back there in Genesis 1:28, that God blessed them, told them to be fruitful and multiply, and then He told them to subdue the earth, and have dominion over it.

So, what would have happened if God had stopped before creating mankind? His creation would have run down. That is what the Second Law of Thermodynamics says—if things are not maintained, they tend toward disorder. If we just let the grass grow out back of here, pretty soon it would be unmanageably tall and unsightly. But, at a certain time, we will tend to it, because we do not want it to be unkempt and wild-like.

That is how anything is. If you do not put oil in your car, it will break down. Anything you leave, and will not tend to will break down eventually.

And so, that is why God says that there was no man there. Man was God's helper in this creation. Man would be given a very specific job to do, and that was to maintain the creation on the earth; not just in the garden but worldwide as he spread out over the whole earth.

So, God had created a beautiful, verdant, fruitful earth, and it was perfect, but it needed man to maintain it—maintain it, order it, and train it—to make it produce to its fullest capabilities, so that it would truly be a useful and beautiful creation. Moses paints us a picture of a breathtaking piece of land that is raw, and needs the caring and productive hand of mankind to make it sing.

Now "earth," here, in the *New King James Version*, "Before any plant of the field was in the earth," is a very interesting term biblically. The word is "eretz." In the Middle East the Jews call their nation, "Eretz Israel"—The Land of Israel. Eretz means land. It has been translated here as "earth," because the translators took it to mean generally—that the plants were in the ground or soil. There is a possibility, a hint, that Moses is here referring to the land. Remember his audience is the Israelites. He is trying to get them to imagine this place—the land—as it was before mankind had been put on the earth. He could possibly be meaning the Promised Land—that there is the possibility that he is saying that this was before any agriculture in the land. It is only a small possibility. And if so, it is the first indication of the central geographic focus of the Bible on the land, and specifically on Jerusalem.

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God is always talking about the land—the land of Canaan, the land of Israel, this land.

Turn to Genesis 12. You all know this section very well. I want you to notice the land here. We often focus on different parts, but notice how many times the land is mentioned.

**Genesis 12:1-7** Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

You see here in these introductory verses to the life of Abraham how central the land was. And when God promises him this land, he builds an altar. That is how central the focus is here—the worship of God in this particular piece of real estate—the land.

Turn to Leviticus 25. It does not end in Genesis. We could go through the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—and Joseph who wanted to make sure that when he died that the children of Israel took his bones with them and put them in the land.

**Leviticus 25:23** The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me [God says].

They are just renters on His land. So, it cannot be sold permanently, because He is the owner. It is His land—the land.

**Deuteronomy 1:8** See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.

So, here in Deuteronomy as they are about to go into the land, God specifically makes the connection back to Genesis 12. This is the land, the only land for His people.

Now, think about it. If God was going to put His new man anyplace on earth, where would He do this? Would it not be likely that He would put the man in the land that He would be using for the rest of time? I think it is way up there on the list. This idea expands out as we go through the Bible.

**Psalm 37:29** The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever.

So, not only did a physical people live there, but now, He is telling us that the spiritual people will be there—the righteous that are going to inherit that land. This passage shows us the connection to us, today, the righteous—His spiritual people.

Turn to Isaiah 60. This passage jumps way forward into the future.

**Isaiah 60:19-21** "The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory [ref Revelation 21 and 22]. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Also your people shall all be righteous [Psalm 37]; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands [hold on to this too], that I may be glorified.

So, this land—the land, the righteous in the land, the work of His hand—all spin around this central focus of what began in Genesis 2:5—the land. It is very interesting that it is brought up so early in the book, that we are focused upon a specific piece of ground on the earth.

Like I said, this is only a possibility, but it is a strong possibility, or a probability in my mind. It is a pretty good probability that the land that He is talking about is the same land that He has been working in for the past 6000 years, which the Bible says He will continue to work in for all time. *This spot is special to Him.*

Ask anyone in the western world where the holy land is, and nearly all of them will tell you that it is off the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea in the place that is now

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called the state of Israel—the land of Canaan—the land given to Israel, now occupied by their remnant, Judah. It is where David and the kings of Judah reigned, and it is where Jesus Christ walked and preached, and died, and rose again, and where His disciples and apostles launched their worldwide efforts to take the gospel to all the earth.

And we cannot leave it there—it is also the same patch of ground to which God will return Himself; He will return Israel to that land; and that is where He is going to set up the Kingdom of God on this earth; it will be this way forever.

I am not going to say that it is the exact piece of ground, but I think I have made a good case for it. This piece of land is center stage for nearly all that happens in God's Word, and in God's plan. As I just said, I cannot say with absolute certainty that Moses intends us to think of the land of Israel and his use of "eretz" in verse 5 (Genesis 2), but I think that it is a high probability that we can.

God is about to awaken man and put him into His garden, and the most likely spot is where He later put His name—Jerusalem, His holy hill—Mount Zion; Mount Moriah; that area there where Jerusalem is today, where the temple was built. If you would go through the Psalms, the holy hill idea is there frequently, as in Psalm 43 and Psalm 15—who is going to be on His holy hill?

If we put this back into Genesis 2:5-6, what Moses is instructing his Israelite readers to do is to imagine the Promised Land before one foot of sod had been turned; before one olive tree, or one grape vine had been planted. This was pure virgin territory. This was the land in all its glory, and perfection.

Now, it was also before it had ever rained on the earth.

This is an interesting point, because we have to think in terms of an Israelite. An Israelite would know that rain was the life-blood of agriculture in that land. If it did not rain, if the early and later rains did not come at their rightful times, it was certain that their crops would fail. They could not store enough water to irrigate everything. It is unlikely that they could store and distribute enough for one season, let alone two, and famine was sure to quickly follow. It is just the way that the land is set up, and God did it for a reason. He wants His people to rely on Him in faith for everything. He wants to be, and is, their Provider, and so He used that land in the way He created it as a test for them every year. And He would reward them, or withhold from them as He saw fit according to their faith, or faithlessness.

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So a time before rain is probably impossible for an ancient Israelite to conceive, because rain was so precious, and necessary. But, right after he says this, he adds that a mist rose up and watered the ground. I cannot understand a time or place without rain, but I can understand dew, a mist coming up from the ground and watering everything. That was a necessary part of Israelite agriculture in the Promised Land. They typically have long stretches in which there was no rainfall. And so they had to rely upon the dew that condensed out of the air to water their crops.

There are 37 verses that have to do with dew in the Bible. And a lot of it has to do in connection with God giving words, or blessings. So dew was very much a positive thing in Israelite thought. So the Israelite reading this would realize that the ground was not was impoverished of moisture. It was getting some.

Let us look at this for a moment. Turn to Job 38. I brought you here specifically for you to see God is the author of dew. He is the One who causes the dew.

**Job 38:25-28** "Who has divided a channel for the overflowing water, or a path for the thunderbolt, to cause it to rain on a land where there is no one, a wilderness in which there is no man; [kind of sounds like what we are talking about] to satisfy the desolate waste, and cause to spring forth the growth of tender grass? Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?"

The question is rhetorical, and the answer is obvious—it is God, and it is Him speaking. He is trying to tell Job, "What is your experience in creating things? Were you there when I created all these things? As you see here, dew has its source in God as well.

**Haggai 1:9-11** "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."

Here it is intimated that it was simply the withholding of the dew that was the ultimate cause of this. See how necessary it is? And, also see how God used the withholding or the giving of dew as a means of getting their attention—cursing them, in this case, for their wrong priorities.

Turn to Zechariah 8. This is a time of blessing, in fact Jerusalem during the Millennium.

**Zechariah 8:12** For the seed shall be prosperous, the vine shall give its fruit, the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew—I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these.

So here we see it in a positive sense. God blesses Israel with dew.

So what we see in Genesis 2:5-6 is that even though there was not any rain at this time, there was dew enough to do what was necessary.

However, after saying all this, we should not jump to the conclusion that this means that there was no rain before the Flood. Do not jump to the conclusion that there was no rain before the Flood, because there likely was rain before the Flood. The idea for no rain is linked to the idea that there was a vapor canopy high in the atmosphere making the earth very humid all over the earth, so that there was no need for rain.

The construction of this verse does not imply that there was never rain before the Flood. All it suggests is that there had not been rain yet. Remember that Moses is trying to get the audience to think as far back as possible. This was a time before the rain had started, before the crops had sprouted, before the trees had been planted. He is taking us as far back in our imagination as is possible. We have to remember that this was taking place sometime during the sixth day. And it has just been a few days before on the second day when the waters were divided.

So during the creation week, it did not rain, but rather a mist rose up from the ground. What Moses could be implying here is that the earth was slowly drying out, because it had been covered completely with water. Is that not what it said in Genesis 1:2, 6-10? God had to bring the land up out of the water. Think of something that had been submerged for a while, how long would it take to dry out? And so, the sun was up, and it was heating the soil, and there was all this moisture in the soil, and it needed time to escape.

So, during this time the meteorological cycle was just beginning when the water was evaporating up out of the ground eventually forming clouds, and so on. But, he is taking us back so far to the point that we can see this cycle beginning. It had not happened before. This was the first time for it to occur. And this meteorological cycle which every Israelite knew about because of their agriculture ties—knowing when the rains would come, and when to plant—was saying, "Wow, this happened right at the beginning

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when all this was new."

Even so, the whole face of the ground was wet, well watered, and primed for bounteous growth.

**Genesis 2:7a** And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground.

So today, we have put the setting into its correct understanding. We have tried to imagine a beautiful untouched portion of land with rich soil, and plenty of water, never been touched yet by human hand, and then the action begins. The central activity is the creation of man.

All of the things that have happened before—the making of the land, the separation of the waters, the plants, animals, the sun, moon, and stars being ordered and such, all God's activities prior to this verse, were all preparatory to this very act, because without mankind, these things were superfluous, and pointless. Man was the central element in God's plan to reproduce Himself.

All of this was pointless if there were no "seed," as it were, for reproducing Himself. All these things were created for mankind to enjoy, and to use, and to have dominion over. As it says, man was necessary to till the ground. Moses is giving us hints as to why this is important, because there was no man before this. Man is important. Man is necessary. Man is an integral part of God's plan. And His creation was about to occur. And it occurred within this environment.

So, the creation of man was what all these other things were leading up to.

Now, we get to this verse, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground." The verse is purposely very earthly (no pun intended). The language is quite picturesque. Moses wants us to see through our mind's eye the very Creator God, the very same One who had done all these other things. By speaking a word, he wants us to see the very Creator God kneeling in this wet earth, untouched by mankind before now, but now touched by God. We are to see the Lord God choosing His clays like a master potter, gathering up some from here, and some from over there; we are to see Him kneeling, kneading, and folding these soils together to the correct consistency in order to make His medium for the creation of man. And then we are to think of Him at work forming a human being.

Did He just form some rough human shape? Or, did He fashion it exquisitely like a

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sculptor down to each individual hair, and pore? Think about it. Use your imagination here.

We have already seen God kneeling and working with the dirt. He is getting His hands dirty. What did He do? Did He just kind of "abracadabra" and here is an Adam? Two arms, two legs, and a head with ears that stick out to here? I do not think so.

To me, I believe Moses wants us to see God working in a very detailed way, even though it is said very concisely, I believe He wants us to think of God as a sculptor and potter. They do not do things haphazardly. They plan things out. They work hard. They work in detail too.

I believe (this is my own thought, my own imagining) that He put Adam together piecemeal. I do not think He gathered up all kinds of clay and made Adam, and carved out a belly button, and then breathed the breath of life into him. I believe that He did something much more intricate. I believe He pulled together various soils and made a heart, and laid it aside. And then He pulled together various soils to make the liver, and then He set that aside too. And then He did it again for the kidneys; the spleen; and the intestines; and He made bones, and blood vessels; and nerves; and a brain; and He laid these all within a shell of skin and muscle. Then He finished it and bound it all up together. He made each individual toenail, and each individual hair. God did not do things haphazardly. He did not do them slapdash. He crafted a being in the same manner but far greater than Michelangelo did with David; or with any of the great sculptors of this world making things so lifelike.

But God's creation was not just lifelike, it was going to *have life*. And so we see God getting dirty for us, working hard for us. He is revealed here as a hands-on God who took the time and the effort to make man as perfectly as only God could, down to each individual bit that makes up a human being. He took great care to make us just as He wanted us to be, using Himself as the model.

Do you realize what He did here in making Adam? He was making a self-portrait in the medium of clay. Not exactly, but close enough. And did He think so little of Himself He just did it slapdash throwing mud "against a wall"? No, we are to imagine God painstakingly crafting man.

He is not a cold, remote, untouchable deity that just points a finger and says, "Be," but a Being who works hard, who is an artist, who does things personally, who is not above sweaty toil, and long hours. He is a master craftsman *par excellence*.

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Go and read for yourselves Job 38 and 39 where God Himself is telling Job how much and how involved He was in creation in setting the lines, and crafting the feathers of a bird's wing, for putting within the horse its various intelligences and reactions. It is quite amazing to think about. And if He was going to do these things in such detail to the animals, why not man? He even says in there that He gave the ostrich its stupidity for a purpose.

If you think that He did these things in such detail for the animals, and the inanimate systems that are there in the world and universe, would He not also take the time and effort to go into detail for the pinnacle of His creation—mankind—the being that He wants to make into His sons? I think so.

So, God took meticulous care in designing and forming not only every part of His creation, but especially Adam from the dust of the ground. I wanted to go into the fact that he was made of the "dust of the ground" and show you what that may mean, but that will have to wait until next time.

But I will say, not only does He show in this verse that he was made of the dust of the ground, He also links him to Himself in terms of spirit.