

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

The bridegroom praises his bride: 'A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.' The threefold imagery—'garden inclosed' (gan na'ul, גַּן נְעוּל), 'spring shut up' (gal na'ul, גַּל נְעוּל), 'fountain sealed' (ma'yan chatum, מַעְיָן חֲתוּם)—emphasizes exclusive access and preserved purity. Enclosed gardens, sealed springs, and shut fountains are protected from contamination and reserved for their rightful users. This verse celebrates the bride's sexual purity and exclusive commitment to her bridegroom. She hasn't given herself to others but has preserved herself for covenant relationship. The dual terms 'my sister, my spouse' combine familial intimacy with marital exclusivity. This verse affirms both premarital purity and marital faithfulness. Spiritually, it represents the Church as Christ's exclusive bride, set apart for Him alone.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern gardens, springs, and fountains required walls and seals to prevent theft, contamination, or unauthorized use. Water sources were precious and protected. The imagery celebrates exclusive possession and protected purity. In ancient culture valuing virginity before marriage and faithfulness within it, this verse would powerfully affirm covenant exclusivity. Early church fathers applied this to the Church—she is 'enclosed garden' belonging exclusively to Christ, not given to the world. Medieval theologians used this imagery for Mary's perpetual virginity and the Church's purity. The Reformers emphasized that believers are set apart (sanctified) for Christ, not belonging to the world (John 17:16). Modern

readers recover appreciation for sexual purity before marriage and exclusive faithfulness within it, countering cultural promiscuity.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this imagery of exclusive preservation and purity inform biblical sexual ethics—both before and within marriage?
2. In what ways should believers be 'enclosed gardens'—set apart for Christ, not giving themselves to worldly allegiances?

Interlinear Text

גַּן	נֶעֱלָם	אֲחֻתִּי	כָּל הַ	גַּל	נֶעֱלָם	מַעְיָן
A garden	inclosed	is my sister	my spouse	a spring	inclosed	a fountain
H1588	H5274	H269	H3618	H1530	H5274	H4599

חֲתֹמֶת
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.

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