

Eden, The Garden, And The Two Trees (Part One)

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I am beginning a new series that is quite different from the first two messages of this Feast of Tabernacles ["The Handwriting Is On the Wall (Parts One and Two) (2007)"], and I hope those messages were clarifying and exhortative. I want us to be on the same page as to why the Church of the Great God is doing what it is doing. Before we go onto that I want to give you four points from those previous sermons that will kind of summarize them.

1: Abraham and Sarah epitomized a pilgrim's life. They lived and worked focused on the future. They had a vision of a far better world, and thus they never put down roots in this one by allowing themselves to get distracted from that vision.

2: The Church of the Great God operates to place the responsibility for developing your relationship with God on *you*. It is *you* who must control choices in your life, or brethren, the character will not be yours.

3: It is the church's responsibility to persuade you through teaching that provides you with understanding of what your priorities and choices ought to be. We had a very fine example of that this morning, and I hope that you are persuaded.

4: It is not the church's responsibility to make preaching the gospel to the world as its highest priority at this time. We perceive the church as being in a "Deuteronomy" situation, in which each member makes final preparations for entering the Kingdom of God. Thus, until God raises up a true apostle or sends a prophet or two, our responsibility is to continue doing the last assignment given, and that is to prepare to follow *Him* wherever He goes in whatever He does.

Richard has mentioned a couple of times in sermons the importance of "first occurrences" to biblical understanding. Their importance lies in setting patterns for events that happen later, and the "first," broadly foundational, often clarify specific meanings of what happens later.

For those of you who are older, you will recall how frequently Mr. Armstrong referred to the Two Trees in order to illustrate the two ways of life open to every one of us. One tree represents the way of get, and the other tree the way of give. One represents the way of self-centeredness; the other the way of love and outgoing concern.

Almost the entire Bible is specifically illustrating by a huge map of examples drawn from about 4,000 years of man's history the effect of partaking of what either of these two trees represents. What Herbert Armstrong did was reference a first occurrence.

The book of Genesis is absolutely loaded with first occurrences. That is the major reason why it is named "Genesis." Just in the first two or three chapters there is the re-creation, the first day, the first week, the first vegetation, the first animals, the first broad indication of the Creator's work; the first command, the second command, the third command, the first Sabbath, the first man and the first woman; the first lie, the first sin, the first clothing, the first curses, the first promise of Christ, the first promise that the time will come when Satan will no longer be a problem mankind has to deal with. We just concluded the third chapter, and the remaining 47 chapters contain multitudes of more firsts before Genesis ends. It is truly the foundational book of the Bible.

Today we are going to begin a geography lesson, and of course it will begin in Genesis because the subject matter here has its roots thoroughly tapped into Genesis. It is not the first scripture that I am going to turn to. I just said it has a root there.

Now geography is the science or the study into physical features. It is mostly applied to describe the location of things that are on the surface of the earth, but it can also apply to other things as well. I think that what we are going to peer into is a worthwhile effort to undertake at a Feast of Tabernacles.

We are also going to be involved with a great deal of symbolism, and it is my hope that I do not confuse you. You are going to have to think and keep on your toes in order to keep aligned with this study because it will require much cross-referencing and putting things in their proper order. I think you are up to it. I do not doubt it at all. Nothing here is going to be very complicated, but I think just keeping things in order is going to be a difficult thing for many of us.

Rightly understood, this subject is not only interesting, but I think it can be a strongly encouraging faith-builder that will reflect God's sovereignty, His forethought, and thoughtful concern to provide us with clues as to this "mystery" we are involved in, as Paul called it. It should intensify our faith in Him and our fear of Him. We will study into the location of the Garden of Eden, the place of the Two Trees within it, and many, many other very significant items associated with these three. You will see how consistently interwoven the Bible is to one purpose through the use of one basic pattern. The Bible has one Author, and one basic purpose.

Some months ago I was sent a paper on this subject by Shelia Crider, who is a member living in Fort Worth, Texas. I found it to be quite helpful. In it were many specifics that I already knew, but they were unarranged in my mind. That paper she sent to me was written by Jim Rector. Some of you will remember his name. He is now deceased, but he was a former Worldwide Church of God minister. But he in turn compiled his paper with the help of much material supplied by a man named Richard Davis who was a member of his group in Texarkana, Texas.

I got a great deal of confirming material from a book I already had, titled *Mysteries of Golgotha*, by Ernest Martin. He also was a former Worldwide Church of God minister, and he also is now deceased. He was a man that I hold in very high regard as a researcher and as a teacher. Please understand that I did not and do not always agree with him, but he was nonetheless a very stimulating teacher on biblical subjects, and I personally think he was the best teacher by far that I had while studying at Ambassador College. In addition to this I also did a great deal of Googling on the Internet, and brethren, you would be surprised what you can find there.

As we begin it is very helpful to understand a certain biblical peculiarity regarding geography and place-names. Jerusalem is a place. It is the name of that place, just so you know what a place-name is. If you understand this peculiarity, you will find it actually helps you to put things in their proper order and in their proper geographical location, and if you combine this with correctly cross-referencing the information. It is this: God permitted the human writers to use different names for the same places.

A simple example is Israel. Israel is also referred to as Canaan and the Promised Land. Sometimes the name Israel refers to a man; that is, Jacob. It refers to an entire nation, and yet in another place it refers only to the Northern Ten Tribes. And yet in another place, Israel—the Ten Northern Tribes—is called Ephraim, and at other times it is called Joseph. That is the principle.

We are going to begin, of all places, in the Song of Solomon.

Song of Solomon 4:8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse,
with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top
of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of
the leopards.

Two of the names in that verse are used for the same general geographic area, but given different names in other places. I am pretty sure you are familiar with those other names, but you are not familiar with Shenir and Hermon all that much.

Deuteronomy 3:8-9 And we took at that time out of the hand of
the two kings of the Amorites the land that was on this side Jordan,
from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon; (Which Hermon the
Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;)

Here is one place that has three names. You are subject to this at any time in the Bible. Any one of those three names might be used: Hermon, Sirion, or Shenir. So that is a very clear statement of what I am talking about here. You have to be aware that God allows the authors to use different names. Anybody who has done any kind of studying into geography ought to understand that this is very common. Every ethnic group of people on earth

does this, because languages change, things and events occur within nations, and because of that event they will change the name of whatever it was where that event took place *because* of that event. The same place it was called before by a different name, but the name became changed.

Deuteronomy 4:47-48 And they took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, who were on this side of the Jordan toward the rising of the sun; from Aroer, which is on the bank of the River Arnon, even to Mount Sion [one that you are familiar with], which is Hermon.

There is a mountain now with four different names, and all in the space of a couple of chapters. This is what I meant about cross-referencing. These are things you have to hold in your mind and know that over time a name may have changed, but we are talking about the same place. It can be confusing and it can get one mixed up.

Mount Hermon is the dominating geographic feature in that area of the world. It is a very high mountain. You might be interested to know that the Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, and the Temple Mount are all individual small peaks, all in the area of Jerusalem, and all of them are actually part of the very long shoulder of Mount Hermon. The peak of Mount Hermon is all the way up around Damascus, which is on the side of Mount Hermon, but that long mountain reaches all the way down to Jerusalem and beyond south.

The problem for us in all of this is that many times the Bible does not warn us as we are reading along—"Watch out! I'm going to use a different name for that person or location than I used before." You have to hold this in your mind. Oftentimes Bible translators have put a little letter beside a name-place, and they will refer you to where that place was called something different in some other part of the Bible, so you have to make use of those little references. This information is discovered by cross-referencing within the Bible, and sometimes from secular histories as well.

This is really not all that confusing, because if one is careful in organizing pieces of information gathered from here and there in the Bible, the

geographic picture actually becomes quite clear. We will be focusing on one small area within the vicinity of Jerusalem that in turn is located on the very much larger shoulder of Mount Hermon.

I am going to be referring to many scriptures, and I will be referring to them several different times, but each way for a somewhat different perspective in a different context for a different reason. The first series of verses that I am going to be giving to you are foundational verses upon which this entire study stands. (Incidentally, I used the word "study." I actually prefer to think of this as a Bible study more than I do as a sermon, but I think it is a helpful study.)

The key words for this study are: *copy*, *shadow*, *symbol*, and *pattern*. I might encourage every one of you to pay particular attention **all the time** to that word "pattern." Our God operates according to patterns, and He does not change those patterns, as I will show you in just a minute.

Even though place-names may change through history, God and His plan and His character never varies, never changes. Malachi 3:6 is a scripture that should be in our memory banks. It is there that He said, "I am God. I change not." There is a New Testament scripture that is similar to this, but its intent is just a little bit different from Malachi 3:6. This is Hebrews 13:8, where it says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

The purpose of the Malachi 3:6 statement is that His purpose never changes. He says, "Because I am God, and I never change, you Jacob (meaning Israel) are not blasted away, or I would have done that a long time ago." Hebrews 13:8 is a reference that His personal character does not change. So we have two solid statements. One is that His purpose never changes, and the other is that His personal character does not change.

Hebrews 8:4-5 For if He [Jesus] were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests [of the Aaronic priesthood] who offer gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For, He said [God], see that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

The *New International Version* renders verse 5 as: "They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Notice that the sanctuary is the copy and shadow of what is in heaven. What we are looking at is a major spiritual principle: copy, shadow, symbol, pattern.

We are now going to go to Hebrews 9, and this begins the series of verses from which the entire study has its foundations.

Hebrews 9:23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Notice that the word "patterns" [copies] is plural. Please mark in your mind that the patterns are in heaven, and the things on earth are copies, shadows of what exists in heaven.

Now we are going to go to Exodus 25:40. This verse appears as instructions, given by God speaking to Moses, which were given for the building of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. This is the verse that was quoted by Paul just a little bit earlier.

Exodus 25:40 And see that you make them according to their pattern, which was shown you on the mountain.

Exodus 26:30 And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which was shown you on the mountain.

This dealt with all of the accoutrements of the Tabernacle, as to where the posts went, where the brass rings went, where the curtains went, and all those things. He had to erect it *exactly* as was shown him, with no deviations whatever.

We are now going to look at Numbers 8:4. Here the talk is about the Menorah—the 7-branched candelabra.

Numbers 8:4 And this workmanship of the lampstand was of hammered gold, from its shaft to the flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

Moses was good at following directions. He did what he was told. This is a very important principle here.

We are now going to go to I Chronicles 28. So we have come about 400 years from Moses' time now to the time of David and Solomon.

I Chronicles 28:11-12 Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlors thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, and the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things.

I Chronicles 28:19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.

So David was good at following directions most of the time as well as Moses. Nobody has done it perfectly, but I hope you are beginning to have this instruction driven into your ears and mind to follow the patterns that are in this Book. That is how you get to the Kingdom of God.

They are making physical things, but in the making of those physical things God made sure that they did not deviate one iota from what He showed them. So even as Moses received information from God, maybe inspiration as well, so did David.

Moses was in charge of supervising the erection, the building of all of the parts of the Tabernacle, and then David was used by God to hand the pattern of those things [to Solomon] for the erection of the Temple, which differed very little, except that it was made out of stone and metal and it stayed in one place. It was different from the Tabernacle, but the principle is the same. God did not want those men to deviate one iota, because then it would not have been an accurate representation of Him nor of the things that were in heaven.

We are now going to go back to the New Testament again to Acts, and this will conclude this series of scriptures. Stephen is speaking:

Acts 7:44 "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He had appointed, instructing Moses, to make it according to the pattern that he had seen."

By using so many verses I want you to be impressed that this conforming to the patterns is no small matter with God. Spiritually, in principle, it has a direct connection to our being made into the image of Jesus Christ. He is the reality, we are becoming a copy. And so God, working through Christ, is working toward that end that we will have our own peculiar physical features, but in the heart, in the character, we will be an exact representation of our Savior, and therefore able to operate from within His body to the responsibilities that He is going to be carrying out in the Kingdom of God.

The Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, and the Temple, and to some extent the Body of Christ, all fit into this same spiritual principle. The next series of scriptures begins to focus on our subjects more specifically.

We are going to go back to the book of Hebrews again. The book of Hebrews seems to be an important book for the end-time.

Hebrews 9:1-3 Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and a earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared made: the first part [meaning the first

room] in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All.

You might want to put in the back of your mind again that Paul called the curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies "the *second* veil." That is a correct way to understand that veil. It was the *second* veil.

Hebrews 9:3-5 And behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, in which was the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot speak in detail.

This is going to occupy a good bit of this study; not entirely, but a lot of the information I am going to give you involves what we just read as to where they were placed, and the part they play in the location of many, many things significant to salvation for you and me.

Let us go back to the book of Genesis once again. Here are our Genesis roots.

Genesis 2:8-17 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 for 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 name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasses the whole land of Havilah where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasses the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goes toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every

tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

Genesis 3:2-3 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden [Notice there was more than one tree. It says *trees* of the garden.]: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.

These passages provide us with more specific information for this subject to be built upon. There are five things I want us to take notice of as we extract them from these verses here in Genesis.

1. The Bible does not say how long a period of time passed before Adam and Eve made that fatal choice, but because the rest of the Bible reveals much of God's character and pattern of making judgments, this leads one to believe that He gave them plenty of time to experience life with Him easily available. He walked in the Garden. He was there with them. It does not mean every minute and every second, but He walked in the Garden too, right with His creation. In other words, He did not just throw them to face the Serpent's challenge totally unprepared for such a daunting test.

God is so patient and kind in His dealings with mankind; He surely gave them time, experiences, and the contact with Him necessary to learn important factors. In other words, they were not required to face the Serpent and make those critical choices of that test right out of the womb. Some comments of Jewish rabbis speculate that the time period may have been as much as seven years. There is reason to hope here, because He is equally patient and kind and merciful toward us.

2. Comparing Genesis 2:9 with Genesis 3:3, you can see that the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were both in the midst of the Garden.

My personal belief is that God placed these two trees side by side. I have no scriptures on which to base this speculation, but I believe that God placed

them in that manner so that a clear, no-nonsense choice was available to them. Remember, the Scriptures tell us that God tempts no one into sinning, like they could go to some little corner in the Garden and think nobody was watching them.

Is it not true that most of the Ten Commandments, especially the last seven, present mankind with clear, black and white contrasts in most cases? There are billboards over many places in the highways of the United States that read, "What part of 'Thou shalt not' don't you understand?"

3. Where on earth was Eden and the Garden of Eden located?

The Bible does not specifically provide its location in any one verse; however, as we shall see, no serious converted student of the Bible should have any doubt whatever as to its location because of supporting material scattered throughout its pages. We are going to be covering most of that.

Almost all conjecture regarding Eden's location on earth eventually centers on attempts to identify that location by means of the rivers mentioned, beginning in Genesis 2:10-14. People do this because they do not believe the Bible. However, make note of the fact that the Bible clearly says only *one* river went out of Eden. This is not a huge thing, but it is important.

Also take note that it does not say that the river went *through* it. It just said there was one river in Eden. As you will see, it is very easy to determine as we keep adding information that the river did not run through it. It began in Eden, and it went *out* of Eden. In other words, what I am telling you is that it just came right up out of the ground, and then left Eden. Now why must it be this way?

If you know the Bible reasonably well, you know that in the book of Ezekiel there is a river that is going to come out from under the throne of God. It is going to come right out of the ground, and it is going to leave there, and it too is going to divide into four different directions.

What we are looking at here regarding the river that comes out of the Garden of Eden is the forerunner of *that* river. Do you know that river is also mentioned in another place? We will get to both of them in just a little bit.

Now why does it have to be that way? Because that river represents God's Holy Spirit! That is easily provable in the book of Ezekiel. How many Holy Spirits are there? There is only one, and that Spirit emanates from God. I think we can almost pinpoint the location of where that river bubbled up out of the ground. It too was in the midst of the Garden.

Let us go to Ezekiel 47. We will go to the other reference to this river a little bit later.

Ezekiel 47:1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

That really pinpoints exactly where it was. There was an altar there. The river bubbled out of the ground to the south side of the altar, and then headed east from there.

Ezekiel 47:8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

The river that flowed out of Eden flowed to the east, and this river too flows to the east. What I want you to see here is that God never changes. In the patterns, in the instructions, He follows through with things consistently like this so that we will never get shaken up. If we really have faith in Him, and He tells us something, you keep it in mind because it is going to become advantageous to you if you believe it and use it—even this part about the river flows east; not west, not north, not south. God says it goes east; therefore it is important.

4. The next thing I want us to notice from Genesis 2:8 is that the Garden was not Eden itself. The Garden was eastward *in* Eden; therefore, Eden is one of the names the Bible provides for the whole general area. The Garden was in a specific area in the eastern part of Eden.

The word "Eden" means "delight." Thus Eden was a place of delight. Who named it? God did. That ought to tell you something, and it is this: That particular area of ground really pleased God. It was a delight to Him. He was happy when He made it. He said, "This is beautiful!" He took delight in it, and so that is what He named it. It was a garden of delight.

5. Pay particular attention to frequent mentions of an easterly direction.

I know that because of these patterns the river in Eden flowed eastward, first watering the Garden, then exited from it, and continued eastward beyond the area of Eden. In other words, it went completely out of the land and then divided into those four rivers that were mentioned in Genesis 2.

Most theologians identify the location of Eden as being in Mesopotamia, believe it or not, in the Tigris/Euphrates valley. They do this because the earliest-known advanced civilization that bequeathed the world's records of its existence was the Sumerians' civilization that indeed was located in Tigris /Euphrates valley.

You will recall, that when Adam and Eve sinned, God banished them from the Garden, and He placed the cherubim with a flaming sword to protect the way to the Tree of Life. Now which direction did Adam and Eve head? I have no doubt whatever they stayed somewhat in the vicinity of the Garden, but they headed east, keeping to the river that went in that direction. Would it not be natural to have water to drink? We will see this confirmed as we go along.

Let us go to Genesis 3:24. Adam and Eve have sinned.

Genesis 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep [or to guard, to protect] the way of the tree of life.

Why did He not put a cherubim on the north side, south side, or west side? Because there was no door there! There was no opening to the Garden. The

Garden was completely enclosed. There was only one way in and out. How many ways, brethren, are there to God? One! You cannot come at Him from any old direction you think might be pleasurable to you. As we are going to see, anybody who goes to God has to face Him face to face. If you are getting the picture here in Eden, there was only one direction you could go to get to God. You had to travel *west* from the east to get to Him. One way.

Is it any wonder, brethren, that when God scattered the Israelites and took the Word of God with them, which direction did they go? They went west; northwest. This is why all the Israelitish nations are in the west. There is one little pattern there. God does not break these patterns. It is a little clue as to where the people of God are, they are in the west; not the Orient. They are in the west. We will see this direction thing become more important as we go along.

So here we have cherubim that are on the east side, and the only reason they are there is that is the only direction from which God can be reached.

We read in Genesis 4 that Cain and Abel, who also sinned from time to time no doubt, were called before God, and they were commanded to make a sacrifice on an altar in the presence of God. Where was that altar, brethren?

You should already understand, that since Adam and Eve were kicked out, and because there were cherubim guarding the door, that altar could not have possibly been inside of the Garden of Eden; therefore, there was an altar *outside* the gate, outside the Garden. That is exactly where it was, and we will find *exactly* where it was as we progress here; but it was outside the entrance to the Garden of Eden. I will say this much; that it was near the entrance.

Genesis 4:16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Cain did a "no-no." He killed his brother. God called him into account for doing such a thing, and then booted him when he would not take God's command regarding something that he needed to do. And so whenever Cain left the presence of God, he, like Adam and Eve, headed east. He undoubtedly also followed the river out of that area, and from everything that

we are able to see, he went a great deal farther than Adam and Eve did. It says here that he went to the land of Nod. The name "Nod" simply means "wandering." He wandered eastward. "Wandering" eventually becomes a symbol of being confused and directionless.

Israel wandered in the wilderness even though God was with them in the cloud and in the pillar of fire. He would be leading them from time to time whenever He wanted them to move. You can tell by their behavior described in Numbers and Deuteronomy especially, that they were a confused, directionless people, refusing to take direction from God except when He made it so obvious through the cloud and the pillar of fire.

One thing we know here is that Cain and Abel did not move in the direction of God. They did not head west. They went to the east. Cain turned his back on God, and he followed the water wherever it went.

I think you are beginning to see that the one little word "east" or "eastward" or "easterly" is not mere trivia. It is giving clues that are helpful to understanding God and His purpose, and what needs to be done by us.

God specifically included this direction so that there would be a record to His children of the area in which the opposition to God settled and flourished, establishing the civilization and the system that to this very day stands in opposition to God.

Now Cain was the real progenitor of Babylon. We are going to go to the book of Revelation to pick up a couple of verses in chapter 17 just to identify this positively.

Revelation 17:4-5 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Where was Babylon? It was east of Eden. It sounds like a good title for a novel. Where do you think he got that title? He got it out of the Book. These

people were moving away from God is the way this man felt, so what I am telling you here is not something that is hidden. Others have discovered it as well.

Genesis 11:1-2 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, **as they journeyed *from the east*** that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
(emphasis ours)

Something that I am going to say here is fairly obvious once you begin to understand the directional things in the Bible, and that is that Genesis 11:2 is woefully, terribly mistranslated.

Turn now to Genesis 8:4. This is after the Flood.

Genesis 8:4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

Where are the mountains of Ararat? They are in eastern Turkey. Now where is Turkey located in relation to Jerusalem and in relation to the Tigris /Euphrates valley? The mountains of Ararat are directly north of Jerusalem.

Now here is the way Genesis 11:2 should be translated, because it says they went from Ararat to Shinar. Where is Shinar? Shinar is the plain between the Tigris and Euphrates River. What direction did they have to migrate to in that case? Southeast. Again, you see, they are going away from God.

What does that one little thing—east, or eastward—tell you about the people spoken of here in Genesis 11:2? It tells you that the lesson of the Flood was not learned, because after they got settled in Ararat and began to expand their families out, they went back to the place of *their* roots, which was eastward, away from God. In this case the beginning of *that* kingdom after the Flood was through Nimrod, and his associates as well.

The *Keil-Delitzsch* and *Barnes' Notes* commentaries both confirm this mistranslation in Genesis 11:2. It should simply read, "They journeyed east."

These directions are important, because in the early chapters of Genesis, Eden (and most specifically the Garden of Eden) is considered the dwelling place of God. It was His home on earth. The Bible says that He walked in the Garden. In a sense, if we are thinking of this in human terms, that is where He lived when He was on earth. It was His home on earth, and later, when the Tabernacle and the Temple were constructed, the Holy of Holies was considered God's dwelling place.

I am going to show you a couple of verses that will confirm what I just said. Turn to Isaiah 51:3. This is immediately after that scripture in Isaiah 51 where God says, "Look unto Abraham," and this is going to tie Abraham and Eden together with God.

Isaiah 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Did you see what it says there? It says "the garden of the LORD." It belonged to Him. The word "of" shows ownership, possession. It was the LORD's garden. It was the place that *He* took delight in, and He blessed Adam and Eve and put them into this place He found to be so enjoyable Himself, as the work of His own hand.

Ezekiel 28:13 You have been in Eden the garden of God.

This is speaking of Satan. Satan was there. We know he was there because that is where he confronted Adam and Eve. He was also other places as well—right up in heaven. But right here what I want you to get from this is that Eden was the Garden of God. It was His personal residence on earth. Wow! That is really something!

From this, especially from Genesis 11:2, and this knowing that Eden was the home of God, God is showing that the Flood's lessons were not learned. The survivors and their families again were moving eastward, away from God.

Regarding directions in Scripture, it is a general rule, unless a context specifically gives reasons why, that all directions are from Jerusalem. Of

course that is a strong indication of where Eden was located. We are able to pinpoint it in the Scriptures as to *exactly* where it was. This direction pattern directs one as though Jerusalem is in the center of all nations, and all other nations revolve around it.

In Genesis 10:25 it tells us that in the days of Peleg the earth was divided. There are pretty good indications that at the time of the beginning, of Adam and Eve, all the continents of the world were one big circle around Jerusalem, but in the days of Peleg God moved everything into their present locations. That thought continues all the way through.

Jerusalem indeed is the center of nations. That is where God the Creator lived, and everything revolved around Him, and because everything revolved around the Creator, and He lived in that area, therefore all directions are from Him. So when you see north, it is north of Jerusalem. When you see east, it is east of Jerusalem, and west and south, and so forth.

Mr. Armstrong used this principle most especially in *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy* booklet to show where the peoples of Israel migrated to following being scattered by God for their sins. Thus, when Israel scattered, following being defeated by Assyria around 720 BC, which direction did the Assyrians first take them? Northeastward, away from God. And then, after whatever events took place in Assyria, and the Assyrians and the Israelitish peoples began apparently to migrate together, which direction did they go? They went to the northwest, which is another clue. The heading west is the first step back to God. It is just a little indicator.

In the future, during the time prophesied of Jeremiah that is going to be the worst of anything that has ever happened on earth amongst the nations of men, the Israelitish people are shown to be scattered once again. They are going to be re-gathered, and then which direction are they going to go? From wherever they are, they are going to head to Jerusalem, because that is where God will be, through His Son.

Can you see that God has a wonderful purpose and plan working out here? There are clues all over the place that we need to think about, and they are faith-building because they keep pointing to this plan, and pointing to the One who is operating the plan and helping us to understand that there is a

continuous purpose being worked out, and that everything is heading in the direction of the purpose of that Creator.

This wandering has much to do with what we are seeing described here in these early chapters. Rebellious sinning people like Cain and the children of most of the families descended from Noah are moving away from Eden, and thus away from God and His dwelling place. God is thus showing us that the place considered by men as being the point of origin of man's civilization—Mesopotamia—is indeed the home of Babylon on the Euphrates, and of Nineveh on the Tigris River. Both are on the plain of Shinar, and both settled by those defiant toward God at the very beginning of things.

Psalm 48:1-2 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God [the subject is Jerusalem], in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, in the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

Keep all of this in the back of your mind because it begins to get important later.

There might be a play on words here in this psalm extolling Jerusalem, because the word translated "joy" here literally means "delight," even as Eden means delight. It is not the same Hebrew word translated into "Eden," but it means the same thing. It is God's place of delight. Is He ever going to abandon this place of delight? No. He is going to use it to His end, and at the end it is going to come right back into His hands as He works things out, and mankind will be a great deal better for His having done things this way.

That Garden was located in a portion of what later became known as Jerusalem—the City of Peace—not Babylon, the city of tumultuous anti-God confusion where the rebels all settled. We will continue layering the evidence on this. However, it is interesting to note that once the survivors of the Flood and their families moved from Ararat and were settled once again in the area of Babylon, the people continued to do the same things that they had done before the Flood.

After the Flood, though, the vast majority migrated toward Shinar. However, some of Noah's descendants attempted to get back into Eden and the Garden

area from which their ancestors were expelled. I want you to understand that by this time it is after the Flood and Eden no longer existed. The Flood washed it away, but still the people had records. They knew where it was, and some of the people tried to get back. We are going to turn to Genesis 10, verse 18, and we will find out who it was.

Genesis 10:18-20 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as you come to Gerar, unto Gaza; as you go unto Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha. These are the sons of Ham and their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

This is what I think took place. The family of Ham, specifically the descendants of Canaan, migrated first of all with the people who went into the plain of Shinar, and then after they settled there a bit they then went to the area of what we know now as Israel. In this period of time we are talking about nine generations. It was not like things were just happening like this [snaps fingers]. It took a while for this to take place.

I am not saying that it was the ninth generation that they finally reached back to Jerusalem. It was not. Where I got this figure was from Abraham. Abraham was the ninth generation from Shem. Abraham was a contemporary of Shem. Shem lived 450 years after the Flood. So in a small portion of those 450 years Abraham was born, and for a number of those 450 years Abraham was contemporary with Shem.

Genesis 12:6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

The Canaanites were already in the land by the time Abraham got there. I want you to see that God brought His called-out one Abraham *from* Babylon (a type of the world) and later Abraham's descendants—Israel—from Egypt (a type of sin) to this same land that He was eventually going to give to all His called-out ones as their inheritance—the land of Eden. Do you see how everything eventually comes full circle?

This understanding adds to the evidence that Eden was located in the land of inheritance, but in Abraham's day and for centuries following that land was called Canaan because these descendants of Ham had migrated there from Ararat and from Mesopotamia, and they named it after their ancestor, Canaan.

Now from Genesis 12 on, except for brief prophetic trips into other geographic areas, the entire Bible history focuses on *this* land, and most specifically on a particular area of this land—Jerusalem—and thus there is no way the Bible can be used to support Mesopotamia as being the starting point and focus of man's history. Rather, the Bible shows God beginning His entire program in one specific location, unfolding the progress of one family—the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—from their physical beginnings through their spiritual conversion.

The story includes the Savior who was born to one of those families—the family of Judah. He is crucified, but is resurrected, and departs to heaven from where? From the Mount of Olives, as it says in Acts 1:9-12. And when He returns to earth, where are His feet going to touch down? Zechariah 14:4 establishes that His feet will touch down on the same Mount of Olives, and from there He will begin His Kingdom, centering on the same location where the entire many millennia-long program began.

So from beginning to end, this one specific location is the center of God's continuing development of the entire creation. We are going to continue to add more and more, because it really becomes impressive.

In Genesis 2:10-13, it speaks about the names of the rivers that flowed out from the river that flowed out of Eden. There is one specific one—the Gihon. Researchers tend to believe that this Gihon is the well-known Nile River because of the mention of Ethiopia. That may be possible, but also remember that the Flood vastly changed some geographical configurations. However, this place-name turns up in an interesting way.

I Kings 1:32 And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king.

David is dying at this point. His reign is just about over, and there was trouble brewing.

I Kings 1:33-34 The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. [The place-name Gihon was still in Jerusalem in David's day.] And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow you with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

So in David's day, about 3,000 years after the events of Genesis 2 and 3, the place-name Gihon still existed in Jerusalem, and perhaps God has supplied us with some further evidence as to the location of Eden and its Garden.

Now interestingly, the margin in my study Bible has a notation saying that Gihon was located just east of Jerusalem.

II Chronicles 32:27 And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels.

II Chronicles 32:29-30 Moreover he provided him cities and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much. This same Hezekiah also stopped [dammed up] the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

The Gihon area contained a spring that put forth apparently an abundant supply of water. Hezekiah's engineers tapped into it, redirecting its flow by means of a tunnel that they dug under the city from its east to the west side of the city.

I want you to listen to this comment from a man name Peter Michas of *The Messengers of Messiah Ministries*. He says,

The Gihon spring flows under the southeastern hill of Jerusalem, west of the Kidron Valley where the City of David was built. In Old Testament times it provided a substantial supply of water to the city, and this particular water source must also have been considered unique because it was the place where Solomon was anointed, and because the water from this spring was mixed with the ashes of the Red Heifer to produce the waters of purification.

Jerusalem must have had a fairly abundant supply of water because of the various washings required of the priests, as well as the sacrifices themselves, which required a great deal of water each and every day. The sacrifices were required to be washed with running water, not still nor stagnant, so there must have been a consistent strong flow of water. Furthermore, the Gihon water course had the pool of Siloam in which Jesus, in John 9, told the man He healed of blindness to go wash. Why that particular pool? Did it have something to do with Gihon? Maybe.

Modern Israeli government authorities have determined, that to this day, there is a vast amount of water under virtually all of Israel. Is it just sitting there waiting to be used? Oh! I cannot avoid saying "Yes." Something in the book of Ezekiel tells me about that.

What we have here is another small piece of evidence God has made available to us, causing the name of one of the rivers associated with Eden and its Garden to be marked right within the Jerusalem area. To the best of my knowledge there are no Gihons in Mesopotamia.

Let us go to Zechariah 14:8-9. This is a parallel of Ezekiel 47 and 48 about the river.

Zechariah 14:8-9 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.

I feel certain that this is referring to that same huge volume of water referred to earlier in Ezekiel 47. It is virtually certain that it is, and always has been

an abundant supply of underground water flowing through the area of Jerusalem. The implication of this huge volume, combined with this prophecy, is that it is a never-ending supply.

Now let us consider this. Why would God ever plant a garden in Mesopotamia, that men claim is the cradle of civilization, when 500 miles to the west He created the first sacred temple on earth? Do you know what that sacred temple was? The Garden of Eden! That was His temple in those days. He caused His own divine presence to be in the midst of the Garden, and then placed the first humans there, if indeed it was always His purpose to work with His people centered in a location 500 miles to the east. Impossible! There is no logical sense to that.

Mesopotamia does not suggest continuity of a single plan. It does not mean that there is not something special about the land we know of today as Iraq, and Revelation 18:2-5 shows that it is the very center of demonic activity upon the earth. Do you want to know why there is so much trouble over there? It is the center of demonic activity upon the earth—the source of every foul, wicked, and wretched practice ever conceived by the depraved minds of men.

We will stop here for today, and God willing we will continue it in the next sermon here at the Feast. It is beginning to look like I am not going to get done with this series here at the Feast. We shall see.