

THE LORD GOD PLANTED A GARDEN

“Now the Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed” (Gen. 2:8).

God didn't have to plant a garden for man, but He did! He obviously had a reason for doing so. There was, of course, a difference between the garden where Adam lived and the wilderness outside. One was neat and orderly, and the other was not. The Hebrew word for garden is “gan” and refers to an enclosure. It comes from the root “gaw-nan” which means to put a hedge about it. It is logical to assume that the Garden of Eden was an enclosure because when man was driven out of the garden, God placed cherubim on the east side of the garden to guard the way to the tree of life. The gate to the garden was obviously on the east side.

There may be many reasons why God put Adam in a garden. For one, the order and design of the garden exposed Adam to the very nature of God. God is not the Author of confusion and disorder, but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33). Thus the garden exposed Adam every day to the very nature of God. Even though there were no thorns and thistles, it is also significant to note that the garden still needed someone to “work and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15). Every person who has ever planted a garden knows that this is true. Thus being placed in a garden not only exposed Adam to the nature of God but also to his own responsibility to work. As you know, the Ten Commands would later mandate six days of labor every week (Ex. 20:9).

Centuries later the Apostle Paul would compare the church to a garden and write: **“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.” (1 Cor. 3:5-9)**

A congregation and a garden are alike in that both require hard work and discipline. Yes! God planted the garden, but He expected Adam to work and take care of it. Yes! God gives the increase and adds believers to His church, but He still expects His “co-workers” to help take care of it. When no one works in a garden it quickly becomes unruly and unproductive. The same is true of the church!

Training and discipline, of course, begin in the home. It is here that Godly parents teach their children the commandments of God seven days a week (Deut. 6:4-9). Teaching, of course, is not just for children. Timothy was to train reliable “men” so that they would be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2). (The word translated as “men” in this verse is “anthropois” which refers to both men and women.) God has also placed in the church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service (Eph. 4:11-16).

It is easy to recognize a garden that has been “neglected” and it is also easy to recognize a church that has been “neglected”. Please prayerfully consider this warning: **“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let the slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Heb. 2:1-3 KJV).**

Neglect is not good! In the days of Jeremiah the people of God were punished for their neglect: **“A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: the prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?” (Jer. 5:30,31).** Yes, there will ultimately be a day of reckoning. What will you say when Jesus comes again? At that time every parent, pastor, and teacher will be asked asked this question as in the days of Jeremiah: **“Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?” (Jer. 13:20 KJV).**