

The Garden of Eden

Dr Michael Jarvis

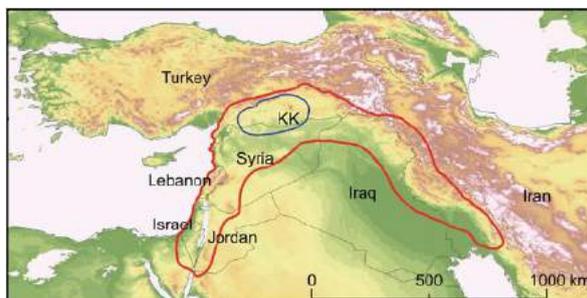
Was there a real Garden of Eden?



The Bible tells us that the Garden of Eden was situated at the head waters of four rivers.

Two of these rivers are clearly known today, namely the Tigris and Euphrates. They both arise in the same mountainous area in today's Eastern Turkey or Armenia. Scientific genetic studies of the first domesticated food crops trace the origin of all seven crops important to ancient civilisation, to a small area within a 200 km circle in the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (Kleiner 2006)

More recent research by a team of four researchers (Killian et al 2010) confirms these conclusions.



This map is taken from the Killian paper and it identifies the core area where domestication seems to have taken place, circled within the blue line. This is the Karacadağ mountain range in South-eastern Turkey. In other words, **exactly where the Bible Genesis account places the Garden of Eden.**

The account specifically states that Adam was placed there for agricultural purposes, *The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it* (Genesis 2:15).

Some people believe that the Bible account of this garden is poetic, designed to illustrate spiritual truths about the nature of sin, and that the account is not literally true. They point out reference to 'God walking in the garden', the 'talking serpent', the 'Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil', the 'Tree of Life', and the 'flaming sword' that kept Adam and Eve from returning to the garden after they had sinned. Those who believe the account is largely poetic do however sometimes acknowledge that it is based on real history.

Personally I am convinced that there was a literal Garden of Eden. The details given about its location speak of a real place and the genetic studies show that this same locality is the

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origin of human food crops and its locality is the same as identified by some linguistic studies, as the possible origin of the first Indo-European language.

I have no problem with the reference to God 'walking in the garden' because there are other events in the Bible where God has revealed himself in human form. For instance, one of the three 'people' who came to Abraham to announce the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 18: 16-33). Also, at Mount Sinai God revealed himself in the 'tent of meeting' as someone whom Moses spoke to 'face to face' and Moses could see him (Exodus 33:11 and Numbers 12: 6-8).

In our scientific age serious discussions have been held about time and the possibility of time travel and going back in time. According to what we know of physics and time, it may be theoretically possible to 'time travel'. The Bible has spoken about this as a reality and that Jesus was present in past generations and at the creation and was actively involved in the creation (John 1: 4, John 8:57, Hebrews 1: 2-4 and other scriptures).

In my view the 'God walking in the Garden of Eden' was Jesus. Furthermore, God was involved with the Garden in a very 'hands on' practical way. We read that **the Garden of Eden was a special place, different from the surrounding areas**. God arranged that this garden would only contain trees good for sight and with fruit good to eat and without harmful things such as thorns. We read that God '*made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food*' (Genesis 2:9). Note that these trees were not created instantly in the Garden. They grew (a process).

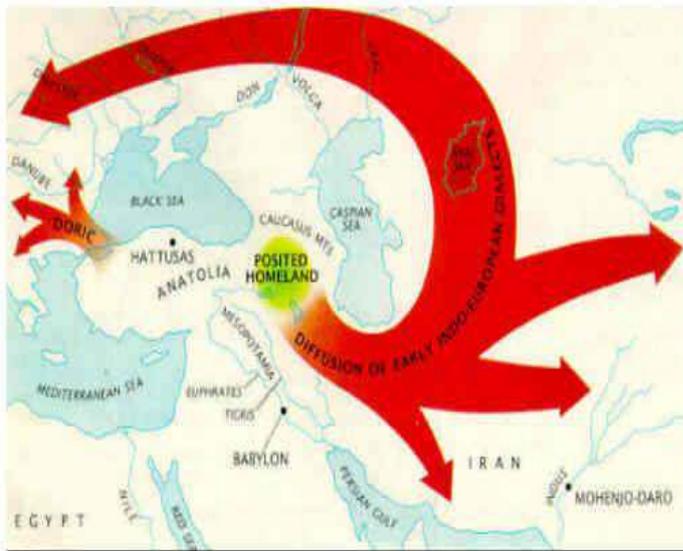
Harmful things and thorns existed in the surrounding areas because we read that God had finished his creation before the Garden of Eden events. The Bible also tells us that, *through him ALL THINGS were made; without him nothing was made that has been made* (John 1:3). Thorns were not created after Adam and Eve sinned! The ground was 'cursed' for them only because they were expelled from the Garden of Eden and then faced the realities found in the rest of creation, including thorns and other difficult things that God had instructed them to 'overcome or subdue'.

Did Satan really appear to Adam and Eve as a speaking serpent? In at least one other occasion in the Bible we read of an animal being used by God to speak in human language, when Balaam's donkey spoke (Numbers 22: 21-31). Can we question that Satan could speak through a real serpent?

Why was the Garden of Eden important?

Scientific research has shown that mankind experienced a dramatic advance in civilisation about 4000BC, with appearance of the first true cities and complex human activities such as mining, social structures and organised religion. Before that time there were groups of simple buildings but no evidence of writing, mining or complex social structures. This dramatic advance in humanity took place at approximately the time that the Bible says Adam and Eve existed.

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Studies of human language suggest that complex language also arose suddenly and that the origin of all Indo-European languages could have been in the Middle East Anatolian region (Bouckaert 2012). This is one of two leading scientific theories formulated by researchers into the origin of languages. It is very interesting that this suggests the appearance of the first complex proto-language could have been at the approximate time and locality that the Bible places Adam and Eve.

We are told that God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, *to work it and take care of it* (Genesis 2:15). He also instructed Adam to name all the animals. This process would have taken many days. Clearly, there was a long period of interaction and instruction between God and Adam before God made Eve. We are told that Eve was only made after Adam had named all the animals (Genesis 2: 20-22).

I personally believe that **God gave Adam new knowledge that was needed to ‘fast track’ humanity into a path that would lead to God’s ultimate plan for humanity and human history.** Anatomically modern humanity had all the attributes needed for the technological advances required if they were to fulfil God’s mandate *‘To subdue the earth and bring it under their control’*. They were created ‘in the image of God’ but to enable expression of the Godly attributes of self awareness, creativity, appreciation of beauty, spiritual awareness and other God given qualities, mankind needed a complex language and instruction from God himself.

We know that when anatomically modern people are raised without contact with other humans, such as the rare cases where abandoned infants have been raised by wild animals, they cannot communicate in a human language. We are not born with a complex language! A child needs instruction from people who already speak. In like manner, anatomically modern humanity, with the brain capacity and voice box structure suited for speech, would be restricted to communicating mainly through signs and vocalisations similar to what we see in chimpanzees, **until they were exposed to a language speaking teacher who could instruct them in a complex language.**

It is probable that Adam was the one who was taught the first complex language, advanced agriculture, mining of minerals, other advanced knowledge and teachings about God.

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Another important question relating to the Garden of Eden is [“Who were Adam and Eve?”](#)

I will discuss this important question in my next article. We will consider the scientific evidence for humanity before the time of Adam and Eve. We will also look at what the genesis account says about other humanity existing at the time of Adam and Eve.

Conclusion

This article is one of a series on closely related topics. Three articles have already been sent to all who are on the fact and faith email list, namely:

[The age of our world](#)

[The DAYS of Genesis creation account](#)

[Reconciling the Genesis creation account with science](#)

These previous articles can also be freely downloaded from my webpage www.factandfaith.co.za On that webpage go to ‘Free downloads’ and then to ‘PDF UPDATE articles’.

References

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15 April 2018

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