

November 6, 2005 AM

**THE BATTLE WITH THE SOIL
GENESIS 3:17-19**

1. IN THE IMAGE OF THE FARMER

Farming as the pattern of life: The image of God in man - man is to be reflecting God's character and activity into the world. God creation, forming and filling the world in six days provides the pattern for how we are to be imaging him. Cf. **Ex 20:11**

What do we find God doing in the creation account? One thing, God is planting a garden. This planting of the garden happens *after* the creation of Adam as **Gen 2:7** followed by **2:8** indicates. Adam is taught by the creation of the garden.

God is the first and greatest farmer. "Farmer" is not human language imposed back on God. It is the other way around.

God's relationship with Israel the vine and vineyard: cf. **Isa 5:1ff; Psa 80:8ff; Ezek 17; Mt 20:1ff; 21:33ff.; John 15**

Answers the question: "Why would Adam be a farmer?" (1) commanded to be a farmer ("guard and till the garden"); and (2) he was patterning his life after his Father's in whose image he was made.

Man as laborer: "Farming" corresponds to all kinds of labor that produces things. God labors so we labor.

Not everyone is to be a "literal" farmer. Movement of history from "garden" (Genesis) to "city" (Revelation).

Farming becomes an image for all sorts of work. In fact, all work is "farming" of some sort. That is, there is an investment of time, energy and resources in order to harvest some kind of crop.

Man, as the image of God, is expected to work. Man that doesn't work is a distortion of God's image and shouldn't eat (**2Th 3:10ff.**)

The grace of fruit: Ground is cursed. God must bring fruit from a dead ground.

Even though it will take work to produce the fruit, it is still God's grace that gives the fruit.

Painful labor: comp. **3:17** with **3:16**, same word translated "pain." Work will be toilsome. There will be obstacles. But *through* the painful toil the fruit/blessing/life will come.

2. FARMER AS PRIEST

Priests and the garden of God: Adam is to till/work/serve and protect/guard the sanctuary of God, the Garden. Adam, as a farmer, is also a priest (cf. **Gen 2:15-17**).

God establishes his presence in Israel specially in the Tabernacle/Temple where the throne of God is guarded by cherubim on the veil. God has established a new garden with new Adams to protect it.

The Tabernacle itself was representative, in large measure, of the people of God themselves. God dwells with his people. His people are represented in the structure as well as the furniture of the Tabernacle. They are "the temple of the Spirit" (**1Co 6:19**).

Cultivating people: As Adam was to "cultivate" his wife, sanctifying her, adding to her beauty and making her fruitful, so the priests were to "cultivate" the people of God in the same way.

Man comes from *adamah*, the ground. He grows and produces fruit. Cf. **Psa 1; Jud 9:7ff; Heb 6:7-8**

The priests in Israel were to be "cultivating" the people of God in all aspects of their lives. For instance, the priests were teachers in Israel (cf. **Deut 33:8-10; Lev 10:11; 2Chron 17:8-10; Neh 8; Ezek 44:23; Mal 2:6-8**). For NC, cf. Timothy (**2Ti 2:6**). Cf. also **Gal 6** and **1Co 9**.

The ministers of God are to be cultivating God's people, doing what they can to see to it that the people bear fruit. And, as they do the work, they should expect that there will be a harvest (numbers, people growing, compensation).

The gospel is "seed" that is planted and bears fruit in the Colossians as it was in all the world (**Col 1:6**). As God's "priests" of the

NC the ministers of God are to protect the flock of God as Paul commissioned the Ephesian elders in **Acts 20**.

The entire body of Christ is the royal priesthood. Things we should be cultivating:

Self: Responsible for the little plot of “ground” that is you. You are to be bearing fruit and cultivating holiness (**Ga 5:22-23; 1Pe 1:15-16**).

Husbands cultivating wives: Husbands as priest-farmers to their wives are to be cultivating their wives, helping her move from one stage of glory to another. (For the wife as a garden read Song of Songs.)

Parents cultivating children: having children and bringing them up in nurture and admonition of the Lord (cf. **Pss 127, 128**).

Cultivating one another in the church: We are to be encouraging one another and exhorting one another so that we don’t become fallow ground (cf. **Heb 3:13; 10:24ff.**).

Thorns and thistles: we will battle “death plants.” We need to do all that we can to bring God’s new creation in which the thorn is replaced by the cypress and the brier is replaced by the myrtle tree (**Isa 55:13**). We need to work toward the transformation of all “ground” to be life-bearing and life-giving ground (i.e., people).

3. FARMING FOR A HARVEST

Work and rest: Man is not in an endless cycle of labor with no rest or no enjoyment of the fruit of his hands. There is a purpose, an end, a goal to which we are working. Cf. 4th commandment. (E.g., Noah, **Ge 5:29** corresponding to **3:17-19**)

Fruit enjoyed by the farmer: all the faithful should expect to enjoy the fruits of our labor. We receive reward because of God’s covenant promises (i.e., his grace). But, as with all farming, those rewards are obtained through faithfulness in labor. We plant. We water. God gives the increase. Cf. **Mt 19:27ff.; 1Co 3; 2Co 5:10; Gal 6:7-8**

The lazy farmer or the farmer who plants bad seed will reap bad fruit. Those who sow to their flesh will of their flesh reap destruction (cf. **Gal 6:7-8**). You *will* eat of the fruit of your hands. You *are* a farmer because you are made in the image of God.

Farmer consumed by the ground: The ground will consume him. He will be overcome by the curse.

4. THE LAST FARMER

As the last *adam* and the perfect image of God, we would expect Jesus the Messiah to be a “farmer.” And he is.

Jesus is a proclaimer of the kingdom of God. He is a prophet announcing the soon coming kingdom. The first words recorded for us by Mark on the lips of Jesus (which sets the tone for the entire gospel) are, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (**Mk 1:15**)

As we read in Matthew’s gospel, Jesus, on a number of occasions, speaks about the kingdom of God as “seed” that is being planted in the earth. And he is the sower of that seed.

The parable of the four soils told in **Mt 13** is a parable concerning the kingdom of God. The seed there is explained to be “the word of the kingdom” (cf. **13:19**).

Following that parable is the parable of the field of wheat and tares. This Jesus says is a parable of the kingdom; i.e., “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field....” (**13:24ff.**) The wheat grows up. But it is discovered that the enemy has come in and planted tares. Jesus explains the parable as the field being the world, the good seed being the children of the kingdom and the tares being the children of the evil one (cf. **13:36ff.**).

Adam as farmer is not something that is lost upon the last *Adam*. He is the Father’s new farmer who is his perfect image (**Col 1:15**), who is the priest who serves, protects and cultivates his people (cf. **Heb 7; Eph 5:25ff.**) and who looked for and expected a harvest from his faithful labor (cf. **Heb 12:2**). But he must endure being swallowed up by the curse.