

## Paradise Regained. No Twenty-one

Many religions envision the life beyond as a paradise, a pleasure garden with stately trees and beautiful flowers, a place of innocence. The Pure Land Buddhists look forward to a place where there are "trees of gold, silver, lapis lazulli, crystal and coral." However, it is not a garden of sensual delight but a paradise whose inhabitants live in unbroken happiness until they reach Nirvanah. Christians also look forward to paradise. But the paradise described in the Scriptures is entirely different from the Buddhists' or any other religion's view. The history of mankind began in a garden with trees pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of paradise was the tree of life, the tree full of promise, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were strictly forbidden to eat from the latter tree. They disobeyed God's command, were driven from paradise and Cherubims with flaming swords prevented them from ever entering it again. They became restless fugitives on earth, pilgrims without a destination. When Christ came into the world, the lot of mankind drastically changed. He broke the power of sin and hell on Calvary's cross and conquered death through His resurrection. The second Adam came to restore what the first Adam had wrecked. He promised to all who overcome, the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Rev.2: 7). And in Revelation 22: 2 the tree of life is once more mentioned. The new earth is the paradise once lost now regained. The tree of life in the old paradise was only a foreshadowing of the real tree of life in the land of God's fulfilled promise, the eternal Canaan of which the old Canaan was only a vague reflection. We must not picture paradise regained as a return to the paradise of old. Paradise regained will be far more glorious than the first one. The entire new creation is the paradise where God's people will have perfect fellowship with Him. It is the place where they can no longer be tempted, a garden without the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why not? Because in Christ Jesus, the Church is victorious and incorruptible. Now we still live in a fallen and broken world. The work we do is partly creative and partly cursed. Our talents and gifts may not be fulfilled in our lives on earth. Many find their work toil and their talents not utilized. Os Guinness commented that if there had been no fall, all work would have naturally and fully expressed who we are and exercised the gifts we have been given. In the paradise regained we can work on our cultural mandate. We will grow in knowledge and achievement. As prophets, priests and kings we will serve our God and reign with Him. All whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life have a glorious destiny awaiting them. Our Lord will come again and we will dwell forever in paradise regained. And His promise is sure: "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God"(Rev. 2:7).