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There are four primary Gardens of the Lord mentioned in Holy Scripture. The First in Eden and the Last in Heaven are the same. But the two Gardens in between must have been planted in order for the Last to reconstitute the First. Did I confuse you? The Garden at Eden represented the perfection of God's will for man, but man did not heed God and listened, instead, to that whispered voice of evil from the wrong tree. So Adam forfeited his claim in Paradise. God withdrew the Garden and the Tree of Life (representing the Lord Jesus Christ) and secured its borders in Heaven beyond the Gates of Splendor. The object of God's plan, all along, was to make it possible for man to be reconciled with Himself and once again acquire access to the Paradise of God.

### **THE FIRST GARDEN**

*"And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen 2:8-17)* God placed two trees in the midst of the Garden – the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God clearly warned Adam not to eat of the wrong tree, and that is precisely the tree of which Adam ate....and, as they say in Alabama, there has been all hell to pay ever since – literally!

Following the sin of Adam and Eve in disobeying the only commandment God had given them, their former righteousness fell away as a covering Robe, and they

KNEW their nakedness (nakedness is paramount to sin). God drove Adam and Eve from the Garden: *“Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”* (Gen 3:22-24)

Where was this Paradise taken and where is the Tree of Life today? *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”* (Rev 2:7) *“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* (Rev 22:1-2) No longer is the Garden accessible to man but through the means of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order for man to come again to the Garden of God’s Paradise, he must go through two more Gardens of the Lord each were gardens of a totally different nature than the first.

### THE SECOND GARDEN OF THE LORD

It is this self-same Garden through which every Christian must follow in bearing his cross – the Garden at Gethsemane! Knowing from Ancient Days of Eternity Past that this Garden (on the near slope of Olivet) lay squarely in His path, our Lord never faltered or hesitated in passing through.

*Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.* (Matt 26:36-46)

How does the Christian confessor come to this Garden and pass through? We must follow Jesus wherever He goes, and that includes passing through what Bunyon allegorically called the “Slough of Despond.” Taking up our crosses daily and following Christ means dying daily to self and living for Christ in serving others. Jesus had to pass through this Passion in order to die the death that we rightfully should have died.

### THE THIRD GARDEN OF THE LORD

There was a Garden nearby Calvary that provided the Tomb of a wealthy man, in which the body of Jesus was laid. It was a ‘borrowed Tomb’ because Jesus only needed a temporary tomb for three days and nights. The tomb of every Christian is likewise a ‘borrowed’ tomb for there comes a day of resurrection from the tombs of every elect of God. *“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”* (John 19:41-42) This was the borrowed

tomb of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathaea in which no man had ever laid. In order to seal His work of redemption, the Lord must suffer death and burial. He thereby defeated death and hell completely. On the third day, He burst the bonds of death and arose from the Tomb with a burst of light and an earthquake. Because He died in our stead, we must also die to self, be buried, and rise in like manner from the tomb at the time of the Lord's own choosing.

#### THE FOURTH GARDEN

Ah, yes, this Garden is the same as that First Garden at Eden restored in Heaven. This is a Holy Garden reserved only for the elect of God. *"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. **In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**"* (Rev 22:1-2) As you can see, this Garden offers all of the same provisions as the first, except for the absence of the Serpent and his Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It is very much like the Bride of Christ alluded to in Song of Solomon: *"Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."* (Song 4:9-12) There is no possession of greater value to the Lord Jesus Christ than His Bride, the Church. He loved her so much that He came across the millennia for her, died for her, rose from the grave for her, and now prepares a place for her under the supervision of His Father. This is the Last Garden to which we aspire. By birth, we have been vanquished from the First Garden at Eden, and by privilege we may pass in the footsteps of our Lord through dark Gethsemane and the Bright Morning of the Garden Tomb. By this means we may arise and be lifted on high to that final Garden Place in the Paradise of God.

Do you have your passport and visa, friend?