

*The  
Gardens of  
God*

*The Garden of Eden*

*The Garden at Gethsemane and the Garden Tomb*

*The Garden in Heaven*

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# *The Gardens of God*

God used many different ways to present His Message in the Bible. For me, one of the most dramatic and memorable is to trace His actions through the *Gardens of God* we call *The Garden of Eden*; *The Garden at Gethsemane* and *The Garden Tomb*; and *The Garden in Heaven*.

## **# I *The Garden of Eden***

Let's look first at one of the most amazing and controversial stories ever written. It is set forth at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 2. Here we are told that God gave Adam (and later Eve), His first two children, a perfect paradise in which to live. We call it the ***Garden of Eden***. Listen to part of the description of this beautiful garden with its perfect river and trees.

*Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 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. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden.*

God then gave Adam meaningful work, and the right to eat the fruit from all the trees –except one:

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, 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.*

Next, God gave Adam a wife:

*The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him...Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man*

Paradise was now complete: *A beautiful environment, work to do, and a mate to love.*

If people are born “good” and they either “stay good” or “go bad” based upon their environment and circumstances (as taught by some belief systems), then this first man and woman would surely have “stayed good” in this perfect environment.

But they didn't.

Instead, Adam and Eve followed their own will and ate from the one tree that was forbidden. They deliberately disobeyed God who had treated them perfectly and given them perfect surroundings in which to live. The heartbreaking fact is that man, since the beginning of time, seems inherently prone to follow his own way, rather than obeying God and enjoying what God wants for us. I don't know, “*Why?*” I only know that “self-will” and refusal to follow “God's will” for us appeared in me and in every generation and in every culture. We call this “sin”, and the penalty for sin is death and separation from God.

If I believe I can be “good” or “bad” on my own, then I can surely get back to God by my own efforts. But it is clear from my own life and the lives of all the rest of the people I see in history, I need to find someone to help me.

## ***# 2 The Garden of Gethsemane and the Garden Tomb***

Centuries later, about 30 A.D., a young man named Jesus appeared in Israel, claiming to be the “Messiah” who had been predicted for

many centuries by various Jewish prophets.. But He cautioned that His Kingdom was not of this world. He came not to bring a Worldly Empire, through force and violence, but rather an Eternal Kingdom for those who would follow God. And he announced that He was God! Fully man, but also, fully God!

He gathered a small band of followers, and moved through the country proclaiming His kingship, and performing miracles, including healing the sick and raising the dead. At the end of three years, He headed for Jerusalem where the death He predicted would await Him there when the Jews observed that year's "Passover" celebration.

Earlier, Jesus had told His disciples, if they wanted to follow Him they would need to deny themselves and take up their own cross each day. Now, He was leading the way. He was showing them (and us) that it is a matter of *whose* "will" would be done—ours or God's? I have discovered the answer is clear: *I cannot do it myself, no matter how hard I try, and no matter how many good works I do. I just can't stop sinning by myself. The only way I can become clean and whole, is to surrender and let God do it.*

Following the Jewish Passover meal, Jesus and His followers went to an olive garden called Gethsemane, just outside Jerusalem, to pray and await His expected arrest. During the night, Jesus faced the great crisis we all face: *Whether to obey God's will, or to seek our own will and be our own God!* Listen to His plea as He cries out to His Father with such agony that He sweat drops of blood:

*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'. He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.'*

*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'.*

*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 26:36-39, 42)*

Twice He asked God to take away the pending death. Twice, He surrendered His will to God. The next day He was taken away and crucified.

*If I want to be right with God-- if I want to be forgiven and washed clean—if I want to be reunited with God for all eternity, there is only one way: "Surrender"! Just as He surrendered that night in the Garden of Gethsemane, so must I accept the sacrifice He made for me and surrender each day and let God's will and not mine be done.*

After Jesus' death, he was taken by some of his followers and buried in a place that has been called ***The Garden Tomb***. Here Jesus fought the battle where he conquered death and set the stage for eternal life for all who were willing to die to self and follow Him into eternal life. Three days later, He arose. After a brief time with his followers, He ascended into Heaven, to await those who are following Him.

### ***# 3 The Garden in Heaven***

God has made it clear that He began this world and He will end it. Life is not an inane circle—it is a journey. First, it is a journey for all mankind. The Bible tells us that the world will end someday, and God will eliminate evil and Satan will be destroyed. But the Bible also tells us that life is a journey for each of us. Each of us has a beginning and each of us has a destination. We don't like to think of it, but people have always realized that there is an

eternity, and that they will spend it in a “good” or “bad” place, depending on whether or not they surrender and let God control their life here on earth. In our culture, we call those places “Heaven” and “Hell. Hell is described in Revelation 20 as a “*lake of fire*”. By contrast, Heaven is pictured in the last chapter in the Bible as a beautiful new version of the original paradise God created in the Garden of Eden.

*“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 down the middle of the great street of the city. 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. 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. They will see his face, and his name will be on their forehead. 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.*”

As we look at an overview of all ***The Gardens of God***, we realize they have given us a picturesque summary of the “Good News”, often called the “*Gospel*”, which assures us:

***God created us.***

***We each take control of our lives and fall away from Him.  
Fortunately, Jesus came and paid the penalty to redeem us;  
Those who accept His offer and let Him control our lives  
will someday be reunited with Him forever  
in a beautiful New Garden in Heaven,  
where there is no pain, no death, no darkness and no sorrow.***

***I look forward to seeing you there!***

***From Grandpa With Love***