



THE NOVA PROJECT



NOVA PERSPECTIVES

Biblical Views On
Contemporary Issues

Racism, Land And Food

*“In His Omniscience and with His Omnipotence,
a garden was decided as the best and optimal
environment for Adam and Eve”*

A powerful aspect of the principle of ‘first mention’ in Scripture, is that God begins to disclose, albeit embryonically, His heart, mind, and intentions through what is being introduced.

In the creation narrative, the first environment created for man’s habitation is a Garden in the East of Eden. In many ways, Eden can be described as the first embryonic nation seeing that it has borders and boundaries, namely a North, a South, an East and a West, and the Garden was planted in the East. We are not told what else was in Eden, we are only told about the Garden in which God placed man and it’s there that we begin to discern the heart, mind, and intentions of God as it relates to our topic.

As the Creator, God had an infinite number of choices for the first habitable environment for his image bearers. He could have chosen to make a city, or a hyper technological environment, or even made us to live in the ocean! God did none of these. In His Omniscience and with His Omnipotence, a garden was decided as the best and optimal environment for Adam and Eve.

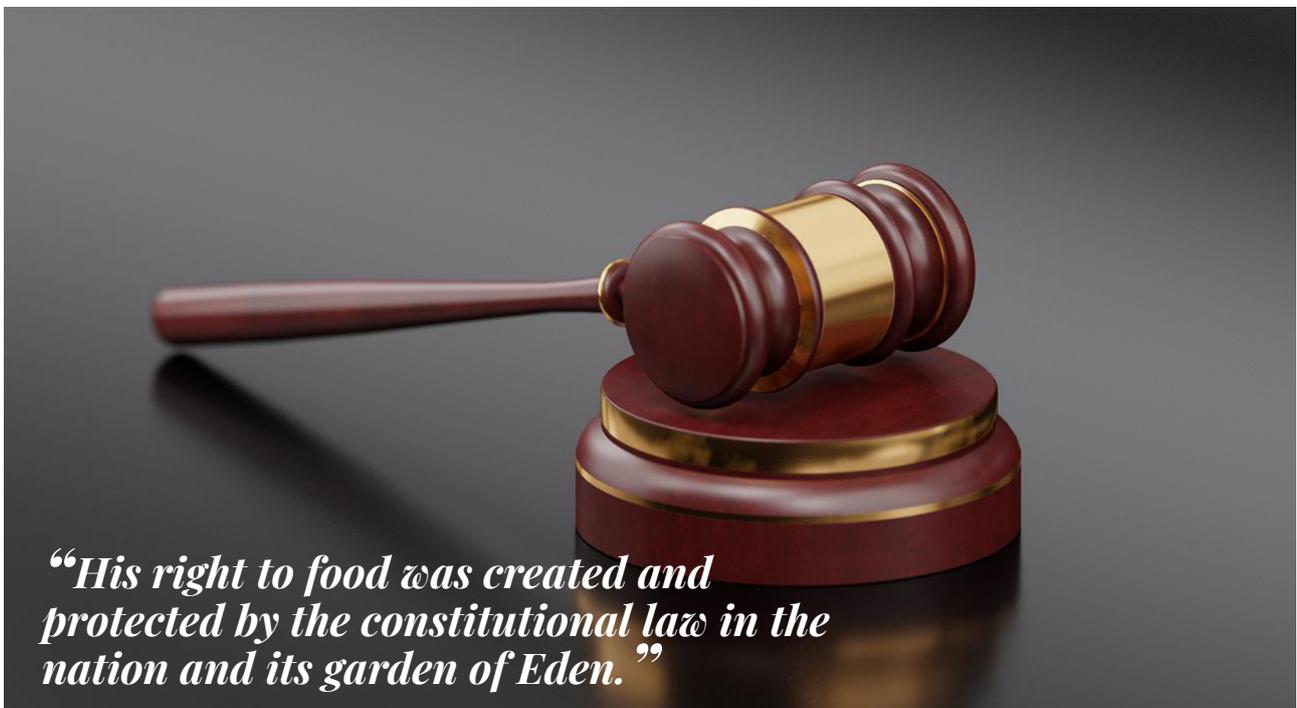
THE GARDEN



After the breath of Life, the Garden of Eden was God's next gift to mankind, that is, "the gift of land in their nation". In general sense, God made a pronouncement that forever established the relationship between mankind, land and food.

Genesis 1:29 Behold", I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. (Esv.)

But this general pronouncement over mankind is then ratified and made concrete by the act of placing a man in the garden, God is communicating that land, and access to land is His good design for us. That it is essential to human flourishing and well-being. Moreover, in this garden, with its land, God is not only providing Adam with access to land with which he can build his life, conduct his work, and call his home, but also is providing him with access to food. In other words, God is providing Adam with food security via the land. Why do I call it food security? For two reasons.



Let's look at Genesis 2:16,17 "and the Lord commanded the man saying, "you may eat of every tree of the garden, but you of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in that day that you eat it you shall surely die"

The first dimension of food security God made was in the vast array of food options that were available (every tree), and those options would continue to remain available due to the built-in sustainability feature of the food system - their seeds. So, there was security from lack.

However, there is a second, and, in some ways, more powerful dimension of the food security revealed in the garden because Adam was commanded to eat

from every tree. One rendering of that word “command” is “constitute”, the root word where we get constitution. Law and a legal framework were set in place by the command of God for Adam to have constitutional rights to enjoy the bountiful provisions made. His right to food was created and protected by the constitutional law in the nation and its garden of Eden.



We know that the command was not benign or merely ceremonial because in verse 17 we see included in the same command, the prohibition of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which Adam and Eve eventually transgressed. Up to this very day, we feel the results of that broken command, so if the law and the command was active on the negative side of “do not eat” it must be equally potent on the positive side of “eat from every tree”. So, food was made secure for man in the garden through sustainable abundance as well as through constitutional law and legislation. It’s a noteworthy observation that this motif of God, Land and Food, is reproduced in God’s covenantal dealing with the nation of Israel. As part of their covenantal blessings, (except for the tribe of Levi), every tribe and the families within those tribes were allotted a portion of land and access to all the food it could produce. Moreover, if any person lost their land due to misfortune or even negligence, the constitution

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demanded that every 50 years land lost must be returned to the original owner. God's people and by extension the families of the earth are not to be landless!

From these insights we can begin to see that the Garden was God's first statement to humanity regarding land access and food security and He grounds these rights in His own justice. The word "justice" in Scriptures is a rich one and carries with it a tapestry of meaning but can be summed up into two veins. The Holman Dictionary describes them this way. "First, it is the standard by which penalties are assigned for breaking the obligations of the society. Second, justice is the standard by which the advantages of social life are handed out, including material goods, rights of participation, opportunities, and liberties. It is the standard for both punishment and benefits and thus can be spoken of as a plumb line. "I shall use justice as a plumb-line and righteousness as a plummet" (Isa. 28:17, REB).



In our broken world today, nations and communities have different means by which they execute justice and decide who should be allowed to partake of earth's vast resources, land access and food included. Some nations, say that justice and equitable access should be determined by birth and race, others argue that nobility should be the metric, and others still state that financial or military power should determine who has the right to land and food.

However, God has spoken in the garden and contravenes all these ideologies. Adam is not only one man but also all men. In other words, all nations are in him, and all races are in him.

Acts 17:26 "And He made from one man (Adam) every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling places." (Esv)

When God gave Adam access to land, He is saying that all men of every race should have access to land in the nation where they live. By commanding that Adam eat of “every tree” God is saying that all men of every race should have ample access to a variety of food options in a sustainable way and their access to food should be protected by law. This is God’s heart and intention for our nations, but this has been thwarted by the fall of mankind into sin, greed, and selfishness. It’s this self-centered nature of man and his societies that has created groups of people that are even more vulnerable than the community in which they belong. The Scriptures identifies some of these groups, namely widows, orphans, migrants and in each of our nations we have these and others that can be identified as vulnerable groups. To these races and vulnerable groups, the heart of the Lord as it relates to food security and land access is even more clear.

Deuteronomy 10:18 “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the migrant, giving him food and clothing” (all of which come from land)

So where do we go from here? To answer that question, we need understand where we are, and according to the scriptures we are no longer in the Garden of God but the city of man.

“THE CITY”

After the fall of mankind and their subsequent expulsion from the Garden and its divine order of justice, man began to rearrange how they lived in the world and lived with each other. A new world order was emerging, and it was called “the city.”

Genesis 4:17 “Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch (Esv).

This city of Enoch is an anti or substitute garden for men to live in and the precursor to the great city of rebellion



built by Nimrod - The Tower of Babel. One key feature of “the city” is that the blessing or enablement of God given to mankind to fill, subdue, create, build and innovate is still totally operative, but not in the direction of building God’s Garden, namely His social order for men based on love, wisdom and justice. However, in this city of rebellion we can still see God’s redemptive grace at work as it relates to land and food.

Genesis 4:20 Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwelt in tent and have livestock. (Esv)

With Jabal, in the city, we have the rise of the nomad lifestyle which is the very opposite of God’s ideal for man of having a fixed place of access, food security (Garden) and an allotment (Israel). Yet within this divergence from divine design, they are still endowed with wisdom by the grace of God to have livestock (food) with them and probably some crops that both they and the animals can eat. It’s a far cry from what man had in Eden where home and food security were wed together in one location, but the Lord works within the constraints of man’s choices and his unjust social structures to bless and take care of them because He loves us. As Jesus puts it, “He causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust”.

Right now, all of mankind lives in “the City” with lives and social structures that are not in line with God’s wisdom and justice. The Apostle John describes it this way, “the whole world lies in the lap of the wicked one.” However, even as the Lord through His redemptive grace provides rain for all, and provided, albeit in a limited way, access to food for Jabel and his descendants, we too who are called by His name must work, albeit in a limited capacity, to ensure those races and vulnerable groups have access to land and food security as a matter of justice for the least of these.

VICTORY GARDEN CARIBBEAN: *REAL LIFE EXAMPLE*

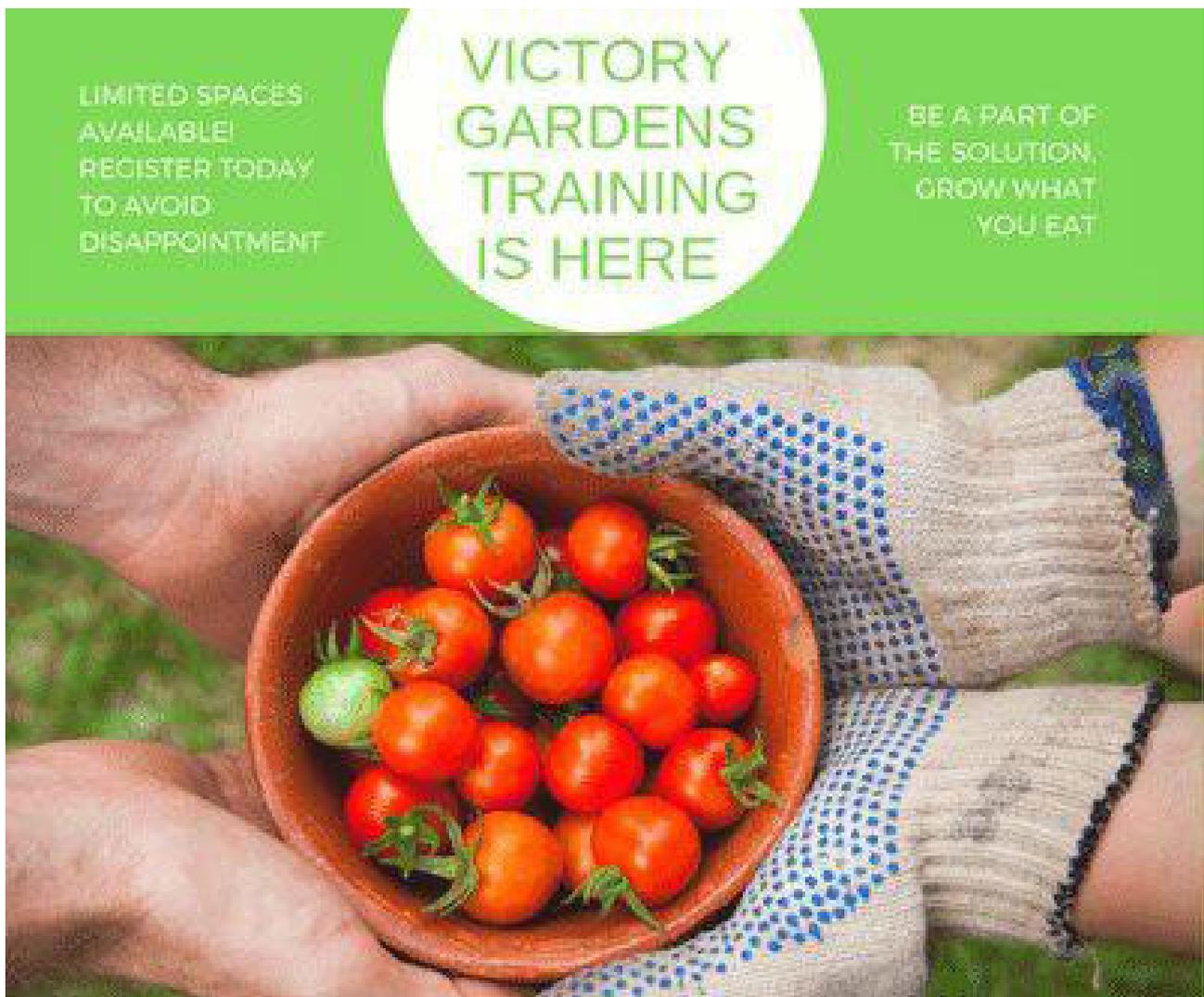


VICTORY
gardens

Around 2018 the Barbados economy was in dire straits, with year-on-year contractions, multiple economic downgrades all with a lack of poor governance. It’s within this context that the Lord moved on my heart to host a conference for

the church and nation by extension, that focused on the economy but through a biblical lens. We had five days of engagement and in one of those sessions the Lord spoke clearly by His word and showed us that both the church and the nation were slaves of consumerism. His rebuke was strong and His command simple - "move from being consumers to producers and start with your own food." It was upon this idea that we created Victory Gardens Caribbean, a faith-based movement focused on creating food security by empowering people to grow their own food.

We started off small with just a handful of believers and we taught them how grow their own crops at home (at their tent) and how to raise chickens. I personally renovated my back front yards to raise chickens and grow crops as an act of obedience to model what the Lord wanted to teach the church and nation. This small movement was beginning to gain media traction as everyone in the country intuitively knew this was the way to go and the way to live.



The next project of Victory Gardens Caribbean took the form of a national competition. Barbadians were invited to grow their own crops at home and the largest and healthiest crops would receive a prize from our corporate partners. Even the government jumped on board and partnered with us in executing this national initiative. We expected about 40 people to sign up. To our surprise over 400 persons opted in! So, we had hundreds of people, many of them first time growers, growing food at home and some are still growing up to this day. This is not to the scale of the garden of Eden, that time will come at the second advent but its working within the confines of “the city” to bring the wisdom, love, and justice of the Garden to the lives of people here and now. We saw persons give their life to Christ, persons who were unemployed thanked us because they were able to eat healthy and save money at the same time. We taught and inspired churches to start using their land to grow food and given the pandemic this advice turned out to be somewhat prophetic as many countries experienced locked downs. After this, the government asked us to be a part of their task force in introducing community gardens. This movement was one that had the power to bring structural change through the grassroots approach. As we sought to practically and actively pursue God’s good design for men in having access to food regardless of colour, class or creed we saw God give wings to Victory Garden Caribbean.

The spin off benefits of this food security movement is too many to mention in this article, but we are convinced that we only saw the level of success that we did because this issue is one that is near and dear to the heart of God. He will empower anyone who is willing to partner with Him in faith to ensure that His wisdom of access to land and food security is executed in the nations of the earth, especially for the least of these. So let us work until that day where the Lord finally unites the Garden with the city in the New Jerusalem where there will be no more injustice.

Adrian Reid - Co Founder - The Nova Project

Author | Speaker | Bible Teacher | Entrepreneur

adrian.reid@thenovaproject.org

76 402 8633



About The Nova Project

The Nova (New) Project is a Christian organization based in Geneva that supports professionals and business leaders to:

Integrate the wisdom of Jesus Christ into their personal lives, vocations and for sustainable development.

To design and execute innovative projects that create spiritual awakening, socio economic development and cultural renewal.



THE NOVA PROJECT

CONTACT US:

Email: adrian.reid@thenovaproject.org
Phone: +41 76 402 8633

