

TWO ADAMS, THREE GARDENS
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Orem 33rd Ward
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Spring is a time of renewal. It is a time when things that have appeared to be dead come to life again. It is a beautiful and an appropriate season in which to commemorate the birth of the Savior, and to commemorate the Easter season. It is also a time for gardening, and it is to the subject of gardens that I would like to turn first--in fact to three gardens, and to two men who spent time in them.

Both men were called Adam, a generic term for man. Now we think of it as a proper name, but originally it seems to have been a title as well. Some of the verses in Genesis where it appears have a definite article in front of it, i.e. the Adam--the man. Biblical scholars believe that it meant "red." That may not make sense initially, until one thinks about it. Scripture associates it with the concept of "first flesh." And one thinks about flesh, and more especially about blood, it makes perfect sense to refer to man as being "red."

For the first time in the experience of this earth--as far as we know--the spirit of man had come to inhabit a body of flesh and blood. And it is to the pigment reflecting the redness of the blood that our attention is drawn by the term. Where we have descriptions of heavenly beings, the term "white" is commonly evoked. So, regardless of the terminology now employed, all of us are really "red men," rather than "white men."

The title was given originally to Michael, the archangel--the Ancient of Days, the one who was placed by God into the Garden of Eden. But Paul also applies the name to Christ, whom he calls the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45-47). The term is perfectly appropriate, when one thinks in terms of the many references to the shedding of Christ's

blood in the process of his redeeming the human race. In a special way, he is also "first flesh," in the sense of being the first resurrected. Further, he is also the father of the human race (as was the first Adam) because he is the father of the faithful. When I use the term "first Adam," it will refer to Michael, and when I refer to the "last Adam," I will be alluding to Jesus.

The first garden I would call to mind is Eden. The meaning of the name has been lost in antiquity, but it seems to have come from a word meaning "plain." I don't know whether it means "plain" as in "generic," or "plain" as in "flat land." At any rate, the meaning of the word has come to mean "delightful," or "pleasant"--it has even been linked with in the Latin Vulgate translation with the word for "voluptuous."

The second garden is one called Gethsemane, which appears to mean "the olive press." This is thought to have been a little garden on the Mount of Olives. And it seems significant at this point to note the role of the olive tree in scripture:

1. The first reference to the olive tree in scripture is associated with the dove's return to Noah's ark, bringing an olive leaf in its mouth. The dove was designated before the creation of the earth, according to the Prophet Joseph, to be the symbol of the Holy Ghost.

The olive branch has come to be associated with peace, as when we refer to a person "bringing an olive branch." Some see the aforementioned event as a symbol of God's establishing peace with man after the flood. When we think of Christ as the Prince of Peace, the symbol takes on even greater significance.

2. When Solomon built his temple, he (or more accurately, his father, David) specified that the doorway to the Holy of Holies be made of olive wood--both the frame

and the door. He also made the two cherubs atop the Ark of the Covenant (the Mercy Seat) out of olive wood. Christ is the door into the presence of God, and the personification of mercy--another symbol linking olive wood with Christ.

3. In a vision given to Zechariah concerning the last days, he saw a candlestick flanked on each side by olive trees , "two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (4:1-6, 11-14). In the book of Revelation (11:1-13), a similar vision was given, in which the two olive trees are compared to two prophets who will play a prominent role in the events of war in Jerusalem. They also shall be raised from the dead after three and a half days.

4. In the famous allegory of Zenos (a descendant of Joseph--who was promised that his branches would go over a wall), the olive tree is used to represent the house of Israel and the gentile nations--tame olive branches for the House of Israel, and wild olive branches for the gentiles; both of which are grafted into the House of Israel.

5. Olive oil was also used for several purposes: it was poured into wounds for healing purposes (Christ as healer); it was used for lamps (Christ as the light of the world); it was used for anointing royalty (Christ as Lord of lords, and King of kings). In short, it is often identified in its functions with activities associated with Christ and his ministry.

The idea of Gethsemane as an oil press--where the oil is crushed from the olive--is an extremely appropriate symbolism for what happened in the garden in the case of Christ, as the agony of the moment drove blood from his pores--healing blood in this case. The very use of the consecrated oil in healings today might well draw us back in

memory to Gethsemane, and the eternal healing process that occurred in that sacred garden--the garden of the olive press.

The third garden is called Golgotha or Calvary (the place of the skull). Its role in the Easter story is also well known, for it was there--using Peter's phraseology--that Christ was hung upon a tree (1 Peter 2:24), and it was there that he appeared initially as the last Adam, the first resurrected, spiritual man.

Now, I would like to tie together the first garden with the second two, and the experiences of the first Adam in Eden with those of the last Adam in Gethsemane and Golgotha. The etymology of the English word "garden" seems to imply an enclosure, and it was into the enclosure called Eden that the First Adam was placed. While there he had experiences that I believe foreshadow the Easter events:

The first Adam is confronted in Eden by Lucifer, and ultimately succumbs to his temptations. The last Adam is confronted in Gethsemane by Lucifer, and resists until the pain becomes unbearable. Satan is told in the first garden that he would have power to bruise the heel of the seed of woman (remember that Christ was the seed of woman, and not of man, in the sense that his mother was mortal, but not his Father), but that this seed of woman would have power to bruise his head (which Christ did through the process begun in Gethsemane).

The voice of the Father proclaiming in Eden that it is not good for man to be alone, lends understanding to the anguish Christ experienced hanging in agony in Golgotha, uttering those heart-rending words born of total aloneness: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" If it is not good for man to be alone, then some of the tribulation of Christ in the third garden become even more clear; what greater sense of

agony to be experienced than being abandoned first by friends (Peter, James, and John-- who slept through his torment), and then by one's father? and ultimately by one's God?

The first Adam is told when he is driven from Eden that he will have to gain his bread by the sweat of his face; the last Adam sweats blood in the garden of Gethsemane for the transgressions of man, as he, himself becomes "the bread of life."

The first Adam tastes of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but cherubim and a flaming sword, turning every way, cut him off completely from the tree of life. After Christ's experiences in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Garden of Golgotha, cherubim step reverently aside, and the flaming sword drops impotently before this last Adam, as he comes forward to partake of the tree of life for all men. As Paul notes, "As in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22).

Let me now change the theme of my observations slightly, and tie the Christmas and the Easter story together by bracketing them with another pair of individuals in the story of the life of Christ, who also share common names, to the experiences of two who were with him in Golgotha, to another Joseph and another Mary.

This last Joseph (whose very name should draw us back to the Old Testament patriarch whose life itself foreshadows that of Christ) is a wealthy merchant from the town of Arimathea, a village not too far distant from Jerusalem. He appears almost out of nowhere at the scene of the crucifixion. He is thought to be a member of the Sanhedrin (Luke refers to him as a counselor, and Mark as an honorable counselor), and early Christian legend associates him with the first group of seventy that the Savior chose. Among the legends of the British Israelites and other early Christian apocryphal literature, he is also said to have been a tin merchant and the first one to carry the

gospel to the British Isles.

There is significance, it seems to me (and I hope to all who have come from the loins of Joseph) that we would have a Joseph on the scene at the important junctures of the Master's life, at his death, as well as at his birth--a reminder, as it were, of the role that the house of Joseph would play in the mission of the Messiah. A Joseph is there at the first, and a Joseph is there at the end. The name literally means "to take away my reproach," a statement that seems to fit well the man who gave the Savior's birth a legitimacy by marrying Mary, and also the man who provided him a tomb of dignity at the moment of his greatest indignation.

We know from scripture that Joseph of Arimathea is apparently thinking in terms of his own demise, and has, consequently, literally carved a tomb out of the rock in the Garden of Golgotha. Upon hearing of the crucifixion of Jesus, he goes to Pilate and pleads for the body of Christ. John tells us that Pilate was startled upon learning of the quickness of the death of Jesus, and sent a guard to see if Joseph's story was true. Upon finding that it was, he grants Joseph's plea, and the Arimathean goes to the cross (and we do not know if others were there to help--we do know that Nicodemus again appears in the narrative at this point to anoint the body of the man he had early talked with in Jerusalem about rebirth, years before) to take down the body, to reverently wrap it in clean linen, and to place it in his own tomb. As far as we can tell from the narrative, it appears to have been Joseph himself who rolls the wheel-shaped rock down its track to seal off the tomb.

Standing nearby, wrenched with deep sorrow herself--both at the cross and at the tomb--was a woman out of whom this same Jesus had cast seven devils, a woman who

had become one of his most loyal disciples--Mary, from the village of Magdala. She is referred to as having witnessed the crucifixion "from afar off," and to have stood in front of the tomb while it was sealed.

It was she and some other women who arose early in the morning on Sunday to go the tomb and to finish the preparation for Christ's burial. It was she who had wondered how they (the women) could possibly move the heavy stone in front of the door, and who had experienced the earthquake on the way to the tomb. It was Mary and the other women who had been confronted by the angel of the Lord and told to go tell the leaders of the church (and this is an interesting twist--so much so that the apostles thought her story to be "idle tales") that Jesus would meet them in Galilee.

And most significantly, it was Mary Magdalene who was the first known human to see a resurrected being, as Christ came to her initially, seeking to assuage her grief. She it was who had known first of his birth into immortality, just as it was another Mary who had known of his birth into mortality (both fitting indications of the significance of woman in God's eyes). John (with whom she is thought by tradition to have followed after the resurrection, just as the first Mary had done) records the event with these words:

. . . she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener [which the first Adam had been], saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

Jesus saith unto her, Hold me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

And then John concludes:

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. (John 20:14-18)

As we know from the writings of the apostle Paul, and from the record of the Book of Mormon, this was only the first of many experiences, but, those must wait for another occasion. These are the memories I would have you associate with your gardening, this spring--if that happens to be your happy lot.