

Digging in the Garden

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Friends today, since it is summer time, at the height of the growing season, I thought we might do a little digging in the garden.

I would like to revisit the first several chapters of the book of Genesis and unearth some nuggets of understanding that are buried there. Specifically I want to focus on the instructions that God gave to Adam, and highlight how God's instruction to him, has an element of duality attached to it.

A duality of instruction, that is actually a template for us as Christians, and eventually for all mankind., as well.

For in Genesis 1:26 we find the mission statement of the entire Bible. The reason why God recreated the earth after the original primordial flood.

Genesis 1:26 states; Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;

So here, at the very beginning of the Bible, God tells us what He is doing. As we all know, God is in the process of creating a family. A process that begins with the formation of man as a physical being in the bodily form of God, in His image.

But a process of creation that will not end until mankind is fully formed in God's likeness as well, possessing the very nature and character of God Himself.

The Hebrew word, which is translated man, in this verse, is also the same word translated into English as Adam.

The English version of the word is literally spelled a-d-a-m. Therefore, the name Adam is the untranslated form of the word. However it is instructive to note, that this term is in fact translated as man, the first 9 times that it is used. And a good question we might ask ourselves is - why?

Why is the Hebrew word translated as man, in it's first 9 appearances in scripture?

Did the scribes just randomly choose to either translate or leave untranslated the word as adam or man?

Well, since all scripture was given by the inspiration of God, to the Holy men of old, I think it is probable that God inspired the early scribes to specifically translate the word as man or leave it untranslated as adam for a very specific reason.

That reason being, to aid us in gaining a deeper level of understanding of this ancient Hebrew text.

As I have made mention in various messages in the past, I have found that by paying attention to the little nuances in the scriptures, we can often glean valuable nuggets of wisdom and truth, that is often embedded within it.

So what is the understanding that we can derive from the distinction of the use of either man or Adam in the first several chapters of Genesis?

I some contemplation, have come to the understanding, that the reason the Hebrew is translated as man, in those first 9 instances, is because each of those 9 scriptures has an element of duality attached to it.

In referring or applying too mankind in a general sense, as well as Adam in particular..

And that it is not until Genesis 2:19, when the term Adam is first left untranslated, in which the scripture relates solely to Adam. And this understanding, as well will see, sheds light on these scriptures in a whole new way.

Let's review some of these scriptures, to see this point more clearly.

First, let's look at Genesis 2:19, the verse in which the Hebrew word, is first left untranslated as Adam.

Let's actually start reading in verse 18, so that we can begin to see the distinction, that I am referring too.

- 18** And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."
- 19** Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.
- 20** So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

Note in verse 18, God inspired the translated word man to be used, implying that it is not only good for Adam to have a wife. But also that God intended mankind in general to have a life partner. That two might become one flesh as husband and wife.

In contrast, verses 19 and 20, the first 2 times the word Adam is left untranslated as Adam in scripture. It is directly referring to something specific that Adam was to do. Adam alone, was tasked with naming all of the animal life, that God brought to him in the garden.

So these verses kind of give us a template, regarding the duality of meaning found in the previous 8 scriptures, in which the term adam is translated as man.

So again, in contrast to something being specific to Adam only, lets back up to the first 2 times the word man is used, in chapter 1 verses 26 and 27.

Wherein God proposes to create man in His own image and likeness in verse 26 and then in verse 27 states that He indeed did just that.

Verse 27 of Genesis 1 reads “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” So here we see, that although the verse could also be applied to Adam in particular, that this verse is in fact also referring to, all mankind in general. For Adam was not the only one made in God’s image and likeness.

The fact that the verse states that God created man, meaning mankind, male and female, further solidifies this point, that the term is translated man, as to apply not only to Adam, but to mankind in general. So we see the distinction being made in these verses. Let’s look at one more example to drive this point home.

Genesis 2:7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

And we can see the duality in this verse as well, as all mankind has been made with the same ingredients , and given the breath of life.

As we find recorded in Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

- 19** For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity.
- 20** All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.

So we see from this context, that Genesis 2:7, can be applied to humanity in general, as well as to Adam in particular, hence the translated form of the word, man is again used.

You might ask, why am I belaboring this point? Well because this suggested duality has rather profound implications regarding it’s use in the rest of Genesis chapter 2, as I hope to show. But let’s look a little closer at Genesis 2:7-8 first.

Genesis 2:

- 7** And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
- 8** “The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed”

Notice, both the chronological order of these verses as well as the phrase “had formed” at the end of verse 8. These verses seem to imply that God created Adam first and then God created the garden for him, with Adam being present, and watching God create the garden for him to dwell in.

This line of reasoning is further supported by the statement that God, put the man in the Garden. The word put in verse 8, means to set in place, or to appoint.

Adam was created outside of the garden and then God, specifically placed him into it.

Now why do you suppose that God would do that? What was the underlying purpose for God to put the man in the garden? Well you might say, it was because God wanted to dwell with Adam and Eve.

Well that indeed is probably an accurate conclusion. But what do the scriptures actually say in regard to this question? Does God tell us why He made a special appointed place for the man to dwell in?

Well as we begin to consider this question, let's notice that verse 15 again repeats the fact that the man was specifically placed by God into the garden. The NKJV says that the man was placed in the garden "to tend and to keep it"

Let's read Genesis 2:15 "Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it"

So here we find the specific biblical reason of why God placed the man in the Garden.

And this brethren, is a very interesting sentence of scripture. For there is a lot more being revealed here, then one can deduce from a passive reading.

When we read verse 15, as it is translated into English, we get the idea that God simply placed the man in the garden for the purpose of maintaining the garden. As it states in the NKJV, to tend and to keep it.

But brethren, when we do a careful examination of the Hebrew words in this verse, researching there underlying meaning. We find that this verse is exceptionally rich and has a profound spiritual connotation to it.

Genesis 2:

15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Now in this verse, we come to a bit of a quandary. Since we have shown, that the word man represents a dual application of the text, how do we then apply that principle to this verse?

Friends, this was a puzzlement to me, until I looked deeper into the meaning of the Hebrew words in this verse.

Specifically the four words translated took, put, tend and keep. So in the remaining time I have with you today, I want to dig into the underlying Hebrew meaning of these words.

For this verse indeed does have a dual application, which ultimately applies to all of humanity. Furthermore, it will answer the question, as to why God appointed a special place for the man and his wife to live. For there was a lesson to be learned.

Let's first turn our attention to the meaning of the word translated "took" This word is Strong's 3947, translated into English as "laqah" It is a common word that is used over 1000 times in scripture.

Commonly used to denote "taking, receiving, or bringing something" However it does have some interesting meanings, that may impart to us, a deeper level of understanding as well.

The Theological Wordbook states that “In addition to these common uses, there are also extended uses that are of theological significance. For instance, the “take” aspect of the word can also imply “to select”

Deuteronomy 4:34 is a good example. Let’s turn their and read that verse.

34 Or did God ever try to go and [take] for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

And verse **37**, “And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power”

The word take in verse 34, is the same word used in Genesis 2:15. Israel was specially selected, or chosen to be God’s special treasure. Literally to be God’s wife, if fact, which adds an additional element of selection.

And we know, that we have been called for the very same purpose. To fulfill the role, to be a part of the bride of Christ.

The point that I want to make, is that Genesis 2:15 is conveying the point that Adam was purposefully created and placed in the garden. In the same way that you and I have been created and specifically selected by God to have a special relationship with Him.

As we will come to see, as we continue digging in the garden. God, through Adam is setting forth the process by which mankind may reach it’s spiritual destination, of salvation.

And this is born out by the depth of meaning of this word “took” used in Genesis 2:15. The Theological Wordbook further states that this word translated took, can also be used in the context of marriage, as in taking, or selecting a wife.

A further understanding of the use of this word, can be found in the Brown-Driver- Briggs Hebrew Lexicon. In addition to using the term “to take in marriage” it can also be used as to take in hand, and thus to lead”

And we find a good example of this Hebrew word, being used in this way, in Joshua 24, verse 3.

Joshua 24:2-3

2 “And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods”

3 “Then I [took] your father Abraham from the other side of the River, [led] him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac”

So here we find that God took Abraham out of Babylon and led him to the promised land, as a physical type of God calling us out of spiritual Babylon and leading us to salvation.

Adam being created outside the garden and then being led and specifically placed into the garden, by God is yet another symbolic type of God's desire to lead all mankind to eventually inherit salvation.

So with this understanding, we come to see, that the garden is representative of salvation.

Adam was created outside the garden, in the world if you will, and then led into God's special habitation, God's dwelling place within the garden, where salvation could be obtained through the Tree of Life..

Furthermore, recall as we covered earlier in verse 8, that the word put in that verse, meant to appoint. God appointed, or decided beforehand to place the man in the garden.

So to summarize, this Hebrew word, translated as [took] in Genesis 2:15, gives us the concepts of special selection, and also of being led or guided by God. We can glean a mental image of God leading Adam by the hand into the garden.

And we can see the spiritual duality, in this also applying to our calling. As we read in Romans 8:29-30 "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called" Christians are foreknown or pre selected to be called to be a part of the bride of Christ, and thus are led by the Spirit of God to salvation.

Moreover, this imagery of placing the man in the garden, conveying the symbolism of salvation, is further advanced by the second word in the phrase in Genesis 2:15.

Where God took the man, and [put] him in the garden.

Let's turn our attention now to the word "put" used in verse 15. As I hope to show, this word further amplifies this symbolism of the garden of Eden, as a type of a salvational rest.

It is a different word, translated put, than what was used in verse 8.

And this Hebrew word has a wealth of spiritual meaning for us. The word translated "put" in verse 15, is the Hebrew word "nuah" or "nuach" Strong's 3240.

While the root word means "to be at rest, or to settle in place, derivatives of this word suggest being in a state of inner peace, and tranquility. So again, this one word can have multiple meanings, depending on the particular context.

So while the NKJV states that the man was "put" in the garden, which is a simple physical statement of fact, it does not even begin to express the depth of understanding that embodies this Hebrew word.

Reading again from the Theological Wordbook; "Nuach, "The root word signifies not only absence of movement, but also to be settled in a particular place, with security and with overtones of victory and or salvation"

What's so interesting, to me at least, is that all three of my reference sources, Strongs, TWOT and Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew lexicon, state that nuach is a direct synonym with Strongs 5117, nuah. In fact the TWOT gives reference to both synonyms as one in the same word.

They may be spelled slightly different, depending on your reference sources, but there underlying meaning is essentially identical. Well, why might you ask is that so significant? Well lets look at this direct synonym in the context of rest, inner peace and salvation.

First let's look at the example of Noah's ark resting on the mount of Ararat.

Genesis 8:

4 "Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat"

In this example the direct synonym is used, Strongs 5117. Symbolizing the fact that when the ark came to rest on dry land, salvation and physical security was assured for Noah and his family. In fact Noah's name is itself, a direct derivative of nuach, Strongs # 3240.

Let's turn now to an even more enlightening use of this word.

Exodus 20. 8-11

8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Now did you realize that within these very familiar verses are mentioned 2 different types of rest. The word Sabbath we know in the Hebrew is "sabbat" meaning to cease from activity, or to rest from your labors. But there is another rest referred to here in verse 11.

11 "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he "rested" [nuach] [5117] on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy"

So here in the fourth commandment, seemingly hidden in plain site, God commands us to follow His example in observing both the sabbat rest and the nuach rest, in order to keep it Holy.

Now how do we qualify these two types of rest, and apply them personally in our worship of God? Well the Theological Wordbook distinguishes the difference as sabbat being physical rest and nuach being a spiritual rest.

Spiritual rest being defined as possessing, or dwelling in a state of inner peace, or tranquility of mind. Practically speaking, we should strive to put aside the cares and trials of daily life, and refocus our attention on spiritually uplifting things.

In this way, we not only will rest our bodies, but more importantly our minds as well. Refocusing our minds on God, as our source of life and hope and strength.

So we can infer from this scripture that when God finished the creation of the earth, that God looked at His creation with a deep sense of satisfaction in what He had done. God was at peace, fully content with His work of creation.

Genesis 1:31 states that “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day”

And while the use of the word nuach, does not always imply a restful state of mind. Let’s look at a scripture, that not only suggests peace of mind, but also couples it with being led by God’s Holy Spirit.

Exodus 33:12-14

12 Then Moses said to the LORD, “See, You say to me, ‘Bring up this people.’ But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.’

13 Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.”

So here, we find Moses asking God to guide him, and help him to understand God’s way of life so that he can properly lead God’s people. And what does the Lord reply?

14 And the Lord said, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest [nuach]”

Brethren, this verse, helps me personally to understand the real relevance of the nuach rest, in the sabbath commandment. Helping us to rightly reprioritize our mindset, on a weekly basis.

God is dwelling within us through His Holy Spirit. That fact gives us the ability to have a restful state of mind, a true inner peace. Understanding, that regardless of what happens in our daily struggles in life. God is with us, to give us the strength and wisdom we need, to help us through those struggles and trials, as He also helped Moses.

But we also need to be mindful, of the example Moses sets for us here, that is we need to truly look too and pray sincerely for Gods helping hand. And be conscience of God’s presence in our lives on a daily basis. Walking with Him, as God told Moses, when He said “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”

OK, so this idea of spiritual rest can be equated with having a deep sense of inner peace. Which is intricately tied to the concept of faith. We have peace of mind, because we rely on God as our source of guidance, strength, and if need be, protection.

And both faith and peace are attributes of God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within us, which are listed as the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology has this to say with regard to the Greek word translated peace in Galatians 5.

Quote “This Greek word denotes the well being that comes only from God.

Generally it embraces the concepts of rest, safety, and freedom from fear. Hence, this peace also acquires the sense of general well being, the source of which is God alone” End of quote.

Let me repeat that last sentence. “Generally, the peace of God embraces the concepts of rest, safety, and freedom from fear. Hence, this peace also acquires the sense of general well being, the source of which is God alone”

Note the similarity in meaning with nuach. Rest, safety, freedom from fear, and possessing a deep inner peace.

This is what God desired for Adam and Eve. And clearly, as is being conveyed by a deeper understanding of Genesis 2, verse 15. It is also what God desires for all mankind to eventually acquire as well.

And this is the mindset that I believe God wants us to mediate on and make a part of us, as well. And that is why God includes this nuach rest in the 4th commandment. In addition to it being listed as one of the attributes, or fruits of God’s Spirit.

So in summation, this word nuach, meaning “to be at rest” can be further defined as “a permanent state of peace and security that is only available in God’s presence”

And so then, taken to it’s ultimate fulfillment and conclusion, this nuach rest pictures or depicts salvation.

And to put an exclamation point on this subject of this nuach rest pertaining to salvation, lets turn to Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. I want to carefully go over some of these verses, as I find them to be a fitting conclusion to this word study.

Hebrews 3:16-19 Speaking of Ancient Israel.

- 16** For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?
- 17** Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?
- 18** And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?
- 19** So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Notice that the rest referred to here is the promised land. And verse 19, states that the reason for there sin, there disobedience, was because of their unbelief. They did not fully trust or believe that God would do what He promised them.

In other words, God was not real to them. They did not really know God as they could have known Him.

And in relating all of this back to Adam and Eve in the garden. They too had the opportunity to really get to know God. They saw God and talked with Him, but they did not heed Gods voice as well, and therefore they also failed to remain in God’s rest. Continuing in Hebrews 4.

Hebrews 4: 1-10

- 1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.
- 2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.
- 3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “ So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

A more accurate way to translate the word finished, might be “came into being” or became manifest. What is being stated here in verse 3, is that God’s rest, the way for mankind to come to salvation was manifest, or available from the time of the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve had the opportunity to partake of the Tree of Life. But they too, failed to perceive God for what He is, the Almighty, the Creator, Lord and Master.

Adam and Eve by their actions showed that they did not want their Creator to be their Lord. They wanted to be their own lord and master, to follow the dictates of their own heart. They wanted to serve themselves, instead of their Loving Creator.

And that brethren, is really life in a nut shell, is it not. Serve God or serve yourself.

The Tree of Life or the Tree of Good and Evil. Blessings or cursing, God has given us the free choice. Verse 4.

- 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”;
 - 5 and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”
- Verse 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.
- 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.
 - 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

A quick comment here, verse 8 is referring too Joshua 22.4. And in that verse in Joshua, the word nuach is translated as rest.

And then in verse 9, the word translated as “rest” is Strong’s 4520 “sabbatismos” which means sabbath keeping or a sabbath rest. Strong’s defines it as the Christian repose, a type of salvational rest.

And this all types back in what we covered earlier regarding the 4th commandment, where God’s rest is described in both ways as well. As being both physical and spiritual.

Therefore what we learn from these verses, is that the physical promised land was a type of the salvational rest that the Church, the Israel of God is striving to enter into. Furthermore, this same nuach rest is spoken of in Genesis 2:15, pertaining to the garden of Eden.

And as we just read in Heb. 4.3, the garden of Eden, was indeed a template for God’s salvational rest, as we are covering today.

Ok, so I think we've spend enough time, on the first half, of Genesis 2:15. Now let's focus on the second half of this verse. Which is even richer in meaning, for those that have ears to hear.

For hidden within these two English phrases, "to tend" and "to keep" lies a vast amount of spiritual insight,, that unfortunately is completely absent from the English translation.

As I believe we will see, the English translation does a gross injustice both in the translation and the underlying meaning of these words in this context.

Let's first, look at the word translated "tend" This one Hebrew word is translated into the English phrase "to tend" The Hebrew word is "abad" Strong's # 5647.

Quoting from the Theological Wordbook of the OT, in regard to this Hebrew word "abad"

"The underlying root meaning of abad, is to worship or obey, and this concept of worship or obedience is often emphasized by the word "abad" being translated into English as "to serve"

"The underlying meaning, of the type of service, be it physical or theological, must then be defined by the surrounding text, as to whether it defines physical or spiritual service or work"
End of quote.

Brethren, notice that a correct application of the word "abad" is defined by the surrounding text.

This is an important point to remember, not only for this particular application, but also for all in depth biblical study.

This point is further emphasized by another text book. Quoting from the "Dictionary of O.T. Theology" "This term "abad" has a use that encompasses both secular and religious/theological importance. Therefore what appears to be merely a non-theological usage is sometimes seen as a religious usage upon closer examination"

And Brethren, I believe that this statement hits the nail on the head with regard to the underlying meaning of Genesis 2:15. When read over passively, especially in the

English translations, the meaning seems to be only physical in nature. "To tend, till or work the ground" The KJV uses the word dress, in the phrase "to dress it"

Now brethren, I ask you. Isn't it just like satan to want to mask the true meaning of such an important question? Why was Adam and Eve placed in the garden?

Common answer, "to work the ground"

Notice that the underlying emphasis is purely on the physical. Just like Satan has deceived the whole world into pursuing purely physical and material endeavors.

However, digging deeper and taking into account the surrounding text, this word takes on a much richer and more theological meaning, as we will see.

In fact if you do a word search in the Strongs concordance under the word serve, you will find that this same word “abad” #5647 is translated serve, several hundred times, most often in a religious context.

And by contrast, it is translated to till, or tiller just 8 times in scripture, and the term dress, which is used in the KJV is only used twice.

So we find that the overwhelming majority of the use of this word in scripture, is in relation to spiritual service.

Let’s look at an example of this same word “abad” translated serve, showing the use of this word in a religious context.

Exodus 3:10-12

- 10** Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”
- 11** 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?”
- 12** 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 God on this mountain.”

This word “abad” is translated serve in the last part of verse 12. “you shall serve God on this mountain”

So, here in EXODUS 3.12 God tells Moses that the Israelites are to serve God on Mount Sinai. So now, I ask you, how or in what way was the nation of Israel instructed by God to serve Him when the came out of Egypt? It was through their obedience to the 10 commandments, was it not?

So we see that the term “abad” translated serve, in EX.3.12 implies obedience to the laws and commandments of God.

Let’s just look at one more example, a familiar scripture. Deuteronomy 10:12

- 12** “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Again, the word serve, used here in the context of obedience to God “to serve the Lord with all your heart and soul” is abad.

OK, now in contrast, let’s look at an example of “abad” in a purely physical sense, correctly translated as till. Genesis 2:5

- Genesis 2:5** “before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground”

Abad is here translated “to till” that is, to work the ground. Notice the subject is clearly defined as the ground. And so since this word clearly means work, in a physical sense, here in verse 5. It seems the translators, simply decided to carry the same meaning forward to verse 15.

However, let’s carefully look at the context surrounding verse 15, by rereading verse 15 together with the surrounding verses. I’ll begin with the last sentence of verse 14 and read through verse 17.

The fourth river is the Euphrates. 15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

Please note, as we covered at the outset, that man, the translated form of Adam is used. Implying that this verse has a dual application.

Ok, so we see that verse 14 clearly ends one thought, that of describing the 4 rivers, and then we have verses 15-17. Now what is critical to our correct understanding of what God is stating here in verse 15, is to use good bible study skills and apply the meaning of the word “abad” translated here “to tend” in the proper context.

And what is the context? Well God placed the man in the garden and then gives him a direct command. God specifically tells Adam that he can eat from all the trees, except one.

Why? Why wasn’t the man, to eat from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Because Adam, as a type of all mankind, was to get all of his direction and instruction from his Creator.

And in applying some simple logic, one comes to the conclusion, that this had to be instruction that God gave the man, as soon as he was led into the garden.

For the tree of good and evil was in the garden among all the other trees. If this instruction was not given at the outset, Adam would have had no idea, that tree was forbidden.

Moreover, it seems from the context, that the reason God commanded the man, and not his wife as well, was because Eve had not yet been created. Judging from the story flow, Adam named the animals in the garden, prior to Eves creation.

Therefore it seems that all the remaining verses in chapter 2, from here in verse 15 through the end of verse 25, took place prior to the first sabbath, on the 6th day of creation.

Furthermore, verse 9, of chapter 2 states that “out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”

Friends, note this very important point. The tree of good and evil looked just like the tree of life. For it says God made every tree to be “pleasant to the sight and good for food” And a relevant question might be, Why?

God is conveying to Adam, and to us, a very profound truth. A truth that is recorded in Jeremiah 10:23. "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps"

God is telling Adam, NOT to decide for himself what is the right and wrong way to live his life. Rather, the Lord God as his Creator was to be Adam's mentor and instructor. In other words, the Lord alone, as mans Maker was to be his Master.

So God created all the trees to be similar, because God wanted Adam to rely on Him for guidance and direction.

That's the overall context of these verses. So the subject matter is NOT the garden. What is being conveyed here, is that Adam was placed in the garden for the specific reason, to serve God. Which is defined throughout the bible as being obedient to what God says. To obey His voice.

Friends, I believe that this is a critically important point, that has been completely lost in the English translations.

And that is the real essence of the Covenant that we have all made with God, is it not? To love God. And we show our love to Him through our obedience to His way of life, which is broadly outlined by the commandants.

As Jesus stated in John 14.15, "If you love me, keep the commandments"

So the word "abad" should be translated as serve, or obey, and not tend, till or dress, in this context. And as we will see next, this understanding, that Adam was placed in the garden to serve God, by his obedience, is further supported by the word translated keep.

So let's turn our attention now, to that Hebrew word translated into the English phrase "to keep it" Strongs #8104. In Hebrew it is spelled "shamar" with the meaning of; to keep, guard, observe and heed.

The Theological Wordbook states that the "basic idea is to exercise great care over" and that it is Most often used in a religious sense.

Continuing to quote: "Shamar" expresses the notion, of paying careful attention to the obligations of the covenant, it's laws and statutes, ect" And the Theological Wordbook gives a further example siting Genesis 18.19 where Abraham is to command his children to "keep the way of the Lord" to do righteousness and justice.

"Shamar" also means to guard. Frequently involving personal discipline, with the need to take heed in respect to ones personal life and actions. Siting the example of Psalm 39.1 where David said "I will guard my ways lest I sin"

The Dictionary of OT Theology states that "The most common use of the word is to be careful and or diligent in respect to ones religious and spiritual responsibilities"

Brethren, again I believe that this meaning hits the nail on the head, with regard to what God is trying to convey to us in Genesis 2:15

Let me repeat that last quote one more time. “The most common use of the word “shamar” is to be careful and or diligent in respect to ones religious and spiritual responsibilities”

Let’s turn to a passage that clearly shows that “shamar” means to diligently keep or to follow God’s way of life.

Deuteronomy 4:

- 1 “Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you.
- 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may “keep” the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. Verse 6,
- 6 Therefore “be careful” to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’
- 7 “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?
- 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?
- 9 Only “take heed” to yourself, and “diligently keep” yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.

Shamar, is used 4 times in this passage. It is translated “keep” as in keep the commandments in verse 2. It’s translated as “be careful” as in be careful to observe in verse 6. And most interestingly, it is used in consecutive phrases in verse 9. Only “take heed” to yourself, and “diligently keep” yourself. Translated as both take heed and diligently keep.

The Dictionary of OT Theology goes on to state that “the word shamar, is used dozens of times regarding “keeping the commandments” Another familiar example is found in EXODUS 20.6. Here in the second commandment, God says He will have kindness and mercy on those that “keep” or obey His commandments.

Ok, so let’s summarize what we have just covered. As I said earlier, if we consult a bible concordance we find that the 2 words translated “to tend” and “to keep” Are the 2 Hebrew words “abad” Strongs #5647 and “shamar” #8104.

Contrary to what is conveyed in the English translation, the meaning of these 2 Hebrew words, when taken together and in the context with the surrounding verses, render for us a much deeper and profound new understanding.

What God is trying to convey to us in Genesis 2:15-17, is that Adam was created and then led into the Garden, and given specific instruction.

“Abad” means to serve and obey, and “shamar” means to do so diligently. So the man was instructed to diligently serve and obey his Creator.

Taken in context, that is the profound underlying meaning of this verse. And this meaning is further supported by the surrounding verses as well. Adam had been given a direct command from his Creator.

Genesis 2:16 states “that the Lord commanded the man” Adam was not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In other words, Adam was not to live, by doing what was right in his own eyes..

Rather, Adam was to diligently obey God’s voice.

Recall what God say of Abraham, the father of the faithful, hundreds of years before the law was reintroduced to the nation of Israel. God stated in Genesis 26 that “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”

Brethren, Adam was given the very same instruction, that all of us have been given. To serve God by loving Him, and that’s the bottom line, the crux of the issue. We show our love for God by obediently conforming to His will.

We are to be a living sacrifice, we are to sacrifice, or put to death, our own carnal way of thinking and doing things, which is symbolized by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

So what we find in Genesis 2:15-17 and thereafter, is that Adam failed to follow God’s instructions, and therefore Adam and Eve both failed to do what was later accomplished by Jesus Christ the second Adam. [1 Corinthians 15:45]

Which was to live a physical life in complete submission and love and reverence for His God, by lovingly keeping the entirety of God’s law., which is a codified expression of God’s own eternal nature.

If we turn to Deuteronomy 10:12-13, we find the reiteration of the instruction that God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:15, this time, given to the nation of Israel. In my bible, the subtitle over this portion of scripture reads “What the Lord requires”

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

- 12** “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul,
- 13** and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?

Again, here at the end of verse 12, the word [serve is “abad” 5647] and at the beginning of verse 13, the word [keep is shamar 8104]

Israel was instructed to diligently serve, or diligently obey. Just like Adam was to obey God’s voice, by keeping His instructions.

So we see here that God requires the same attitude and conduct from all His people. God desired to dwell with the nation of Israel, just as He wanted to dwell with Adam and Eve.

And therefore the requirements were the same, to serve and obey the Lord. And of course the requirements are also the same for us. God does not change, as it states in Hebrews 13:8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

So in conclusion, as I mentioned at the outset of today's message. Genesis 1:26 can be viewed as the "Mission Statement" of the entire bible, informing us as to "Why" God created mankind.

And then, from what we have covered today, we find that Genesis 2:15 might thus be viewed as the template or blueprint, by which God will complete the process of human salvation.

For those that have "ears to hear" these four ordinary, nondescript words, "took, put, tend and keep" give us the Very Formula for Salvation Itself.

They describe for us the essence of the Everlasting Covenant, between God and man, by which all mankind, may one day gain salvation.

The fulfillment of which brings us full circle back to Genesis 1:26. For by fully complying to our part of the covenant, we will not only develop God's likeness, possessing His Holy righteous character.

We will also be spiritually born as well. Being given a glorious radiant spiritual body, made in the very image of God our Father, at the resurrection.

And so as we have covered in this message today. That is the reason, why the translated word man is used in Genesis 2:15 and the surrounding text. Because there is an element of duality attached to it.

For it is God's desire to lead all mankind into His eternal rest, as we covered in Hebrews 4.

So we come to see, that Genesis 2:15 can be divided into two parts, just like the Everlasting Covenant can be divided into two parts. What God promises to do for us, as a result of our obedience to Him.

Which is to lead us by His spirit into His salvational rest in the Kingdom of God, in the same way that God led Adam into the Garden of Eden.

Let me begin to wrap up, with one final thought. Turn please to **Genesis 3:22-23**

And again, as we read this, please note the use of the word man, suggesting a spiritual duality. And so, understanding this then, let's look at this verse from a spiritual point of view as well.

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—

23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

Because Adam had refused to obey God's voice, and instead chose to decide for himself what he would and would not do, as defined by the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. God therefore, sent Adam and Eve out of the garden, separating them from God's rest, to till or work the ground from which they were taken.

Brethren, the word till, is the same Hebrew word “abad” used in Genesis 2:15 with the underlying meaning, to serve.

So in the context of what we have covered today. I believe God is giving us a play on words. Consider, since Adam’s flesh was made from the dust of the earth, and since Adam refused to serve God.

We find recorded here, that God sentenced the man to serve his own fleshly desires, spiritually symbolized by the phrase tilling or working the ground from which they were taken.

And so it is with all mankind, serving themselves, working to please there own fleshly desires, instead of desiring to serve the One that Created them.

I’ll conclude by reading parts of **Deuteronomy 30:19-20**

- 19** “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that you may live;
- 20** “therefore love the Lord your God, obey His voice, and cling to Him, for He is your life and your length of days”

Friends, let us continue to diligently strive to fulfill our part of God’s eternal covenant, by fully obeying His voice, so that we may enter His eternal rest, in due time.

Thomas C. Trinko

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