

# In the Garden of Eden – II: Creation-Community Distorted, Torn Apart

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## **A Perplexing and Bewildering Picture**

Contrast the picture of the Garden of Eden and today's garden, the earth. Then, God saw it, and it was very good: the light systems and the ecosystems; the waters of the earth and their inhabitants; the diverse and dispersed vegetation; the plant and animal kingdoms; and humankind—all in harmony: creation in community with God. It was pleasing to God.

Today, what does God see? If what God sees is what we see (and surely he must see more!) the garden is in a mess, damaged and distorted. Instead of harmony and community, there is estrangement, hostility, and strife; instead of healthy growth and reproduction, there is degradation of vegetation, forests, and water systems; instead of human dignity characterized by productivity and care of creation (work), community, and obedience (worship of Creator), there is poverty, conflict, and war. The garden of earth today is more like the chaos, formlessness, emptiness, and darkness that existed at the beginning, except that now we cannot say that the Spirit of God is “hovering over the waters”; rather, the

spirit of gloom and despair seems to hover over the skies of our globe, threatened with extinction resulting from climate change. It is true that humankind has multiplied and filled the earth; but what God sees is irresponsible, irrational, and reckless consumption, leading to the depletion and destruction of the ecosystems.

What went wrong? How did such a beautiful garden in which harmony reigned—truly a haven—turn into the garden we know today?

Comparing and contrasting the two gardens—Eden then and earth now—leaves us perplexed and bewildered. Even more bewildering is the fact that many in our world today live as though all is well and it is business as usual. The minority of humankind hit hard by the current credit crunch is preoccupied with restoring their fortunes and returning to the yesteryears of high consumer indices. Meanwhile, the majority of the human race, who wallowed in poverty during the pre-credit crunch years, fear that the post-credit crunch days will be even worse for them than the status quo.

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Moses must have gone about his work as a shepherd of Jethro's flock in Midian with a similar sense of perplexity and bewilderment. Forty years had passed since he fled Egypt fearing for his life. But the memory of his first forty years must have made him feel as though it was only yesterday. He had grown up in the home of the king of Egypt while his fellow Israelites groaned in slavery under the heavy hand of their Egyptian masters. He must have occasionally escaped from the comforts of the palace and visited with his Hebrew kinsmen in the labor camps. He must have inquired from the elders how it came about that God's people were enslaved.