

Song of Solomon 4:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

Analysis

A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. The bridegroom celebrates the bride's exclusive devotion through three parallel images of enclosure and protection. The Hebrew *gan na'ul* (גַּן נָאָל, "garden locked") employs *na'al*, meaning locked, barred, or secured. This is no public park but private sanctuary, accessible only to the beloved. Ancient Near Eastern gardens were walled enclosures protecting valuable plants from animals and intruders.

The second image, **a spring shut up** (*gal na'ul*, גַּל נָאָל), uses the same verb *na'al* for a water source that is secured—not a public well but protected spring reserved for the owner. The third, **a fountain sealed** (*ma'yan chatum*, מַיָּן חָטוּם), employs *chatum*, meaning sealed with a signet or official mark of ownership (as in Daniel 6:17 where the lions' den was sealed, or Matthew 27:66 where Christ's tomb was sealed). These images celebrate the bride's sexual purity and exclusive devotion—she has reserved herself for her covenant partner alone.

The progression from garden to spring to fountain suggests both the bride's beauty (a garden of delights), her life-giving refreshment (a spring), and her preciousness as exclusive treasure (sealed fountain). In biblical typology, the garden recalls Eden where humanity first knew unashamed intimacy with God (Genesis 2:25). Christ is the new Adam who enters the garden (John 19:41) to restore what was lost. The sealed fountain points to believers' consecration to Christ—"ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Corinthians

6:19-20). The Church is Christ's exclusive possession, sealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), reserved for Him alone.

Historical Context

In ancient agricultural societies, water sources were precious and carefully protected. Wells and springs were marked with stones or seals indicating ownership, with legal penalties for unauthorized use. Gardens required significant labor to plant, water, and maintain—making walled gardens symbols of wealth and careful stewardship. The imagery would resonate powerfully in Palestine's semi-arid climate where water meant life.

The language of sexual exclusivity carried covenantal weight in Israel's culture. Proverbs 5:15-20 uses similar water imagery, commanding: "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well... Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth." Adultery was portrayed as drinking from another's well or allowing strangers to access one's spring. The Song celebrates what Proverbs commands—covenant faithfulness and sexual exclusivity.

Church tradition interpreted the "garden enclosed" as the Church protected by Christ from heresy and corruption, or as Mary's perpetual virginity (especially in Catholic interpretation), or as the believer's heart reserved for God alone. Protestant interpreters emphasized that believers are set apart (sanctified) for God's purposes, not participating in the world's spiritual adultery (James 4:4). The "fountain sealed" anticipates baptism's seal, marking believers as Christ's possession.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the image of a 'garden enclosed' and 'fountain sealed' inform Christian teaching on sexual purity and covenant faithfulness in marriage?
2. In what ways are believers called to be 'sealed' and set apart exclusively for Christ, refusing spiritual adultery with the world?
3. What practical steps protect the 'garden' of your heart from unauthorized access or corruption by influences that compete with Christ's lordship?

Interlinear Text

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|----------|------------|--------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|-------|
| גַּן | אֲמַנְתָּה | אֲחֹתִי | כָּל | כָּל | גַּן | גַּן | מֵפֶת |
| A garden | inclosed | is my sister | my spouse | a spring | inclosed | a fountain | |
| H1588 | H5274 | H269 | H3618 | H1530 | H5274 | H4599 | |

:מִתְּמַנְתָּה

sealed

H2856

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:27: And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

1 Corinthians 6:13: Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.

Revelation 7:3: Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

1 Corinthians 7:34: There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

