

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE GARDEN

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Genesis 2:8

Just about anyone can tell the difference between a weed patch and a garden. A garden is a plot of land which is picked out, set aside, prepared, planted, and tended by one who has a purpose to enjoy the fruits of it. The beauty and fruitfulness of any garden, manifests the skill of the one who is its husbandman. A weed patch on the other hand grows all by itself and needs no tending at all. Weeds (having no intrinsic value) will grow until the time of the harvest and will produce after their own kind without any special care or concern.

A garden left untended will ultimately become a weed patch, since it is in the very nature of weeds to grow wherever their seed shall fall. In fact weeds will even grow in a well tended garden with only the desire and skill of the gardener to control them.

We read a very familiar passage in Genesis which tells us of a Garden which the LORD planted in Eden. We do not know, geographically, exactly the spot that this Garden occupied nor how large it was, but we do know that it did not encompass the whole earth, since we see Adam, in his disobedience, driven from it and barred from entering it, according to the purpose and will of HIM who planted it. When this garden had fulfilled its purpose it could no longer be found in the earth. That TREE of LIFE which was in its midst could not be eaten of by sinful flesh.

Then we read of another "Garden" which was planted by the same skillful HUSBANDMAN, which was actually planted before the Garden found in Eden. *"A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."* (Song 4:12-16)

This "Garden" is that Bride (spouse) which the LORD loved from before the foundation of the world and chose in CHRIST. *"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."* (Isa 61:3) Just as HE planted the Garden in Eden to fulfill HIS purpose so too did HE plant this "Garden" and "enclose" it with the hedge of HIS grace. In fact the Hebrew word which is translated as Garden in the KJV literally means "an enclosed or fenced plot of land"

This is a Garden which the LORD planted for HIS own enjoyment, and out of which HE causes the perfumes and odors of HIS spices to come forth according as HE directs the NORTH WIND to blow upon it. This *"planting of the LORD"* grows exactly as HE who planted it desires and HIS enjoyment of it cannot in anywise be hindered. None can breach its walls to spoil that which HE has planted nor can any enjoy the fruits of this Garden apart from those who are privileged to be planted therein.

Then we read of another Garden which the LORD visited from time to time when HE walked upon this earth. This was a Garden which was planted by the hands of men, and was called Gethsemane. It was located at the base of the Mount of Olives. Gethsemane literally means "an olive press", and it was here, no doubt, that the fruit of the Mount of Olives was pressed in order to produce the needed oil for light and food.

The LORD JESUS often resorted to this Garden as well as the Mount of Olives to pray. On the night in which HE was betrayed HE was found here by those who were intent on HIS destruction. Prior to HIS arrest by these unjust men, HE had visited this "olive press" and here poured out HIS soul as an offering for sin before the face of HIS FATHER. It was here that HE shed HIS blood in the agony of sin's great burden. *"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."* (Luke 22:44)

Here HE wrestled with death itself and entered into the very anteroom of hell in the behalf of HIS beloved bride. It was here that HE exalted HIS FATHER's will and the glory of HIS kingdom. It was here that HE manifested, most clearly, HIS SONSHIP, as the only BEGOTTEN of HIS FATHER. *"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned (i.e.; experienced, was acquainted with) he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."* (Heb 5:7-9)

This garden was entered that night by crossing the Brook Cedron. (see John 18:1) This brook was also known as the Black Brook and was essentially a sewer which flowed out from Jerusalem. There was a canal which flowed into it even from the Temple into which the excess blood and dung of those Jewish sacrifices were cast. This brook ultimately emptied its contents into the Dead Sea. Is this not a clear picture of the sin of HIS people?

It is interesting to consider that the scriptures say that HE crossed this "brook" *"with HIS disciples"*. *In this we are reminded that GOD "hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2Cor 5:21) *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb 4:15) As HE took HIS disciples across this foul sewer so too has HE delivered HIS elect bride from the stench of their sin by crossing it HIMSELF. Well did Isaiah say, *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* (Isa 53:4-5)

There is another garden, planted by men, which the LORD entered, not in life but in death. *"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."* (John 19:41) Man by nature, had gladly embraced death in disobedience to the LORD's command in Eden's garden, and then became its slave as the curse of GOD passed upon all flesh. *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* (Eze 18:20) Thus it was necessary to hew out tombs for those who cannot escape death.

The LORD JESUS being eternal with HIS FATHER, had no need of any sepulcher except as it pleased HIM to taste death as every man shall. HE came into the world for this very purpose and though the man who had this sepulcher carved out (see John 19:38; Isa.53:9) was sure he would one day be its first occupant to await the day of the resurrection, yet the GOD who is rich in mercy, had ordained that this tomb's FIRSTFRUITS be that ONE who would destroy death and take captivity captive.

It was from the Mount of Olives, but a stone's cast from Gethsamane that the LORD ascended back into the heavens. It is here that the angels testified that *"this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11) Even so come LORD JESUS, gather the fruits of your garden and your resurrection. mam