

## Imagining The Garden Of Eden (Part 8)

Tend and Keep

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Back in part four, I introduced the sermon with the subject of gardens and I was speaking about the imagery that a garden brings to mind. A garden takes a great deal of work. Most of you probably had a garden at one time or another, or maybe you grew up on a farm. You know that they do take a great deal of work. You have to go out there and actually put in a lot of time and effort to get them to grow right. You have to plan, you have to till, you have to plant, you have to water, you have to cultivate, and fertilize, and harvest and all kinds of other things along the way.

But when we think about a garden, we normally have an image of contentment and rest, or beauty. Gardens are things that we enjoy being in, even if we have to do a lot of work. Once the work is done, if we are able to take a chaise lounge in to our garden and sit there, it is very relaxing. We feel a restful feeling. So for many people, tending the garden, despite all the work, is not a chore, but it is a pleasant getaway. "It's not a job, it's an adventure," "it's not a job, it's a hobby." It is fun, it is something that people do to relieve their stress, something they do to take a break from the rat-race. Carve out a little bit of peace and quiet in this world. So a garden can be a retreat from the world and all of its noise and chaos and problems. It can be a getaway, a little vacation in our own backyard.

Obviously, God chose to place Adam and Eve in a garden for a reason, and actually, there were many reasons. We can put it into physical and spiritual spheres, there are both physical and spiritual reasons why He would use a garden. Let us start with the physical side. A garden contains food. That is essentially what a garden is. It either has trees, or shrubs, or vegetables that all produce some sort of food. Obviously the first couple would have needed a great deal of food to sustain them and their family eventually. Taking the plants that were there and using them, obviously shelters could be built using the branches of the trees, or they could have lived in the trees themselves. You probably do not think of Adam and Eve living in a tree house but is certainly possible. I am sure God made the trees big enough for them to do that.

We find here in Genesis 2 that water was in great abundance, enough to supply four rivers. So they did not have to worry about that. Obviously water is a necessity for life.

The garden needed to be maintained and harvested, so there was plenty of work to do as well, things to keep them occupied. They and their descendants would have had a

great deal to do. If any of you have worked on a farm or in a larger garden or have a bunch of fruit trees, there is a lot of maintenance that must be done all the time. Not just at one time or another during the year, but they have to be looked at carefully throughout the growing season and beyond.

Besides food, the plants of the garden would have supplied a great deal of other things, too. Not just food, but things like wood (we mentioned that before), oils, even medications—most of the medications that we use in this world now come from plants—spices and gums; you could even make things like glues from those sorts of things, and rubber. Eventually, they would have learned the industries of making cloth and paper. All of those things could have been manufactured from the resources that were there in the garden.

So the garden was a wonderful place to put them physically, to supply all their needs on the physical side. However, there are more than physical reasons why God chose to use a garden, and those are the reasons that I am going to be keying in on. Now these appear not necessarily in Genesis 2, although there are hints of it there, but this imagery appears a great deal in the Song of Songs. I would like to go there again. I went there back in July, and we saw on a couple of these verses, but I want to also go to several others that mention the garden.

So we are going to start in Song of Songs 4 verse 12 and we will read all the way through chapter 5 verse 1. It is not a very long section, this is the section that I actually read back in July. Do not necessarily key in on the details, it is not all that important, but just the general understanding of the garden in reference to the Shulamite and to the beloved.

**Song of Songs 4:12-16** A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna 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. [The Shulamite says] Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.

**Song of Songs 5:1** [The Beloved] I have come to my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.

We have the understanding here of several things, but notice that the Shulamite is seen as a garden. That is the first thing it says: a garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse. She is seen as a garden, and then she invites the bridegroom to come to her garden, and the bridegroom (or the beloved) does come.

Now let us go to the next part, in chapter 6. The way it has been understood in the New King James, we have some outsiders (they call them “the daughters of Jerusalem”) asking her a question here.

**Song of Songs 6:1-3** Where has your beloved gone, O fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with you? [The Shulamite responds] My beloved has gone to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed his flock in the gardens, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He feeds his flock among the lilies.

He has a garden, too. He has a garden where he feeds his flock. That is his job, he is a shepherd, and she is seeking him in his garden. I do not need much more there; there is actually a great deal more involved here, but I am just giving you the highlights because I want you to see the connected-ness of the garden, and the Shulamite and the bridegroom or the beloved.

Let us go on to the next one which is in verses 11 and 12. Now this is a kind of interesting little section, he is speaking again:

**Song of Songs 6:11-12** I went down to the garden of nuts to see the verdure of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded and the pomegranates had bloomed. Before I was even aware, my soul had made me as the chariots of my noble people.

This is very poorly translated, as you can tell, because it does not make any sense. What does it mean “to become as the chariots of my noble people?” That does not make any sense to us. In the imagery of the story, what she is saying here is that because the beloved has chosen her, and he is the king, she has suddenly risen from being a nobody to being noble. Because she can now ride in the chariots of the king, she is now someone special.

But the important point here, beyond the ennobling, is the fact that she was not aware

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that it had happened to her—“before I knew it”—it was something that had been done to her, and it was something that she realized when she was able, then, to enter into the garden. She was allowed entrance into the garden, and “Shazzam!” or however you want to put it, something happened to her that she was not aware of, something out of the blue was done to her and she became ennobled. That is all we want to pick up there.

Let us go to chapter 8. This is right at the very end of the story. Everything is working out fine, everything is hunky-dory. He says in verse 13:

**Song of Songs 8:13** You who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen for your voice—let me hear it!

He is speaking just to the companions, but he is also speaking to the Shulamite and he is putting them together. The companions and the Shulamite are a group now, so,

She replies in verse 14:

**Song of Songs 8:14** Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices.

The reason why I came here was because I did want to show you that she is not alone, that she has companions, and they are all in the garden. As a matter of fact, it is not just one garden, it is several gardens, which is a unity and a plurality. There are many but they are one, if you want to look at it that way. They all have one owner.

The command that goes here is that the beloved wants to hear her voice or their voices combined. And so she sings, and I believe if Keil and Delitzsch are right, that is what he is asking for: he is asking for a song. Not necessarily for her to speak, but he is asking for a song. You have to understand that is what this is: the Song of Solomon, the Song of Songs. So he is asking for a song from her, and she sings “come quickly.” That is the essence of her song—“make haste, come quickly.”

Now it is very significant how large a role the gardens play in this book, Song of Songs. What we need to realize in these examples, and I am giving a summary here, is that the garden imagery is connected to both the beloved and the Shulamite. Both of them have gardens, and as we saw, the beloved’s garden is the Shulamite’s garden, and vice versa—they have the same garden. Or we might say that he took over her garden and

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attached it to his own, so that it became his. So if we are using this as a parable, which I believe it is, we can say that the church has a garden and it becomes Christ's, and it is attached to Christ's garden and becomes His.

There is another thing I want to mention here before we go any further. I want to make a leap toward Jesus Christ. I would like to go to John 18 just so you can see how the imagery passes into the New Testament in a physical act that Jesus Christ Himself did. Remember, we need to live by every word of God and this was obviously put here for more than just the details of the story going on. It is a clue; it is a hook that we are supposed to grab on to.

**John 18:1** When Jesus had spoken these words...

Let us get the situation here. It was that last evening, the evening of the last supper, the evening of that final Passover, when He had given this long sermon to His disciples giving them His final instructions before He left. He had just made this prayer to God in chapter 17 where He laid it all out, what He wanted: what He was asking God to do for the entire church for all time, to bring it into oneness with the Father, just as He was one with the Father. Chapter 18 verse 1 is the very next thing that is said.

**John 18:1-2** When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.

Now what did they do? Did they just meet there and stand around staring at each other? We know that is not true. I am sure that Jesus used that environment in order to teach His disciples, to be with them, to let them get to know Him and He get to know them. So He found a peaceful, restful, quiet place, a garden, and He brought His disciples in and He taught them there. We see a similar idea to both Genesis 2 in the Garden of Eden and the Song of Solomon in the gardens that play such a big role in that story, in that parable.

So let us go over again what we saw in the Song of Songs, just the highlights again. The Shulamite, or the church, is an enclosed garden, meaning that she is protected. She is kept secure, she has a wall or a hedge about her. And that wall or hedge not only protects her from things from the outside—we would say Satan's encroachments or the world encroaching, that sort of thing—but it also keeps her pure on the inside. It is not

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only protection from those sorts of things, but it also keeps her pure.

It says the garden is well watered with springs of living water, and it even adds that the water was from Lebanon. Each of these descriptions heightens the purity of the water.

**Song of Songs 4:15** A fountain of gardens . . .

Now that does not make much sense to us. What is a fountain of gardens? It probably should be turned around: a garden of fountains, meaning there are many places in this garden where there is water to be found. It is full of water. That is exactly the idea, that there is so much water there that it is almost as if the fountains are the main idea or central focus of this garden. Yes, there are plants there, but it is a garden of fountains, it is a fountain of gardens. How do you separate one from the other? The garden cannot exist without the fountains to water the plants.

**Song of Songs 4:15** . . . a well of living waters . . .

So these fountains are supplied by living waters, and what does that make you think of? It makes you think of John 4 and the living waters that Christ said that He would give to one who needed a drink and they would never thirst. It makes you also think of John 7:38, where out of his heart shall flow rivers of living waters. So these are waters that moved. They are waters that are that are fresh and pure, they come from a pure spring.

**Song of Songs 4:15** . . . and streams from Lebanon.

Have you ever watched water coming down off from a mountain? The higher and steeper the mountain, the faster the water falls and the purer it becomes. The speed of the water adds oxygen to it, and the oxygen helps to purify it. It is cold and refreshing as well, coming off the mountain. So all of these thoughts are coming in here, to this idea of this pure, living water that is refreshing, and it is going to cause of great abundance of fruit.

We see that he also has a fragrant, well-pleasing garden, and what does he do there? He feeds his flock. So he has a garden, he is obviously the chief gardener, but we introduce another image here: he has sheep, and he tends them there, he feeds them. We get this idea in there too, from John 10, that He is the Good Shepherd. His enclosed place where he keeps his sheep is in his garden, a garden that is protected and kept

pure.

There is also her garden again. We are still in Song of Songs 4, verse 16, and she calls for the wind to come and blow upon her garden so that the spices may flow out. This is a very interesting image here. You need to think of the wind as God's Spirit. In John 3, the Spirit of God is compared to wind. Here, the image is the same. She is calling for God to blow upon her garden and stir up the spices so that it would please the bridegroom. The image again is slightly changed elsewhere in the Bible: it is of Christ smelling a sweet-smelling aroma from the sacrifices. So the Shulamite is essentially asking for God's Spirit to come and breathe on her so that she can produce the sweet-smelling aroma for her bridegroom. That is what it says:

**Song of Songs 4:16** Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.

She is calling him to come to her and be able to enjoy the fruit that she has produced.

The next bit is the part about where she is exalted to nobility, in chapter 6 verses 11 and 12. In going to the garden, and in that way we can say, in loving her beloved, she is exalted to nobility in a way that she does not completely understand. I think this is pretty easy to comprehend from a spiritual point of view. She was drawn to the garden; in this case, she went to look at the beauty of it. We can consider this kind of like the calling that the Father gives: it is a drawing toward the garden, and she is allowed to enter into this garden. It is a garden of nuts. She is allowed to enter into that garden and something which she does not really understand happens to her, where suddenly she is the bride, the bride of the king. She is able to ride, as it were, his celestial chariot. We are picking this up just from the king, we are going all the way to Jesus Christ.

Here she was just kind of stumbling along, and she was called into the church, as it were, and made a bride of the greatest Being in the universe. And what is ennobling her, along with the calling and what God has done, is that in the process of entering the garden, she has to take on the image of her beloved. So the ennobling here, if we want to put it into a New Testament context, or into New Testament theological words that we are more used to, is that not only was she called and put into this place by Jesus Christ, but she has also been developing character, and that ennoble her. It places her above the other people in the world, because they do not develop character out in the world. Not in the same way as one can with God's Spirit in the garden. She has become separate.

If we want to put it into another theological term, she has become holy. That holiness that she has is the result not only of the separation that God has made for her, but because she has developed righteous character, which places her in a whole other category.

In chapter 8, she dwells in the garden with companions. It is interesting that behind this Hebrew word “companions,” it does not mean just friends or people that she might associate with, or acquaintances. The word has a bit of an undercurrent of intimate friends, and better than that, it has the undercurrent of family. These are not just any old companions, they are her family. So here she dwells in the garden with her family, and they are all asked by Jesus Christ, in this the image here, to speak or to sing. So she does, and her song is essentially “come quickly,” which is what the church has been preaching these 2,000 years. “Come Lord Jesus, return!” The second coming of Christ is near. Repent and believe the gospel. That is the cry of the Shulamite.

So these things all fit very well. Let us transfer these images back to the Garden of Eden and Genesis 2. I want to do this in kind of a summary fashion. We can suppose that, if we put these images back there in Genesis 2, that first, the Garden of Eden was the ideal place for humanity to get its start, both physically and spiritually. It was safe, it was peaceful, it was productive, and it was well-watered.

Second, it was God's garden, where He dwelled, and He was eager to share it with Adam and Eve, just as the beloved was eager to share his garden with the Shulamite. He wanted them to use it, and to work it, and to improve it, rest in it, and enjoy it as much as He did: get the same out of it that He got out of it.

Third, in the garden the man and the woman had the perfect environment to come to know God, because there *was* God, and they could have a one-on-one, personal, intimate relationship with Him. The Garden was also the perfect environment for Adam and Eve to grow in godly character—to be ennobled, in other words.

Fourth and finally, the Garden *would have* become the home of the God family if it had followed the parallel as we saw in the Song of Songs. But we know that is not what happened. Sin entered, and they were kicked out of the Garden. But the Garden would have, if things had gone well, become the home of the God family, and from there, God's glory would have flowed.

We find in the Bible that something like this will be duplicated in the Millennium. Do you remember what it says in Isaiah 2, that the law will go forth from the mountain of the Lord's house? In the Millennium, a similar type of thing (the image is changed from a



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garden to a mountain) will happen: the Lord's house, His family, will be on that mountain, and His glory, His law, will flow from it and bring in others to it.

We also find in Revelation 21 and 22 that in the New Jerusalem, a very similar thing is going to happen again. New Jerusalem will be the center and from it will flow all these things. There is the river and the Tree of Life there in Revelation 22, all showing that this way God works will happen again in the new heavens and the new earth. He uses the same patterns time after time after time, to bring members into His family. What we have there in Revelation 22 is the culmination of it all, and then on into all eternity. It will work perfectly then.

Let us take this down even further. If we can get into one universal, easily understood concept, here is my big thing (I need a drumroll): the Garden of Eden symbolizes God's rest. If you want to put it in just very simple terms, the Garden of Eden symbolizes God's rest. We saw this last time, not in this way, but in that one word *nuach*. That God caused Adam to dwell in the Garden, and that "caused to dwell" has the idea of resting.

In this vein, thinking of this idea that the Garden of Eden symbolizes God's rest, the most important point of all is that the reason why it is, or that it does, is because God lived there. That is the most important point. That Garden was special because God was in it. It was His presence that made all the difference. He was able to rest there, and those who He invited in were able to enter His rest.

I have just finished my introduction, but I thought this is important because it helps to bring it all together so we can understand that Genesis 2 is not just out on its own. It connects with the rest of the Bible. These same themes keep popping up. So from this point on in the sermon, we are going to continue with my ongoing series.

Please remember that this series is based on the idea that God gave us the ability to imagine, to use imagination, and He wants us to use it in a good and positive way. One way we can do that is to put it to work to enhance our understanding of God's Word, of course keeping it within the bounds of what has been revealed in Scripture. From here on out we are going to concentrate on the next phrase in Genesis 2:15, "tend and keep." We plunged into this last time and got only about half way through, but these are important concepts.

**Genesis 2:15** Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Last time, we concentrated on the Hebrew word underlying *put*—"and God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden." As I said, I consider this to be a very poor and too careful translation of the Hebrew word, which is *nuach*. It does mean to deposit or place a thing, and that is the very conservative definition that they used in order to translate it as the word *put*. They could have used the word *place* as well, that God took Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden. In this case, it completely ignores the root meaning of the word, and that is to cause to rest, or to cause to dwell, especially in the case here that it is in the passive tense.

That fits the context so much better, because we see in the story line that God had made Adam, and He had brought him to life, and then He also made the Garden, and Adam was outside the Garden looking at what God was doing. We then have an inset about the trees that were in the Garden, and the rivers that flowed out of it. Then we see God, and Adam still standing outside the Garden, and God taking Adam by the hand and placing him or putting him in the Garden in order for him to dwell there, in order for him to have rest there as God would have rest. So "cause to dwell" or "cause to rest" implies a great deal more than just simply "put" or "to place."

We found that *nuach* is a rest that is unlike the Sabbath rest, which is a ceasing of weekday activity. *Nuach* is a state of being securely settled in peace, contentment, or even delight, and we know that there are even shades of victory in terms of salvation that are on this word. The word covers a lot: anything from peace and contentment, to victory and salvation.

The ultimate *nuach* rest, though, is available only in the presence of God. We find in other places in the Old Testament that *nuach* is used of resting, but unless God is there, it is not the same. God makes the difference here. He makes possible the true *nuach* rest that He wanted Adam to have.

I am still going on about *nuach* because it has a great deal to do with the tending and the keeping. There is a reason why they are in the same verse. In Isaiah 11 we see the word once again, and I think you will be a little bit surprised about this, because now we are going to talk about the second Adam.

**Isaiah 11:1-5** There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LOORD shall [*nuach*] upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LOORD. His delight is in the fear of the LOORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and

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decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.

Right away here, in verse two, we see that the Spirit of the LOORD rests upon him. That is, God caused His Spirit to dwell in Christ. With Adam, the first Adam, He took him by the hand and caused him to rest in the Garden. But with the second Adam, who was actually the One who had taken the first Adam by the hand, He was not taken to a place: the rest was put in Him through the agency of the Holy Spirit. It was put *in* Him. He was not put in a garden, God's Spirit was placed in Him so that He could have the rest at all times.

And what did it produce? We see all the things that are produced here. It was the presence of the Father in the Son that endowed Him with wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, the fear of the Lord, godly judgment—you can go on and on, with all the things that He does: faithfulness, all of those things were made possible because He had this intimate relationship with the Father. He dwelled, or lived, within God's rest all the time, because it was in Him. Because of that, He was able to do all these wonderful, godly things.

We know that Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, so He was able to live the rest of God even amid all the upset and the turmoil that surrounded Him. Even in the face of persecution and death, He was able to live the rest of God, because it was in Him. It was not an external thing, like the Garden of Eden was. It was an internal thing through the Spirit of God.

The other factor (and remember we talked about this the last time), is that it was not just the fact that God's Spirit is in us, meaning we have this one-on-one relationship with God, but it is the other part: that Jesus responded with obedience, thereby returning God's love. It was not just the fact that God had placed His Spirit on Him, but that Jesus also responded to it by obeying. There always has to be the two things. God does not do everything for us. There is always a response that He requires. So God gave the Spirit and Jesus responded in obedience, and then God's rest was produced. The *nuach* rest was produced. Jesus became our example of this kind of intimate, reciprocal relationship with the Father. That means that if He became our example, it is possible for us to have this too.

God wanted this same type of relationship with Adam and Eve in the Garden, so He did

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His part. He supplied the environment, the instruction, and His presence, but our first parents, as we know from Genesis 3, did not respond with obedience. They did not respond properly. They very quickly responded by transgressing His clear command, not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. Their sin, we find by the end of the chapter 3, caused a separation between them and God, and between them and the Garden. They did not get any of the goodies, and God put cherubim there to keep the way back so that they could not get back in.

So their sin caused separation from both God and the paradise He had created for them to dwell or to rest in. And every one of their descendants, with the exception of Jesus Christ, has done the same. The separation has widened to the point now that Daniel says in Daniel 12:4, that man now lives in frenzied chaos despite his growing knowledge. There is no peace, there is no rest, not in this world, because they are so far away from God and so far away from the conditions that the Garden would have given them.

We are on this idea of separation, and the question is, what is God going to do about it?

**Isaiah 59:1-3, 8** Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. . . . The way of peace they have not known, and there is no justice in their ways; they have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace.

There is no way, being separated from God, that we can have any semblance of the rest of God. No peace.

**Isaiah 59:9** Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us; we look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness!

Remember, Jesus is the light of the world. He has not dawned on them.

**Isaiah 59:10-13** We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noonday as at twilight; we are as dead men in

Imagining the Garden of Eden (Part 8) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

desolate places. [What a bleak picture this is painting.] We all growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves; we look for justice, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions *are* with us, and as *for* our iniquities, we know them: in transgressing and lying against the LOORD, and departing from our God . . .

What comes out here is that all these sins are directed against Him! Even though people might be in the way, we might be doing these sins against people, they are really against God.

**Isaiah 59:13-21** In transgressing and lying against the LOORD, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. [Then, things start to change here.] Then the LOORD saw it, and it displeased Him [I think that is an understatement] that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man [there was no leader, in another place it is called “standing in the gap”; there was no one, no person], and wondered that there was no intercessor [nobody was intervening]; therefore [this is the solution] His own arm brought salvation for Him; and His own righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; the coastlines He will fully repay. So shall they fear the name of the LOORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LOORD will lift up a standard against him. “The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” [that is a very interesting sentence.] says the LOORD. “As for Me,” says the LOORD, “this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants’ descendants,” says the LOORD, “from this time and forevermore.”

Very interesting chapter, I daresay. We saw that the first half exposes man's way of life as the direct opposite of the *nuach* rest of God. They sinned, they were separated from

God, they could have no peace, no rest, nothing was going right, there was sin everywhere. God is essentially forgotten. Today, so many people think God is dead. They are atheists, they are agnostics, they have gone in search of some other God. So there is no peace, no truth to be found. Society is without justice, much less salvation. They cannot even have equity in the courts. Sin is everywhere. Some revolt. Some take it out on others. Some moan and groan in misery and do nothing. Actually, no one does anything about it. Nobody is there that can make or can bridge the gap. No one is available to bring the two separate sides together. Sounds like today. Who is going to solve this mess?

I look out on the scene, just in America, and I see what is going on—even in simple things like Social Security. Who is going to solve that mess, with trillions of dollars of debt? We cannot pay for what we promised. How can that be solved? And so people will find various ways to do whatever they want to do. Some will steal, some will lie, some will murder, some will do things underhanded, some will not pay their taxes. Take any problem. It seems like it cannot be surmounted, cannot be solved, and so people will then take things into their own hands. And some will not do anything, some will just sit there and cry and hope somebody will take care of them.

What we see here in verses 15 through 21 is the only one that can do anything about it is God Himself. He must intervene, and His intervention is a combination of righteousness and salvation on those who respond, and furious vengeance and recompense on those who continue to rebel. That is how He solves it. He will do good for those to respond to Him in obedience and repentance, and the others He is just going to have to clear off the deck, as in the way.

Notice verses 20 and 21, this is the crux of the matter. The Redeemer comes. He injects Himself, His presence, in Zion. And what is Zion often in the symbolism in the Bible? It reflects or it represents His people. Certainly the church would be part of that, His holy ones. So He injects His presence in Zion to those who respond to Him. It says specifically, the Redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob. It is not just that He is coming back to His people, they also have to respond. They have to repent. They have to turn from their sins, and God then in verse 21 responds in kind by giving His Spirit and His Word. He makes a covenant with them, and He says that it will last forever. He responds by giving His Spirit and His Word to them forever. This is what we understand as the New Covenant, which culminates in entrance into God's rest for all eternity.

What He is telling us here is that not only is He going to intervene, He is going to turn the situation totally around, so that as bad as it was in this time in the beginning of the

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chapter, it is going to be good like you have never seen it before. It is going to be perfect. He is going to take it from one extreme all the way to the other, from total bad to absolute good. And that is only going to happen if we all participate in His rest.

But we are not there yet, are we? In our situation, we have made the New Covenant with Him. We have already entered into that agreement. But we have not yet inherited the fullness of God's rest. We are kind of in between. The process has been started: God has given us His Spirit and His Word, and He says He will leave it there forever. But we still have to respond. We still have to do what Jesus did, which was respond with obedience and thereby show God that He loved Him. We can experience that in a limited way, in our own human way, through the indwelling of God's Spirit. We can have a taste of God's rest, especially on the Sabbath. But even that is far short of the ideal. We do not know, we do not understand the things that God has in store for us. That is what Paul quotes there in I Corinthians 2. We have a little inkling of it, because God has given us His Spirit. But we do not know the fullness of what is coming.

I will go to Hebrews 4. This is the chapter that talks about God's rest.

**Hebrews 4:6** Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience.

**Hebrews 4:8-9** For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

This is *sabbatismos*. He is combining the idea of the rest of God with the Sabbath itself. So we get a double-pronged conclusion here from Paul, that not only do the people of God need to keep the Sabbath, but that there is a rest coming that the Sabbath represents.

**Hebrews 4:10** For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

What I really want is verse 11:

**Hebrews 4:11** Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

Ah ha! The last part of Isaiah 59:21, that talked about all of this being “forever and ever” has a catch. The catch is found here in verse 11, that even though we have been offered to come and enter this rest, and we have actually accepted this offer, that we still have to be diligent in order to enter the fullness of it.

It is offered to us, and the offer is good and genuine, but there is always that reciprocal bit of action that God requires. What he says here is we have to be diligent to enter it. The word here means “labor.” We have to labor, or strive, or work to enter that rest. That is what we have to do. God has done everything that He can do, but there is that little bit of work—actually it is a “lot of bit of work”—that we have to do. It seems like a “lot of bit of work” to us. It is really in the grand scheme of things not all that great, but for us it just seems that way. It is so hard because we are fighting against our human nature. But we have to do something, and this is where “tend and keep” come in.

That is why the two concepts are in the same verse. God put man in the Garden. He allowed him to enter His rest, to tend and keep it. That is where we come in—to tend and keep it. This brings us back to Genesis 2, where we have to define what “tend and keep” means. In these two verbs, tend and keep, are the essence of God's instruction regarding how we are to respond in obedience to Him. Remember, He provided the Garden, He provided us His Spirit, He has done everything He can to provide us the perfect environment, and now it is our turn to respond. Our response is in these two words, tend and keep.

The first of them obviously is *tend*. In the King James Version it is *dress*, “dress and keep.” In Hebrew it is the word *abad*, found 289 times in the Old Testament. We can see that it is a fairly common word and it means *to work*, if we want to bring it down to its most basic definition. But I think that if we use another word we will have a better understanding of how that work is supposed to be done, and that is that its other meaning is *to serve*.

It can imply doing a specific kind of work: to till, to cultivate, to embellish certain things. Often the work that is done is agricultural, because a lot of the Bible's imagery is in agricultural things. Even the fact that they are in the Garden is an agricultural image. So in keeping with that image, the translators of most Bibles keep this in an agricultural vein, so they use the word *cultivate* or *to till* or *to tend*. All of those are fine definitions, but I think we need to stick with the basic here, *to work* or *to serve*.

The reason why I say that is because in the overwhelming majority of uses in the Old Testament, the word is translated *to serve*. However, it essentially means to expend



Imagining the Garden of Eden (Part 8) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

labor upon a thing, to work. We should also understand that this word was also employed to describe the work given in service to God. The priests served the tabernacle. The priests served God in doing this and that. So it has not only the idea of doing physical labor, but also of doing spiritual labor as well. If we want to give it a general definition, I would say that it means to labor in service. That puts these two ideas together: to labor in service

In Genesis 27:26, when Isaac blesses Jacob:

**Genesis 27:26-29** Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son." And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you . . .

So there is this word *abad*, talking about people serving. It is often used in the Bible in terms of one country making another country's citizens serve them, like the Israelites served the Egyptians.

In Exodus 3, God is speaking to Moses, and here is Moses speaking to God asking the question:

**Exodus 3:11-12** But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve [*abad*] God on this mountain."

You shall *abad* God on this mountain.

In Exodus 20, the memory chapter (what is Exodus 20? The 10 commandments), we find *abad* actually twice here in this chapter.

**Exodus 20:5** you shall not bow down to [these idols] nor [*abad*] serve them.

This is again the idea of religious service. Go down to verse 9, right in the Sabbath

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commandment:

**Exodus 20:9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

You shall *abad* on those six days, so you do labor.

**Numbers 8:14-15** Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine. After that the Levites shall go in to service the temple of meeting.

So here it is, “go in to service.”

Deuteronomy 28th, this is part of the curses on their disobedience:

**Deuteronomy 28:39** You shall plant vineyards and tend them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them.

The word tend, you shall *abad* them, so just like in Genesis 2:15, it is translated tend.

**Proverbs 12:11** He who tills his land will be satisfied with bread.

So here is specific work that is done, he *tills*.

**Ecclesiastes 5:12** The sleep of a laboring man [here it is used as an adjective, a man who works] is sweet.

**Isaiah 19:9** Moreover those who work in fine flax [here it is translated just as work].

Isaiah 28:21 is an interesting one:

**Isaiah 28:21** For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may do His work, His awesome work, [both of those words are not *abad*, here it is:] and bring to pass His act, His

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unusual act.

It is the words *bring to pass* that are *abad*. All the work that He does to bring a certain thing to pass is *abad*.

The second word, *keep* (we have seen enough of *abad*), is *samar* (pronounced like shamar'). This is used 468 times, so it is even more common than *abad*, and it means *to guard, to watch over, to retain, to observe, and to preserve*. It can also imply *taking care of*, as in *tend*—when you tend something, you take care of it. But in this case, because it is used with the word *tend*, or to work, it suggests making secure or exercising great care over.

Like *abad*, *samar* also has an extended, more spiritual meaning in that it was used by the Hebrews in terms of keeping or observing God's law or His holy days, His precepts. So just like we use the word keep, a lot of the same definitions are in the Hebrew. We also see it occasionally in the phrase *be careful to observe*. So it implies a great deal of care, of being right on top of things all the time, watching out for it, protecting it, guarding it, preserving it—all those things to make sure that it lasts, and it continues to do what it is supposed to do.

Let us go back to Genesis to see some uses of *samar*. In Genesis 18, God was with Abraham and they were talking about Sodom:

**Genesis 18:17-19** And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD . . .

So this is in terms of not only observing, but preserving, and watching out for it, and being careful to do so.

In Exodus 12, in the instructions on the days of unleavened bread:

**Exodus 12:17** So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

So there it is as *observe*.

**Leviticus 18:24-26** Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments.

The word *keep* there, as translated in Genesis 2:15, “you shall keep My statutes and judgments.”

In Numbers 23, this is Balaam trying to curse Israel, but he could not:

**Numbers 23:11-12** Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!” So he answered and said, “Must I not take heed to speak what the LOORD has put in my mouth?”

So it is *take heed* there. He had to be careful, he had to listen. He had to be careful to do what God said: take heed.

**Judges 7:19** So Gideon and the hundred men who were with him came to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just as they had posted the watch.

The word is *watch*. The idea is to guard, to watch.

**I Samuel 30:23** But David said, “My brethren, you shall not do so with what the LOORD has given us, who has preserved us and delivered into our hand the troop that came against us.”

So here it is as *preserve*.

**Job 10:12** You have granted me life and favor, and Your care has preserved my spirit.

Here it is, the word *preserved*.

**Psalm 31:6** I have hated those who regard vain idols.

This is the word *samar*, here it is *regard* in the same way that one would serve an idol.

In Psalm 121 it is used six times, and it talks about God preserving and watching over us. In Isaiah 62:6, it is the word *watchmen*, and in Malachi 2:7, 9, 15 and 16, it is talking about the priests who would not keep their charge.

So we can see from all these examples how the Bible uses these fairly common words. If we boil them down to their essential ideas, we find that God placed Adam into the Garden to labor for its good and to care for it, in all of its ramifications. So it is labor and care, working and being careful, working and guarding; working, laboring, serving, and preserving. There are all these ideas, there is also even observing, as we saw. The work that he was to do was service.

The work was service: something done for the benefit of another person or thing, and the idea was that he should learn outgoing sacrificial love. Putting himself down, making the other happy, making the other person have the things that he needed. It was putting down the self so that the other could be exalted in one way or another, or to be served.

The care that he took in guarding and preserving the Garden was to teach him other things, like the principles of leadership in terms of oversight, and custodianship, and watchfulness, and the protection and preservation of what is good and right. If we are going to use two words, he was to learn love and leadership.

Let us finish in John 21. I want to bring this into a New Testament context. John 21 is after the resurrection, before Christ has ascended. Peter and several other disciples had gone out to fish, and Jesus meets them on the shore and they have breakfast.

**John 21:15-19** So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah,

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do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." Thus He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me."

This is in a different context, the tending and feeding of sheep. The idea is the same as in Genesis 2:15. Here, Jesus connects the concept of love for Him with Peter's God-given job of feeding and tending. If Peter would do as Christ asked, he would be not only obeying His command (remember, he would be responding in obedience), but he would also be exhibiting reciprocal love for Christ. It is no wonder that John says in his epistle:

**I John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

So if we do the same, if we tend and keep God's Garden, or if we tend and feed His sheep, we will also be loving God, and in the process of entering his rest.