

**A REVELATION
OF.....
THE 3 GARDENS OF
GOD**

PLUS ANOTHER YET TO COME

**ONE OF A SERIES OF REVELATIONS ON VARIOUS
ASPECTS OF SCRIPTURE, AS INSPIRED BY THE
HOLY SPIRIT.**

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A NOTE FROM DAVID.....

Having spent much of my life involved in the gardening industry, as a grower, wholesaler of flowers, bulbs and plants and finally as a mail order seller of the same, this revelation has reached into my 'gardeners' heart!

Gardens and nature have a special place in God's heart too. This is not surprising, for He was their creator! Nor is it surprising then, that He should choose garden settings for key events in His interaction with man to take place.

When given this revelation, I was busy (our eternal excuse!), so I put it to one side until now. But as I start to meditate upon it again, my initial excitement is returning.

I trust you will share my enthusiasm as together, we explore the ramifications of the crucial events that took place in these beautiful garden settings.

His servant and yours

David Tait

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PART 1

THE BACKGROUND

DEFINITION OF TERMS

GARDENS — mentioned in Scripture, of Eden (Gen. 2:8, 9); Ahab's garden of herbs (1 Kings 21:2); the royal garden (2 Kings 21:18); the royal garden at Susa (Esther 1:5); the garden of Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:41); of Gethsemane (John 18:1).

The "king's garden" mentioned 2 Kings 25:4, Neh. 3:15, was near the Pool of Siloam.

Gardens were surrounded by hedges of thorns (Isa. 5:5) or by walls of stone (Prov. 24:31). "Watch-towers" or "lodges" were also built in them (Isa. 1:8; Mark 12:1), in which their keepers sat. On account of their retirement they were frequently used as places for secret prayer and communion with God (Gen. 24:63; Matt. 26:30–36; John 1:48; 18:1, 2). The dead were sometimes buried in gardens (Gen. 23:19, 20; 2 Kings 21:18, 26; 1 Sam. 25:1; Mark 15:46; John 19:41). (See PARADISE.) 1

GARDEN. It was promised that the lives of God's redeemed people would be like a watered garden, ordered and fruitful (Is. 58:11; Je. 31:12; *cf.* Nu. 24:6).

In Egypt the Hebrews had known richly productive vegetable-gardens (Dt. 11:10; *cf.* Nu 11:5; *Food). Fed from an irrigation-ditch, or from vessels by hand, a network of little earth channels criss-crossed the vegetable-beds like a chessboard. By merely breaching and resealing the wall of such a channel with the foot, water could be released on to the beds as needed.

In Palestine people cultivated gardens for vegetables ('garden of *herbs', 1 Ki. 21:2; 'what is sown', Is. 61:11), and fruit (Am. 9:14; Je.

1 Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

29:5, 28; Ct. 4:16). Gardens might be associated with, or even part of, vineyards, olive-groves or orchards (Ec. 2:5; Am. 4:9; *cf.* 1 Ki. 21:2). Spices and choice plants featured in the gardens of royalty and of the nobility (Ct. 5:1; 6:2, 11 (walnuts); *cf.* 4:12-16 generally; Ec. 2:5). These and other gardens were walled round (*cf.* Ct. 4:12) and had to be kept watered, *e.g.* from a spring or pool (Ct. 4:15; *cf.* ‘ Ec. 2:5-6; contrast Is. 1:30). They may also have sometimes contained a summerhouse (2 Ki. 9:27). The ‘king’s garden’ at Jerusalem was a well-known landmark (2 Ki. 25:4; Je. 39:4; 52:7; Ne. 3:15); and the Persian royal palace is mentioned as having a pleasure-garden (Est. 1:5; 7:7-8). Similarly, Egyptian and Mesopotamian kings kept fine gardens; and a garden once occupied a large court inside the sumptuous palace of the kings of Canaanite Ugarit (14th-13th century BC). For full references to gardens in Assyria and Babylonia and the many trees and plants they contained, see in Ebeling, Meissner and Weidner, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, 3, 1959, pp. 147-150.

Tombs were sometimes situated in gardens. (2 Ki. 21:18, 26; Jn. 18:1, 26; 19:41; *Gethsemane). A less happy use of gardens was for pagan rites, perhaps linked with the fertility cults of Canaan (Is. 1:29; 65:3; 66:17). The Garden of *Eden was a symbol of God-created fertility (Gn. 13:10; Is. 51:3, *etc.*). K.A.K 2

PARADISE — a Persian word (*pardes*), properly meaning a ‘pleasure-ground’ or ‘park’ or ‘king’s garden.’ (See EDEN.) It came in course of time to be used as a name for the world of happiness and rest hereafter (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7). For ‘garden’ in Gen. 2:8 the LXX. has ‘paradise.’ 1

PARADISE. Paradise is a loan-word from ancient Iranian (*pairidaēza*-) and means a garden with a wall. The Gk. word *paradeisos* is used for the first time by Xenophon for the gardens of the Persian kings. LXX translates *gan’eden* of Gn. 2:8 by *paradeisos*.

a. In the Old Testament

2 *The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

The word paradise (Heb. pardēs) appears in Ne. 2:8; Ec. 2:5; Ct. 4:13. RSV renders it by ‘king’s forest’ in Ne., ‘park’ in Ec. and ‘orchard’ in Ct. The actual word is thus nowhere used in the OT in an eschatological sense, which meaning developed in the later Jewish world. The following trends can be discerned. The word paradise (Aram. pardēsā) was used to give expression to the meaning of primeval times (German *Urzeit*) and then expanded to include fantastic speculations on the glory and bliss of those times. This was connected with the expectations of a wonderful Messianic time in the future. This coming age of glory would be identical with the garden of Eden of ancient times. The Jews believed also that paradise was present in their own time, but concealed. This concealed paradise was the place to which the souls of the Patriarchs, the chosen and the righteous people, were taken. The ancient, future and present paradise were regarded as being identical.

b. In the New Testament The word paradise (Gk. paradeisos) occurs in only three instances in the NT (Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:3; Rev. 2:7). The context shows that the predominating sense is that of the later development of the word. In Lk. 23:43 the word ‘paradise’ is used by Jesus for the place where souls go immediately after death, *cf.* the concealed paradise in later Jewish thought. The same idea is also present in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31).

In 2 Cor. 12:2-4 Paul wrote in the third person of his experience of being caught up into paradise where he heard unspeakable words (Gk. arrhēta rhēmata). In this case paradise is the ‘third *heaven’ with its glory, perhaps the same as in Lk. 23. The only place where paradise is used in an eschatological sense is in Rev. 2:7. The promise is made by Christ that he will give paradise as a gift to the one who overcomes. The present paradise will come in its full glory with the final consummation. The idea of a garden of God in the world to come is strongly emphasized in the last chapters of Revelation. The symbols of the tree of life, of life-giving water, and of the twelve kinds of fruit are all witnesses to the glory of the coming paradise (Rev. 22). F.C.F. 2

EDEN — delight. (1.) The garden in which our first parents dwelled (Gen. 2:8-17). No geographical question has been so much discussed as that bearing on its site. It has been placed in Armenia, in the region west of

the Caspian Sea, in Media, near Damascus, in Palestine, in Southern Arabia, and in Babylonia. The site must undoubtedly be sought for somewhere along the course of the great streams the Tigris and the Euphrates of Western Asia, in “the land of Shinar” or Babylonia. The region from about lat. 33 degrees 30’ to lat. 31 degrees, which is a very rich and fertile tract, has been by the most competent authorities agreed on as the probable site of Eden. “It is a region where streams abound, where they divide and re-unite, where alone in the Mesopotamian tract can be found the phenomenon of a single river parting into four arms, each of which is or has been a river of consequence.”

Among almost all nations there are traditions of the primitive innocence of our race in the garden of Eden. This was the “golden age” to which the Greeks looked back. Men then lived a “life free from care, and without labour and sorrow. Old age was unknown; the body never lost its vigour; existence was a perpetual feast without a taint of evil. The earth brought forth spontaneously all things that were good in profuse abundance.”

(2.) One of the markets whence the merchants of Tyre obtained richly embroidered stuffs (Ezek. 27:23); the same, probably, as that mentioned in 2 Kings 19:12, and Isa. 37:12, as the name of a region conquered by the Assyrians.

(3.) Son of Joah, and one of the Levites who assisted in reforming the public worship of the sanctuary in the time of Hezekiah (2 Chr. 29:12). 1

EDEN, GARDEN OF. The place which God made for Adam to live in, and from which Adam and Eve were driven after the Fall.

I. The name

The *MT* states that God planted a garden in Eden gan-b^ēēden; Gn. 2:8), which indicates that the garden was not co-extensive with Eden, but must have been an enclosed area within it. The *LXX* and *Vulg.* and subsequent commentators have noted that to a Hebrew-speaker the name ‘ēden would suggest the homophonous root meaning ‘delight’; but many scholars now hold that Eden is not a proper name, but a common noun from the Sumerian edin, ‘plain, steppe’, borrowed either direct from Sumerian, or *via* Akkadian (edinu), the garden thus being situated in a plain, or flat region. From its situation in Eden the garden

came to be called the ‘garden of Eden’ (gan-‘ēden; Gn. 2:15; 3:23-24; Ezk. 36:35; Joel 2:3), but it ‘was also referred to as the ‘garden of God’ (gan-^olōhîm, Ezk. 28:13; 31:9) and the ‘garden of the Lord’ (gan-YHWH, Is. 51:3). In Gn. 2:8ff. the word gan, ‘garden’, and in Is. 51:3 ‘ēden itself, is rendered paradeisos by the LXX, this being a loan-word from Old Persian (Avestan) pairidaēza, ‘enclosure’, which came to mean ‘park, pleasure ground’, and from this usage came English *‘paradise’ for the garden of Eden.

II. The rivers

A river came from Eden, or the plain, and watered the garden, and from thence it was parted and became four heads (rā’šîm, Gn. 2:10). The word rō’š, ‘head, top, beginning’, is interpreted variously by scholars to mean either the beginning of a branch, as in a delta, going downstream, or the beginning or junction of a tributary, going upstream. Either interpretation is possible, though the latter is perhaps the more probable. The names of the four tributaries or mouths, which were evidently outside the garden, are given as pîšôn (Gn. 2:11), gîḥôn (2:13), ḥiddeqel (2:14) and p^orāt (2:14). The last two are identified, without dissent, with the *Tigris and *Euphrates respectively, but the identifications for the Pishon and Gihon are almost as diverse as they are numerous, ranging from the Nile and Indus to tributaries of the Tigris in Mesopotamia. Sufficient data are not available to make it possible to identify either of these two rivers with certainty.

Gn. 2:6 states that ‘a mist (‘ēḏ went up from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground’. It is possible that ‘ēḏ corresponds to Akkad. edû, itself a loan-word from Sumerian id, ‘river’, indicating that a river went up or overflowed upon the ground and provided natural irrigation. It seems reasonable to understand this as relating to the inside of the garden.

III. The contents of the garden

If the statement in Gn. 2:5-6 may be taken to indicate what did subsequently take place within the garden, an area of arable land (šādeh, AV ‘field’) to be tilled by Adam may be postulated. On this were to grow plants (šî^aḥ) and herbs (ēšeb), perhaps to be understood as shrubs and cereals respectively. There were also trees of every kind, both beautiful and fruit-bearing (Gn. 2:9), and two in particular in the middle of the garden,

the tree of life, to eat from which would make a man live for ever (Gn. 3:22), and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, from which man was specifically forbidden to eat (Gn. 2:17; 3:3). Many views of the meaning of 'the knowledge of good and evil' in this context have been put forward. One of the most common would see it as the knowledge of right and wrong, but it is difficult to suppose that Adam did not already possess this, and that, if he did not, he was forbidden to acquire it. Others would connect it with the worldly knowledge that comes to man with maturity, and which can be put to either a good or bad use. Another view would take the expression 'good and evil' as an example of a figure of speech whereby an autonymic pair signifies totality, meaning therefore 'everything' and in the context universal knowledge. Against this is the fact that Adam, having eaten of the tree, did not gain universal knowledge. Yet another view would see this as a quite ordinary tree, which was selected by God to provide an ethical test for the man, who 'would acquire an experiential knowledge of good or evil according as he was steadfast in obedience or fell away into disobedience' (*NBC*, pp. 78f.). (*Fall, *Temptation.) There were also animals in the garden, cattle (b^ehēmâ, *Beast), and beasts of the field (Gn. 2:19-20), by which may perhaps be understood those animals which were suitable for domestication. There were also birds.

IV. The neighbouring territories

Three territories are named in connection with the rivers. The Tigris is said to have gone 'east of Assyria' (qīdmat 'aššûr, literally 'in front of 'aššûr'; Gn. 2:14), an expression which could also mean 'between 'aššûr and the spectator'. The name 'aššûr could refer either to the state of Assyria, which first began to emerge in the early 2nd millennium BC, or the city of Assur, mod. Qal'at Sharqât on the W bank of the Tigris, the earliest capital of Assyria, which was flourishing, as excavations have shown, in the early 3rd millennium BC. Since even at its smallest extent Assyria probably lay on both sides of the Tigris, it is probable that the city is meant and that the phrase correctly states that the Tigris ran to the E of Assur. Secondly, the river Gihon is described as winding through (sābab) 'the whole land of Cush' (kûš, Gn. 2:13). *Cush in the Bible usually signifies Ethiopia, and has commonly been taken in this passage (*e.g.* AV) to have that meaning; but there was also a region to the E of the Tigris, from which

the Kassites descended in the 2nd millennium, which had this name, and this may be the meaning in this passage. Thirdly, the Pishon is described as winding through the whole land of *Havilah (Gn. 2:11). Various products of this place are named: gold, *bdellium and šōham-stone (Gn. 2:11-12), the latter being translated ‘onyx’ in the EVV, but being of uncertain meaning. Since bdellium is usually taken to indicate an aromatic gum, a characteristic product of Arabia, and the two other biblical usages of the name Havilah also refer to parts of Arabia, it is most often taken in this context to refer to some part of that peninsula.

V. The location of the garden of Eden

Theories as to the location of the garden of Eden are numerous. That most commonly held, by Calvin, for instance, and in more recent times by F. Delitzsch and others, is the view that the garden lay somewhere in S Mesopotamia, the Pishon and Gihon being either canals connecting the Tigris and Euphrates, tributaries joining these, or in one theory the Pishon being the body of water from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea, compassing the Arabian peninsula. These theories assume that the four ‘heads’ (AV) of Gn. 2:10 are tributaries which unite in one main stream, which then joins the Persian Gulf; but another group of theories takes ‘heads’ to refer to branches spreading out from a supposed original common source, and seeks to locate the garden in the region of Armenia, where both the Tigris and Euphrates take their rise. The Pishon and Gihon are then identified with various smaller rivers of Armenia and Trans-Caucasia, and in some theories by extension, assuming an ignorance of true geography in the author, with such other rivers as the Indus and even Ganges.

The expression ‘in Eden, in the east’ (Gn. 2:8), literally ‘in Eden from in front’, could mean either that the garden was in the E part of Eden or that Eden was in the E from the narrator’s point of view, and some commentators have taken it as ‘in Eden in old times’, but in either case, in the absence of certainty as to the meaning of the other indications of locality, this information cannot narrow it down further.

In view of the possibility that, if the Deluge was universal (*Flood), the geographical features which would assist in an identification of the site of Eden have been altered, the site of Eden remains unknown.

VI. Dilmun

Among the Sumerian literary texts discovered early this century at Nippur in S Babylonia, one was discovered which described a place called Dilmun, a pleasant place, in which neither sickness nor death were known. At first it had no fresh water, but Enki the water-god ordered the sun-god to remedy this, and, this being done, various other events took place, in the course of which the goddess Ninti (*Eve) is mentioned. In later times the Babylonians adopted the name and idea of Dilmun and called it the 'land of the living', the home of their immortals. Certain similarities between this Sumerian notion of an earthly paradise and the biblical Eden emerge, and some scholars therefore conclude that the Genesis account is dependent upon the Sumerian. But an equally possible explanation is that both accounts refer to a real place, the Sumerian version having collected mythological accretions in the course of transmission.

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GETHSEMANE — oil-press, the name of an olive-yard at the foot of the Mount of Olives, to which Jesus was wont to retire (Luke 22:39) with his disciples, and which is specially memorable as being the scene of his agony (Mark 14:32; John 18:1; Luke 22:44). The plot of ground pointed out as Gethsemane is now surrounded by a wall, and is laid out as a modern European flower-garden. It contains eight venerable olive-trees, the age of which cannot, however, be determined. The exact site of Gethsemane is still in question. Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*) says: 'When I first came to Jerusalem, and for many years afterward, this plot of ground was open to all whenever they chose to come and meditate beneath its very old olivetrees. The Latins, however, have within the last few years succeeded in gaining sole possession, and have built a high wall around it ... The Greeks have invented another site a little to the north of it ... My own impression is that both are wrong. The position is too near the city, and so close to what must have always been the great thoroughfare

eastward, that our Lord would scarcely have selected it for retirement on that dangerous and dismal night ...I am inclined to place the garden in the secluded vale several hundred yards to the north-east of the present Gethsemane.”¹

GETHSEMANE (from Aram. *gaṭ šemen* ‘an oil press’). A garden (*kēpos*, Jn. 18:1), E of Jerusalem beyond the Kidron valley and near the Mount of Olives (Mt. 26:30). It was a favourite retreat frequented by Christ and his disciples, which became the scene of the agony, Judas’ betrayal and the arrest (Mk. 14:32-52). It should probably be contrasted with Eden, as the garden where the second Adam prevailed over temptation. Christ’s action in Gethsemane (Lk. 22:41) gave rise to the Christian custom of kneeling for prayer. The traditional Latin site lies E of the Jericho road-bridge over the Kidron, and contains olive trees said to date back to the 7th century AD. It measures 50 m square, and was enclosed with a wall by the Franciscans in 1848. It corresponds to the position located by Eusebius and Jerome, but is regarded by Thomson, Robinson and Barclay as too small and too near the road. The Greeks enclosed an adjacent site to the N. There is a broad area of land NE of the Church of St Mary where larger, more secluded gardens were put at the disposal of pilgrims, and Thomson locates the genuine site here. The original trees were cut down by Titus (Jos., *BJ* 5. 523).

BIBLIOGRAPHY. W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, 1888, p. 634; G. Dalman, *Sacred Sites and Ways*, 1935, pp. 321ff. D.H.T. 2

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST — one of the cardinal facts and doctrines of the gospel. If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain (1 Cor. 15:14). The whole of the New Testament revelation rests on this as an historical fact. On the day of Pentecost Peter argued the necessity of Christ’s resurrection from the prediction in Ps. 16 (Acts 2:24–28). In his own discourses, also, our Lord clearly intimates his resurrection (Matt. 20:19; Mark 9:9; 14:28; Luke 18:33; John 2:19–22).

The evangelists give circumstantial accounts of the facts connected with that event, and the apostles, also, in their public teaching largely insist upon it. Ten different appearances of our risen Lord are recorded in the New Testament. They may be arranged as follows:

(1.) To Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre alone. This is recorded at length only by John (20:11–18), and alluded to by Mark (16:9–11).

(2.) To certain women, “the other Mary,” Salome, Joanna, and others, as they returned from the sepulchre. Matthew (28:1–10) alone gives an account of this. (Comp. Mark 16:1–8, and Luke 24:1–11.)

(3.) To Simon Peter alone on the day of the resurrection. (See Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5.)

(4.) To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection, recorded fully only by Luke (24:13–35. Comp. Mark 16:12, 13).

(5.) To the ten disciples (Thomas being absent) and others “with them,” at Jerusalem on the evening of the resurrection day. One of the evangelists gives an account of this appearance, John (20:19–24).

(6.) To the disciples again (Thomas being present) at Jerusalem (Mark 16:14–18; Luke 24:33–40; John 20:26–28. See also 1 Cor. 15:5).

(7.) To the disciples when fishing at the Sea of Galilee. Of this appearance also John (21:1–23) alone gives an account.

(8.) To the eleven, and above 500 brethren at once, at an appointed place in Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; comp. Matt. 28:16–20).

(9.) To James, but under what circumstances we are not informed (1 Cor. 15:7).

(10.) To the apostles immediately before the ascension. They accompanied him from Jerusalem to Mount Olivet, and there they saw him ascend “till a cloud received him out of their sight” (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50–52; Acts 1:4–10).

It is worthy of note that it is distinctly related that on most of these occasions our Lord afforded his disciples the amplest opportunity of testing the fact of his resurrection. He conversed with them face to face. They touched him (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:27), and he ate bread with them (Luke 24:42, 43; John 21:12, 13).

(11.) In addition to the above, mention might be made of Christ’s manifestation of himself to Paul at Damascus, who speaks of it as an appearance of the risen Saviour (Acts 9:3–9, 17; 1 Cor. 15:8; 9:1).

It is implied in the words of Luke (Acts 1:3) that there may have been other appearances of which we have no record.

The resurrection is spoken of as the act (1) of God the Father (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:24; 3:15; Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; Heb. 13:20); (2) of Christ himself (John 2:19; 10:18); and (3) of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

The resurrection is a public testimony of Christ's release from his undertaking as surety, and an evidence of the Father's acceptance of his work of redemption. It is a victory over death and the grave for all his followers.

The importance of Christ's resurrection will be seen when we consider that if he rose the gospel is true, and if he rose not it is false. His resurrection from the dead makes it manifest that his sacrifice was accepted. Our justification was secured by his obedience to the death, and therefore he was raised from the dead (Rom. 4:25). His resurrection is a proof that he made a full atonement for our sins, that his sacrifice was accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice, and his blood a ransom for sinners. It is also a pledge and an earnest of the resurrection of all believers (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:47–49; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2). As he lives, they shall live also.

It proved him to be the Son of God, inasmuch as it authenticated all his claims (John 2:19; 10:17). 'If Christ did not rise, the whole scheme of redemption is a failure, and all the predictions and anticipations of its glorious results for time and for eternity, for men and for angels of every rank and order, are proved to be chimeras. 'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.' Therefore the Bible is true from Genesis to Revelation. The kingdom of darkness has been overthrown, Satan has fallen as lightning from heaven, and the triumph of truth over error, of good over evil, of happiness over misery is for ever secured.'" Hodge.

With reference to the report which the Roman soldiers were bribed (Matt. 28:12–14) to circulate concerning Christ's resurrection, 'his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept,' Matthew Henry in his 'Commentary,' under John 20:1–10, fittingly remarks, 'The grave-clothes in which Christ had been buried were found in very good order, which serves for an evidence that his body was not 'stolen away while men slept.' Robbers of tombs have been known to take away 'the clothes' and leave the body; but none ever took away 'the body' and left the clothes, especially when they were 'fine linen' and new (Mark 15:46). Any one

would rather choose to carry a dead body in its clothes than naked. Or if they that were supposed to have stolen it would have left the grave-clothes behind, yet it cannot be supposed they would find leisure to ‘fold up the linen.’” 1

RESURRECTION. The most startling characteristic of the first Christian preaching is its emphasis on the resurrection. The first preachers were sure that Christ had risen, and sure, in consequence, that believers would in due course rise also. This set them off from all the other teachers of the ancient world. There are resurrections elsewhere, but none of them is like that of Christ. They are mostly mythological tales connected with the change of the season and the annual miracle of spring. The Gospels tell of an individual who truly died but overcame death by rising again. And if it is true that Christ’s resurrection bears no resemblance to anything in paganism it is also true that the attitude of believers to their own resurrection, the corollary of their Lord’s, is radically different from anything in the heathen world. Nothing is more characteristic of even the best thought of the day than its hopelessness in the face of death. Clearly the resurrection is of the very first importance for the Christian faith. The Christian idea of resurrection is to be distinguished from both Greek and Jewish ideas. The Greeks thought of the body as a hindrance to true life and they looked for the time when the soul would be free from its shackles. They conceived of life after death in terms of the immortality of the soul, but they firmly rejected all ideas of resurrection (*cf.* the mockery of Paul’s preaching in Acts 17:32). The Jews were firmly persuaded of the values of the body, and thought these would not be lost. They thus looked for the body to be raised. But they thought it would be exactly the same body (*Apocalypse of Baruch* 1:2). The Christians thought of the body as being raised, but also transformed so as to be a suitable vehicle for the very different life of the age to come (1 Cor. 15:42ff.). The Christian idea is thus distinctive. 2

RIVER OF GOD — (Ps. 65:9), as opposed to earthly streams, denoting that the divine resources are inexhaustible, or the sum of all fertilizing streams that water the earth (Gen. 2:10). 1

IN THE GARDENS

Each of the 3 ' key' events in the Bible took place in a garden. Each was the culmination of a battle in the spiritual world. Each too, was to have a profound effect on the human race' s future and God' s relationship to it.

The first one is obvious. The Garden of Eden was God' s perfect creation, designed for mankind' s eternal habitation, provided people obeyed one simple (not so simple as it turned out) rule! Today, we still experience the effects of this ' lost' battle in the spirit. As a former horticulturist, I well understand the consequences of weeds and sore backs! And my wife, Kathy, has experienced the pain that accompanies the pleasure of childbirth, four times! But no more! Now it is the next generation' s turn. A real plus of being a grandmother!

The remaining two gardens, on the other hand, are less obvious, but both involve the ' putting right' of Adam and Eve' s spiritual failure in Eden' s luscious landscape. They involve therefore, the death and resurrection of Jesus. For Jesus, like Adam and Eve, battled with satan, but unlike our human predecessors, He was successful in overcoming the cunning adversary. A success which, we can participate in today, through joining with Jesus. This is succinctly summarised in one simple verse, hidden away in the Bible' s final, Book of Revelation.

*¹¹ They (the ones prepared to make the spiritual sacrifice Jesus did) overcame him (satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.
(Revelation 12:11) 3*

As we move through our study we will see what happened in the three gardens and what we can look forward to in the garden yet to come.

3 Unless otherwise stated, all scriptures are from *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

A GARDEN OF PROVING, TEMPTATION AND SEPARATION

EDEN, GARDEN OF. The place which God made for Adam to live in, and from which Adam and Eve were driven after the Fall.

I. The name

The *MT* states that God planted a garden in Eden gan-b^eēden; Gn. 2:8), which indicates that the garden was not co-extensive with Eden, but must have been an enclosed area within it. The LXX and Vulg. and subsequent commentators have noted that to a Hebrew-speaker the name 'ēden would suggest the homophonous root meaning 'delight'; but many scholars now hold that Eden is not a proper name, but a common noun from the Sumerian edin, 'plain, steppe', borrowed either direct from Sumerian, or *via* Akkadian (edinu), the garden thus being situated in a plain, or flat region. From its situation in Eden the garden came to be called the 'garden of Eden' (gan-ēden; Gn. 2:15; 3:23-24; Ezk. 36:35; Joel 2:3), but it ' was also referred to as the 'garden of God' (gan-^olōhīm, Ezk. 28:13; 31:9) and the 'garden of the Lord' (gan-YHWH, Is. 51:3). In Gn. 2:8ff. the word gan, 'garden', and in Is. 51:3 'ēden itself, is rendered paradeisos by the LXX, this being a loan-word from Old Persian (Avestan) pairidaēza, 'enclosure', which came to mean 'park, pleasure ground', and from this usage came English *'paradise' for the garden of Eden.

The New Bible Dictionary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

Let' s have a brief look at the story to again remind ourselves what happened to turn a peaceful, perfect paradise into a pathway of paganism and perversion, peddling personal pride.

A GARDEN OF PROVING

On the third day of the ' Creation Week' , God created the perfect garden, one without weeds!

¹¹ Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day. (Genesis 1:11-13)

God placed man in the Garden to tend to it and its inhabitants.

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:27-8)

And was given beautiful, healthy fruit to eat. No Big Macs in those days! There was no competition for food. The animals didn't eat each other, nor compete with humans, eating only the green plants. As there was no competition for food resources, all lived in harmony.

²⁹ Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. (Genesis 1:29-31)

The Garden was perfect, with an automatic watering system, an abundance of trees and plants for beauty and food. Adam was charged with looking after it.

⁴ This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens— ⁵ and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was

no man to work the ground, ⁶ but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground— ⁷ the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Genesis 2:4-14)

BUT! Have you noticed that there are always ' ifs and buts' in God? For the promises, the good things of God, are always conditional, dependent upon people' s response to God' s provision. It was this way from the very beginning!

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"(Genesis 2:15-17)

Adam and Eve could retain their ' garden lifestyle' , one of walking in harmony with God forever, through eating from the Tree of Life, BUT only as long as they were prepared to obey His instruction not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. A tree of human independence: yes, one of separation from the protection of God. For God does not want to relate to robots, programmed to automatically do His

bidding. Both then and now, He seeks relationship through choice, not compulsion.

God gave the promise of eternal life under His care and provision. What would mankind's response be?

A GARDEN OF TEMPTATION

For our freewill to be effectively exercised, there must be alternative choices available. If Adam and Eve, in their state of (unproven) perfection, were to prove their desire to continue to relate directly to God, there had to be an alternative, ungodly relationship available.

This same principle applies to angels too. While we aren't exactly sure how it happened, but God used a 'fallen angel' to provide us with an alternative.

¹¹ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹² 'Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. ¹⁴ You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. ¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. ¹⁶ Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. ¹⁷ Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.(Ezekiel 28:11-17)

We now know this alternative spiritual being as 'satan', 'lucifer', the 'devil', or the 'evil one'. Like God, satan is a spirit, unable to be seen. As Adam and Eve were created perfect however, they were able to 'see', or perceive, God's presence, *in the garden in the cool of the day* So satan then, needed

to take on a physical form, in order to be as convincing. He inhabited and used the serpent to achieve this. The scene of decision was set. As is normal, then and now, he convinced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit by twisting the truth, by making it sound plausible, rather than telling outright lies.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?’”² The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”⁴ ‘You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman.⁵ ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

(Genesis 3:1-6)

A GARDEN OF SEPARATION

Once the choice had been made, the forbidden fruit swallowed and digested, Adam and Eve realised what they had done.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’¹⁰ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’¹¹ And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’¹² The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’” (Genesis 3:7-13)

While Adam and Eve had always been naked (must have been a warm climate!), they were covered before God with garments of relationship (salvation) and robes of (unproven) righteousness.

¹⁰ I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)

These were stripped away once they decided to side with satan, exposing their nakedness. To this day, we still wear clothes to cover our nakedness.

As a consequence, the serpent, for allowing satan to use him, and satan himself, were punished. The serpent lost its legs and satan, was destined to eventual defeat by the offspring of the woman he misled. Yes, God has senses of both humor and justice, always having the final say!

*¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, ‘Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’”
(Genesis 3:14-15)*

The consequences of disobedience for Eve were to suffer pain through what was designed to be her most fulfilling experience, childbirth, and to be in subjection to her husband.

¹⁶ To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. (Genesis 3:16)

Likewise, Adam' s work in the garden was turned from pleasure into pain. Having been a horticulturist, I too have experienced the never ending, unpleasant work of weeding, the sweat required, and the sore back resulting from the effort involved.

At this time too, they experienced a degradation occurred in their diet, from eating all green plants along with the fruit. The harmony between species disappeared, for there was now competition between man and animals for the available food.

¹⁷ To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.' ²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. (Genesis 3:17-20)

The final degradation in diet came at the time of Noah, when man started eating animals, and animals, each other, the situation that exists today.

Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. ² The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. ³ Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. (Genesis 9:1-3)

However, contrary to most people' s understanding, God did not desert his creation! For He extended Adam and Eve grace by killing an animal, or animals, on their behalf. For God demands a ' life for life.' (Leviticus 24:18) Although we may not understand or like it, God requires the sacrifice of a life for relationship with Him to be restored.

¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. (Leviticus 17:11)

In spite of what they had done, God showed His love for them. Here we have the first case of 'salvation through grace' and the first picture of what Jesus would do for you and me on the cross.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

However, the consequences of sin, even when forgiven, still have to be faced, both then and now. Satan's lie was exposed. The effects of aging and death were established and Adam and Eve banished from the garden of perfection, the Garden of Eden.

²² And the LORD God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.' ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-4)

Yes, the first dealings between God and mankind took place in a garden.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

When we think about Eden' s Garden, we generally major on the fruitless, forbidden fruit fiasco. Yes, we are only too aware of the effects that Adam and Eve' s decision have upon our lives today. We often blame the first married couple for our pains and sicknesses, but the reality is, had it been us, we too would also have taken that fine fruit! Besides, it is finished! It is done! We cannot reverse history!

Yet, the true heart of the story is not truly in the eating, which was almost inevitable, but rather, is found in the various clothing worn. For what transpired is a precise picture of human endeavor and God' s mercy, a scenario that is played out in individual lives, right to this day.

HUMAN RESPONSE TO SIN

The normal reaction amongst those who have an awareness of sin, through some appreciation of moral principles, is to endeavor to ' live a good life' . This can be seen in Adam and Eve' s response to the understanding of their nakedness. They responded to their moral dilemma by trying to do something about it themselves, making the world' s first designer, fig leaf clothes. Not designed to attract the admiration of others, for there were no others, but rather, to try to deflect God' s attention from what they had done.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. (Genesis 3:7)

Today' s equivalent of the same process is ' religion' . We sew together our ' fig leaves' of good behavior, which we believe will keep us in right standing with God! Living a good life. Doing our bit to help others less fortunate than ourselves. Being good people. Surely that' s enough to get us to heaven?

The problem is, our solution to the problem of separation from God, as with Adam and Eve, comes from within our corrupted human understanding. It seems logical and reasonable to our way of thinking, but is not acceptable to God.

GOD'S RESPONSE TO SIN

The beauty, and really, the main point, of the story of Adam and Eve is not the sin, but God' s response to it. Contrary to popular belief, God forgave them for what they had done. He signified this by sacrificing animals in order to give them a new covering, one of the ' skins of salvation' (the first leather?) to replace the robe of righteousness they had lost.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. (Genesis 3:21)

As mentioned previously, this is the first picture in the Bible of the way back to God. The first of the unsatisfactory sacrifices of the Old Testament which led to the final voluntary sacrifice of Jesus Himself on the cross for you and for me.

⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.'"⁸ First he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them' (although the law required them to be made). ⁹ Then he said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:5-10)

There is only one way back to God. Good works don' t work! Jesus said it all!

⁶ Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

THE EXAMPLE OF CAIN AND ABEL

It took but a single generation for mankind to degenerate to the point where one man was prepared to kill another. In a classic tale of jealousy and rage Cain lost control of his reason and took his brother Abel' s life. Let' s review the story.

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man.' ² Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. ³ In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. ⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.' ⁸ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let' s go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.
(Genesis 4:1-8)

Over the years I have heard many explanations as to why the Lord was pleased with Abel' s offering but not Cain' s. For both gave of the bounty of their crop. But nothing that truly satisfied me. Until now!

The only inkling of an explanation the Bible gives is in Hebrews, where it talks of Abel having greater faith than had Cain.

⁴ By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. (Hebrews 11:4)

The key section of that verse is where 'God spoke well of his offerings.' Abel' s offering was superior to Cain' s. How? Why?

The answer is that Cain' s offerings were of his own labors, a picture of those who seek in human wisdom and understanding to reconcile with God through good works. They were presented to God with the wrong motivation. "See how good I am in giving this offering to you!"

Abel' s offering, on the other hand, was given with an understanding of what God had done for his parents by supplying them with clothes of salvation to wear, made of animal skins. He chose the best ' *fat portions*' from the best *firstborn* (the strongest and most perfect) of his flock. He understood the principle of his sinfulness and the need to make restitution to God through the sacrifice of a life for his life. In fact, the best, most perfect, animal' s life for his life, for only the best satisfies a perfect God. His heart motivation was, "God, I am a sinner. Please forgive my sins"

Cain' s true heart of human selfishness was exposed shortly thereafter, when he killed his brother in a fit of jealousy and rage.

Yes, Abel' s sacrifice was acceptable while Cain' s wasn' t. Nothing has changed today! We cannot ' earn' back our relationship with God through good works but must come to Him in repentance, through Jesus, who sacrificed His life for us. Only then can we restore the fellowship with the Father enjoyed by Adam and Eve before they succumbed to the serpents (satan' s) temptation.

THE GARDEN OF EDEN - A LEGACY

Little is known about the Garden of Eden, which is not surprising given that it was the source of primitive man, where the only means of recording history was by word of mouth down through the generations.

However the existence of such a place is recorded not only in Jewish tradition but in many other cultures throughout the region also, e.g. Sumerians, and even in the wider world e.g. Greek. A land of peace, one of great bounty: truly a paradise, where there was no death or sickness.

While we do not know its exact location, two of the four rivers surrounding it still exist today, the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is likely to have been a well-watered river plain, providing natural irrigation for a profusion of trees and plants.

Gardens are highly prized throughout the Old Testament. King Solomon, when wooing his lover, idealized the garden.

¹¹ Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon. ¹² You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain. ¹³ Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and nard, ¹⁴ nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices. ¹⁵ You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon. Beloved ¹⁶ Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits. (Song of Solomon 4:11-16)

God too, promised through the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah, that the restoration of Israel would be as the restoration of the Garden of Eden. Firstly Ezekiel.

³³ ” ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. ³⁴ The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. ³⁵ They will say, ‘This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.’ ³⁶ Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.’ (Ezekiel 36:33-36)

And also Isaiah:

‘Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ² look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many. ³ The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing. (Isaiah 51:1-3)

The Garden of Eden has always been regarded as a picture of the ideal paradise, one of God' s eternakingdom to be restored in final days, as we will see later.

Gardens then, came to represent the epitome of God' s creativity, the place in which the glory of God' s creation is most easily seen. Surely then, it is not surprising that the major acts God purposed to rectify the forbidden fruit eating experience, should also take place in and around gardens.

Let' s see how.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMENE

A GARDEN OF SELF-SACRIFICE

GETHSEMENE (from Aram. gaṭ ṣemen ‘an oil press’). A garden (kēpos, Jn. 18:1), E of Jerusalem beyond the Kidron valley and near the Mount of Olives (Mt. 26:30). It was a favourite retreat frequented by Christ and his disciples, which became the scene of the agony, Judas’ betrayal and the arrest (Mk. 14:32-52). It should probably be contrasted with Eden, as the garden where the second Adam prevailed over temptation.

The New Bible Dictionary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962

Most of us think that the cross itself represented the moment of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. While that is true from our standpoint, for Jesus, His commitment, His self-sacrifice, was actually made prior to the events of the cross taking place, during His time of prayer at the Garden of Gethsemene. Once we understand this, the account of the events that fateful night takes on a whole new perspective.

For example, His disappointment at the disciples falling asleep is now understandable. They were deserting Him at the most crucial decision-making time of His life and ministry.

Let' s now take a look at the story.

After participating in the Last Supper, Jesus and His remaining disciples (Judas had departed) left the room, gathering together amongst the olive trees of Gethsemene. The time of decision was at hand.

³⁶ *Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’* (Matthew 26:36)

He selected His closest three associates and took them with Him as support during the time of the irreversible decision He was about to make.

³⁷ *He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. (Matthew 26:37)*

It would appear that Peter, James and John didn't realize the importance and gravity of the moment, as Jesus had to tell them of His agony and ask them to support Him.

³⁸ *Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'* (Matthew 26:38)

The moment of decision, the moment of self-sacrifice had arrived. Jesus didn't want to die on the cross! He knew the consequences. He knew the battle he would face, the pain He would suffer, both physically and spiritually. Naturally, He didn't want to do it! Yet He remained, as He had throughout His life, 100% committed to doing the will of His Father.

³⁹ *Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'* (Matthew 26:39)

After taking this ultimate step of obedience He returned to His disciples for comfort and support for what He had just done. It's no wonder He was upset when He spoke to Peter!

⁴⁰ *Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?'* ⁴¹ *he asked Peter. 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. (Matthew 26:40-41a)*

This was followed by a statement that applied not only to the disciples, as we generally understand it, but also to Jesus himself!

The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.' (Matthew 26:41b)

Going back to pray, He again cried out to His Father

⁴² *He went away a second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’ (Matthew 26:42)*

And the whole process was repeated for a third time.

⁴³ *When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. (Matthew 26:43-4)*

What a disappointment His closest friends must have been! He had to tell them what was about to happen. How bad afterwards, the three disciples must have felt, when they finally understood what Jesus had been going through!

⁴⁵ *Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!’ (Matthew 26:45-46)*

The decision made, Jesus went forward to begin the process that would inevitably lead to the to the anguish of the cross of His destiny.

⁴⁷ *While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: ‘The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.’ ⁴⁹ Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed him. ⁵⁰ Jesus replied, ‘Friend, do what you came for.’ Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. (Matthew 26:47-50)*

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

The challenge of the Christian life has always been to live the way Jesus did. The ultimate example of this is found at Gethsemane, when Jesus placed the will of His Father above His own life.

No less a commitment is required of each and every follower of Jesus today. While we may not face literal death, as Jesus did, a spiritual death to our own desires and ambitions is required of each and every one who truly desires to follow Him.

For example, the apostle Paul experienced physical hardship and eventual death at the hands of the Romans.

²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers.

²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. ³³ But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

(2Corinthians 11:23-33)

Paul did not minister on his own behalf but out of obedience, allowing Christ to work through him.

¹⁷ Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. ¹⁸ I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— ¹⁹ by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. (Romans 15:17-19)

Doing God' s will produces character in our lives.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:1-4)

As we follow the example of Jesus.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1-3)

There are lots of other examples to follow too.

¹⁰ Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance

and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (James 5:10-11)

Through conquering all the challenges we face, we become as one with Jesus in doing the Father' s will.

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-9)

THE GARDEN OF THE TOMB

A GARDEN OF VICTORY

RESURRECTION. The most startling characteristic of the first Christian preaching is its emphasis on the resurrection. The first preachers were sure that Christ had risen, and sure, in consequence, that believers would in due course rise also. This set them off from all the other teachers of the ancient world. There are resurrections elsewhere, but none of them is like that of Christ. They are mostly mythological tales connected with the change of the season and the annual miracle of spring. The Gospels tell of an individual who truly died but overcame death by rising again. And if it is true that Christ's resurrection bears no resemblance to anything in paganism it is also true that the attitude of believers to their own resurrection, the corollary of their Lord's, is radically different from anything in the heathen world. Nothing is more characteristic of even the best thought of the day than its hopelessness in the face of death. Clearly the resurrection is of the very first importance for the Christian faith. The Christian idea of resurrection is to be distinguished from both Greek and Jewish ideas. The Greeks thought of the body as a hindrance to true life and they looked for the time when the soul would be free from its shackles. They conceived of life after death in terms of the immortality of the soul, but they firmly rejected all ideas of resurrection (*cf.* the mockery of Paul's preaching in Acts 17:32). The Jews were firmly persuaded of the values of the body, and thought these would not be lost. They thus looked for the body to be raised. But they thought it would be exactly the same body (*Apocalypse of Baruch* 1:2). The Christians thought of the body as being raised, but also transformed so as to be a suitable vehicle for the very different life of the age to come (1 Cor. 15:42ff.). The Christian idea is thus distinctive.

1*The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

⁴¹ *At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.* ⁴² *Because it was*

the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:41-42)

Can you imagine the situation? Jesus was dead. And buried! It was all over. After 3 1/2 years of so much promise, when it appeared as if the long awaited ' Savior' of the Jewish people had come to rescue them from their Roman oppressors, all that remained was a lifeless body in a borrowed grave! Nothing to do other than to grieve a lost friend, then go home and get on with life. So much promise had ended in abject disappointment and disillusionment.

Until the first day of the week, that is! When Mary Magdalene went to the garden to visit the tomb.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. (John 20:1)

What did she think? That Jesus had been raised from the dead as He had predicted He would be?

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Matthew 16:31)

No! Nor would we! She automatically thought that grave robbers had been responsible for His disappearance. What to do? She ran off to find Peter and John to tell them, for they might have an idea.

² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!''(John 20:2)

Peter and John raced to the tomb, with John (likely considerably younger) getting there first.

*So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
(John 20:3-4)*

Going into a dead man' s tomb, other than to prepare the body, was not the done thing, then or now. However the irrepressible Peter' s curiosity quickly got the better of Him and he went in, followed, more circumspectly, by John. They quickly saw that the body had gone, but must surely have wondered how and why the linen wrappings had been left behind.

He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) (John 20:5-9)

With typical male logic they concluded that as all was now over, they should go home. Mary, on the other hand, remained close by, saddened by this final heartbreak of the missing body of her Jesus.

¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes, ¹¹ but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. (John 20:10-11a)

Plucking up the courage to look into the tomb, she saw two angels, who spoke to her.

As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." (John 20:11b-13)

As if this was not enough of a surprise, she turned around and saw a man she thought was the gardener. Maybe he would know who had taken the body of Jesus.

¹⁴ *At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.” (John 20 :14-15)*

Jesus revealed himself to her.

¹⁶ *Jesus said to her, “Mary.” (John 20:16a)*

Just imagine what would have gone through her mind! How could it be! Jesus had died on the cross! How could He be there! In a state of shock...

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). (John 20:16b)

Jesus quickly explained the situation and sent her off to tell the others.

¹⁷ *Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (John 20:17)*

Mary did as she was told, and the news of the victory Jesus had won over death spread.

¹⁸ *Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her. (John 20:18)*

This GOOD NEWS would have brought not only rejoicing and celebration, but to the Old Testament students which the disciples were, an

understanding of the verse in Genesis where satan was informed of his final fate.

*¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”
(Genesis 3:15)*

Mankind' s intimate relationship with the Father, lost in the Garden of Eden, was now restored in the Garden of the Tomb by the self-sacrifice of Jesus, through His commitment to do the Father' s will, made in the Garden of Gethsemene and activated upon the cross.

Each of these three key events which changed the course of human history, was initiated in a garden.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

The resurrection of Jesus and, in turn, the dead, is at the very heart of our faith. Without it, we are merely deluded people, greatly to be pitied!

¹² But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³ If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

The hope of the resurrection is our motivation to living for Jesus today.

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ² By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³ Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. ⁵ If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. ⁶ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— ⁷ because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. (Romans 6:1-7)

It encourages us to become like Jesus and to share in His sufferings.

*¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.
(Philippians 3:10-11)*

Yes, the hope of the resurrection of the dead motivates us to live for Jesus now.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:3-5)

But that is not all!

THE GARDEN OF ETERNAL LIFE

A GARDEN OF REST

PARADISE. Paradise is a loan-word from ancient Iranian (pairidaēza-) and means a garden with a wall. The Gk. word *paradeisos* is used for the first time by Xenophon for the gardens of the Persian kings. LXX translates gan'eden of Gn. 2:8 by *paradeisos*.....

b. In the New Testament The word *paradise* (Gk. *paradeisos*) occurs in only three instances in the NT (Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:3; Rev. 2:7). The context shows that the predominating sense is that of the later development of the word. In Lk. 23:43 the word 'paradise' is used by Jesus for the place where souls go immediately after death, *cf.* the concealed paradise in later Jewish thought. The same idea is also present in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31). In 2 Cor. 12:2-4 Paul wrote in the third person of his experience of being caught up into paradise where he heard unspeakable words (Gk. *arrhēta rhēmata*). In this case paradise is the 'third *heaven' with its glory, perhaps the same as in Lk. 23. The only place where paradise is used in an eschatological sense is in Rev. 2:7. The promise is made by Christ that he will give paradise as a gift to the one who overcomes. The present paradise will come in its full glory with the final consummation. The idea of a garden of God in the world to come is strongly emphasized in the last chapters of Revelation. The symbols of the tree of life, of life-giving water, and of the twelve kinds of fruit are all witnesses to the glory of the coming paradise (Rev. 22).

The New Bible Dictionary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

The New Jerusalem

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them

and be their God. ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4)

The ' Holy City", the new heaven and new earth, destined to replace the current ones at the end of the 1000 year ' Millennial Reign' of Jesus, is a combination of elements from the city of Jerusalem, the Temple and the Garden of Eden.

The final chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22, describes the new city in terms of a garden, one similar to the Garden of Eden. So, the eternal kingdom of the Lord, which all true Christians look forward to inhabiting, is compared to the Garden of Eden, but with enhancements! Let' s have a look.

During the great battle of the end days, the River Euphrates, one of the four that bounded Eden' s Garden, will dry up!

*¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.
(Revelation 16:12)*

Prior to this event, the rivers and springs had been turned into blood.

The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. (Revelation 16:4)

However, these worldly disasters are not a spiritual problem, for the watering of the garden will come from the directly from the throne of God.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. (Revelation 22:1-2)

The Tree of Life from the Garden of Eden is again found here, for perfection has been restored. This time however, mankind' s perfection has

finally been proven. Now, instead of just one tree in this eternal garden, we have 12. For 12 signifies 'divine government', the rule of God for eternity!

On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:3)

Judgement has been completed and all whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life will live together in the kingdom of God, in harmony, (Hard to imagine looking at the church today!) forever.

²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Revelation 21:26-7)

Those who overcome the temptations and desires of this life in order to follow Jesus will inherit eternal life.

⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7)

In this final garden, here in the eternal City of God, having been made perfect through the sacrifice of Jesus, the shedding of His blood, we will be able to dwell in the direct presence of God.

No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (Revelation 22:3-4)

There will no more be a need for night (for night serves to separate days in order to provide a measure of time), as eternity is timeless.

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:5)

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Most Christians see eternity as being something to inherit after death. But we are called to inherit the kingdom of God now, not at some time in the future, for the kingdom is found within us.

²⁰ Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, ²¹ nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” (Luke 17:20-21)

As we die to our own nature through obedience to the Lord' s will, so the kingdom grows within us. This kingdom is not burdensome, but one of rest in Jesus.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

As we learn to submit to the will of Father so we enter His rest.

⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11)

As is the case when we die physically, by the process of dying spiritually to our selfish nature, we can enter God' s rest now.

¹³ Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.” (Revelation 14:13)

King David recognized this principle 3,500 years ago! In the beauty of the 23rd Psalm David finds rest in the middle of the many problems and challenges of His life, through his trust in and obedience to the Lord. The beautiful setting of the ' garden' of the green pastures and still waters is an appropriate place at which to finish this study of the ' 3 Gardens of God' .

May we be prepared to sacrifice ourselves in order to enter our garden of rest.

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.