

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 335

Jesus as the Gardener

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Episode Summary

In John 20:11-16 is a famous scene after the resurrection that takes place at the garden tomb. To our surprise we learn that Mary Magdalene failed to recognize the risen Jesus, instead “supposing him to be the gardener” (John 20:15). In this episode of the podcast, we discover that John’s intent in this scene was not to have his readers question Mary’s ignorance or judgment. Rather, the scene draws on a frequent ancient Near Eastern tradition, also present in the Hebrew Bible, that associates kings with gardens and even casts them as gardeners. The garden tomb scene and the identification of Jesus as the “gardener” turns out to be filled with symbolism that presents Jesus as the Davidic messiah-king.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 335: Jesus as the Gardener. I’m the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he’s the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you?

MH: Pretty good. Pretty good. Just taking things one day at a time, really. Some of the audience will know that my mom is real ill, so as we record this, I’m actually her caregiver for a certain number of weeks. She’s chosen home hospice. So I’m at the beginning of that. So just trying to do the best job I can there. And fortunately, we have a few other people come in and out so we can do the podcast. So just glad it worked out.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. So you’re in Pennsylvania right now?

MH: I’m in Delaware actually. I wish I was in Pennsylvania. I always wish I was in Pennsylvania, but... [laughs]

TS: Yeah, Delaware, that’s the place...

MH: No, I like Florida.

TS: Yeah, well our thoughts and prayers are with you.

MH: Yeah, thank you. Let me just put it this way. Some of you out there know people that aren't into technology. They have the flip phones like I used to. So I'm poking at myself a little bit here, but I'm not this bad. But where my mom lives, in her place—no internet. She doesn't even have an email address. So this is the first and only time you'll ever hear me say this, either on or off the air. But I'm so thankful for my iPhone. [laughter] I never thought I'd feel thankful for Apple.

TS: Yeah.

MH: But I do today. Because that's how we're doing this.

TS: Yeah. I literally could be stranded on a desert island all by myself. As long as I had internet, I'd be fine.

MH: Mm hmm. So this is the one day in my life that I'll look back on and say, "I was thankful for Apple that day." [sigh] You know, here we are.

TS: We're thankful for it as well, that's for sure. So today, New Testament.

MH: New Testament, but again with Old Testament connections. This is kind of what we've been doing. So we might as well just jump right into it. We're going to do Jesus as the Gardener, which is an odd title, but some listeners may catch the reference right away. The launching pad here is John 20:11-16. And we're going to start there and then circle back to it at the end. Because believe it or not, this actually has a lot of context to it, things that we wouldn't necessarily be inclined to think of, although people who have read *Unseen Realm* will probably discern real early on (and I'm going to try to telegraph the connection for those people who've read *Unseen Realm*) where this is going to go. But it's really interesting. Because it's just one of those things that even you know both sides of the equation, you don't necessarily make the connections. But in this case, I think they're going to be apparent. But on the surface, you just wouldn't think of where we're going to go, unless perhaps you've read *Unseen Realm*. So here's John 20. I'm going to go back to verse 11 and start there. The pivot verse is going to be verse 15. But in John 20:11, this is when Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection. We read:

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you

seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

And then in verse 16:

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

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And then she recognizes who this is. Obviously, Mary doesn't expect to see a whole man, much less Jesus. And apologetics folks have talked about this almost ad nauseum. “How could she not recognize him?” And we weren't there to set up the scene. We don't know if there's distance in between the two. We don't know if he's wearing a hood or something. We don't know any of that. So it's useless to speculate. But my point here is, that really isn't the point of the passage. See, we tend to look at this and we go into modern exegesis mode. “We've got to solve this problem. We have to milk this passage and mine it for apologetics value about the resurrection. And this is an apparent contradiction, so we need to defend this or that explanation.” That has nothing to do with what John is doing. But since we're fixated on those sorts of questions... Even for those who have read *Unseen Realm*, it's very easy to not stop and ask yourself certain questions. And then when you do, to move beyond those questions and start connecting dots.

Those of you who have read the book know all about the cosmic mountain idea and the cosmic garden idea from the Old Testament. It goes through the Old Testament and it leaks into places in the New Testament. And this is one of those places that wouldn't necessarily be intuitive. Because when we come to the passage, we go into problem-solving mode or apologetics mode, or something like that. In terms of the cosmic mountain/cosmic garden motif, God (or the gods in other ancient Near Eastern religions) dwelt in gardens and on mountains. And the dwelling place of the gods (the abode of the gods) utilized that imagery—utilized those metaphors—to convey certain ideas about the divine abode: its remoteness, its perfection, its paradise nature, all these sorts of things—how removed it is from human presence. And we get that. If you've read *Unseen Realm*, you get that.

But the same thing is true, not just of deities, but also kings. And in *Unseen Realm*, we talk about the cosmic garden/cosmic mountain. There's a particular chapter where we make some connections between kingship and David and these themes, and even other figures. When we think of cosmic garden/cosmic mountain, it's not just deity only; it's also kingship. Because if you're the king (in Israel, anyway, especially if you're the descendant of David), you're sort of the inheritor of the status of the new Eden. Because you're ruling from and living in Zion (in Jerusalem), which is described in a variety of ways (and we're going to see some of those ways in this episode), like Eden or like a garden. And that last one is the one we sort of aren't really aware of. Because we associate these

things only with tabernacle, only with temple. But the temple's in Zion. The temple's in Jerusalem. And if you do some archeological research, the temple is very close (some would say almost immediately adjacent) to the king's palace. You have this whole complex of ideas that we have to do work to ferret out so that we can see the connection points.

That's what's we're going to do in this episode. We're going to be talking about cosmic garden stuff in relation to God and the Israelite king and ultimately the ultimate Israelite King, the messiah, who is Jesus. So some of that stuff we already know if we're *Unseen Realm* readers. But we're going to go a little bit deeper here into the weeds and into the details.

So let's just sort of talk about paradise, to jump in here, and again, cosmic garden (gardens in this society) especially before urbanism and even *with* urbanism. It was a struggle. It's a struggle to have food. It's a struggle to have enough water supply, so on and so forth. Well this is why these gardens are described the way they are. "You'll never want for any food. It's an oasis. There's always going to be enough water. It is the perfect place to be."

So that whole idea (the paradise idea) actually gets carried through the Old Testament as well. Why is Canaan, for instance, described as "the land flowing with milk and honey?" In part, it's to denote this idea of "If we live here, we'll never want for anything. All our needs will be met." It's sort of a utopian description. And in that sense, it goes along with the rest of this Edenic imagery.

10:00 The paradise idea is even more important (at least for our topic today) when we start looking at certain passages in the Septuagint. And for those to whom that term is unfamiliar, the Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament of the Hebrew Bible. Most often, the Septuagint uses the word *paradeisos*. Does that sound like paradise? That's what it is. Greek *paradeisos* is typically used of the word for *garden* in the Old Testament. The Garden of Eden is the *gan eden*. *Gan* is the word for garden. And most of the time, the Septuagint will use *paradeisos* for garden, and it does so consistently with the Garden of Eden. This is part of why the Garden of Eden develops this sense of being a paradise or utopia (all our needs are met). But frankly, you don't even need the word to think that. All you need to know is about the cosmic garden/cosmic abode idea from the wider ancient Near Eastern. You're still going to have a paradise (a well-watered paradise). So you don't need *paradeisos* from Greek. But it's interesting. And for our purposes today, there's going to be a place for this in the discussion.

So we have a paradise. If you think a little bit more about Eden, we have Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are, of course, created as God's imagers. They are the imagers of the *king* because God is *king*. Okay? They were kings by proxy in God's home, which is his garden, which is his temple, which is his palace. And the cosmic garden is all those things. Yeah, it's a garden, but it's also an abode

(in this case, for God). And where God is, his entourage is. So the Divine Council, Adam and Eve (as humans being created to be fit to occupy the same sacred space)... These are all familiar ideas from *Unseen Realm*. But it's also a temple and a palace and so on and so forth. As such, Adam and Eve are the first instance of human kings in the garden. The "king in the garden" idea is something I want in the back of your mind during this episode. Because believe it or not, in ancient Near Eastern literature, kings were often portrayed as gardeners. It sounds kind of odd. Like, "Oh, they all had the same hobby." No, that wasn't the point. The king as the gardener, especially if the king occupied the cosmic garden or the earthly imitation (the earthly counterpart, the earthly touchpoint) of the cosmic garden... If that's what you're thinking, then the reason that the king is a gardener is the same reason that the king is a shepherd. He is a provider for his land. He is the ultimate provider. He is the one who either the gods put in charge—in power—or is somehow depicted as a god himself. He is the one through whom the gods (or God) maintain the order that they desire (or in Israel's case, that God desires). That's the king. The king is the gardener. The king is the one who maintains the utopia. "Meets the needs of his people" is probably the best way to put it. And so when things get out of whack... This is what they pay you the big bucks for if you're king. When things get out of whack, naturally you're going to blame the king. And then the king might blame the priesthood. You have it real bad if you're a king *and* a priest! But you get this idea. The people who are supposed to be connected to the gods... "And the gods aren't happy; that's why it hasn't rained." This is how it works. This is how the whole thought system works.

So it's not unusual, but it's not something we realize. The ancient person would realize this much more apparently. But it's not unusual for kings to be portrayed as gardeners in the ancient world. Now probably the closest we would come to recognizing this is the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. But this is an image, and this is imagery that is much wider than that situation in Babylon. It's a very common thing.

So back to Adam and Eve, Adam and Eve are the first biblical examples of the king in the garden. There just happen to be two. Humanity is God's king on earth. He's God's proxy. Humans are God's proxy by virtue of being his imagers on the earth. And the dominion mandate is applied to both. So it's appropriate to talk about both Adam and Eve having this status. As the biblical story keeps moving, then eventually it moves toward this notion of a single leader who is a man. That'll come to represent the leadership of God's people whom he's trying to redeem and through which God is trying to restore Eden. So you get people like Noah and the patriarchs and Moses and Joshua and, of course, all the way up to the kings, the archetype of which is David. So we go from a couple (the human couple, the origin of the human in the biblical story) as being God's proxies. They're both given the same set of mandates. It's not to mean that they don't have different gifts and all this kind of stuff. They're humans, alright? But it's appropriate to talk about them both sharing this same status because they're

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male and female—God creates them as his image and the mandate is given to both of them. And a lot of the debate around the role of women in ministry and how we should look at women... This is why for a lot of people it turns on the Fall, and the Fall changes the situation, all this kind of stuff. In other words, it's a result of the Fall (one particular view). I'm not worried about any of that. We did a whole series on my blog on that. I can have fun arguing either side of that, which is why there's such a debate. Because there's a lack of clarity on exactly how to approach... Really it's how you approach certain questions in that whole debate.

But I'm not concerned about that right now. I want you to think about Adam and Eve (collectively, humanity) as the king—the proxy of the king—in the garden. So there's an immediate association between kings... We would call them (to be more theologically astute or fancy, I guess, or maybe accurate) either “steward kings” or “steward rulers.” But that's what they are. Again, cosmic garden... These are the ones that God has put in charge of what's supposed to happen here.

Now we also get parallels (and we've talked a little bit about this on the podcast before) between Adam and Eve (and especially Adam) and Israel. Adam and Israel have clear parallels. I spent a little bit of time in *Unseen Realm* talking about this, the way things that happened to Adam also happened to Israel and vice versa. There are these connection points. I referenced a few times, both in the book and we've mentioned this kind of thing briefly on the podcast, but the work of Seth Postell. His book is called *Adam and Israel*. There's just a lot to this. There's a lot to see here as far as parallels between Adam and Israel, and we know that this more or less continues on. We have “Jesus is the second Adam”. And the point of that is not to exclude Eve. The point is that Jesus is a new humanity. We're going to come back to that point as well.

So by virtue of the way the incarnation works, the incarnation has to work a certain way because of the Davidic covenant. The messiah is going to be a man because it's a male king descended from David. There are reasons why it works out the way it does that we don't need to pick apart in our postmodern... the context in which we live. There are reasons why it is the way it is in the biblical story, and the biblical connection points, because of when the biblical writers wrote and what they were trying to communicate.

So we have this connectivity (cosmic garden, kingship, rulership if you will, Adam, we've got the kings, we've got Jesus)... And since we're talking about these connections between Jesus and Adam or the Davidic king and Adam or the messiah and Adam, these sorts of things... Because the messiah is a representative of Israel. He represents Israel corporately. Because we have that situation going on... What I'm trying to do is set the table for when we think about gardens, we should be thinking about kings and ultimately messiah and, of course, Jesus. Because an ancient person would have had these things (this would have been the matrix of ideas floating around in the ancient person's

head) that helps them look at the data points and start connecting things, so that they could read a passage and it would make sense to them on a level that it doesn't make sense to us.

So bearing all that in mind, I want to go out to a few resources as I've been doing this in... I don't know if we can call this a series or not, but just this Old Testament and New Testament thing. And I'm going to ask a question for today, or just to kick the can down the road a little bit. If gardens are connected with the presence of God and the king in the Old Testament (and that's very obvious and it's going to become even more obvious as we proceed), it should be expected that there would also be this connection to the messiah.

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Now the first article I'm going to reference is by Joachim Schaper (I think it's a long A pronunciation), "The Messiah in the Garden: John 19:38-41, (Royal) Gardens, and Messianic Concepts." Now this is something I can't put in the protected folder because it's in a book. It's not something that you can get a whole pdf of. And I don't actually have the book. I got enough of it in Google Books to make it useful to dip into a little bit. But it's going to be one of three or four sources I mention today. So you'll just have to know that the resource is out there. But his article is really interesting. It's in a book called *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*. It's a 2010 title, so it's not rare or unusual. And on page 3, he begins this article talking about these connection points. And he writes this:

There are plenty of mentions of gardens in the Hebrew Bible, including many which see gardens as being of special importance to kings, just like in numerous texts and images from other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Indeed, kings are often depicted as gardeners, because of the special significance gardens have in what one might call the Near Eastern symbolic system. Although, as has rightly been said, evidence of the concept of the king as gardener in the Hebrew Bible is inconclusive [MH: and he gives a few scattered references], it is nevertheless very likely that the image of the king as gardener played a similar role in Israel. This is supported by the fact that a king's garden is mentioned on numerous occasions in the Bible...

We're going to talk about some of those references, because some of them are going to be pretty important. But that's a fact. You actually get references to the king's garden in the Hebrew Bible. It doesn't seem like anything that we care about remembering. "Okay, the king had a garden. Big deal." But again, that's because of the way we're thinking when we read the text and they would have thought a bit differently. Schaper goes on and says:

The connection between gardens and kings is less obvious in the Hebrew Bible than it is in the Mesopotamian literature, but it is nevertheless present.

And he goes on to talk about how it's surprising to him that scholars who talk about the cosmic mountain/the cosmic garden and New Testament scholars as well (because he's angling toward John)... He's very verbal about this in the article. It surprises him that more scholars haven't spent more time on this, because it's kind of hard to miss when you really start drilling down into it. For instance, in the article, he'll point out that the term *paradeisos*... Remember I mentioned that earlier. That's the way that the Septuagint typically translates the Garden of Eden—the *gan* (Hebrew word for garden is *gan*) that is typically *paradeisos* in the Septuagint. So it has this denotation of paradise. Well, that actually is a Median loanword (you know, the Medes and the Persians). Well, if the Medes... This term (the Greek term *paradeisos* has actually been demonstrated to be a Median word originally (*paridaeza*). *Pari* means “around” and *daeza* is an enclosure. So a *paridaeza* (or a *paradeisos*, going into Greek) is some kind of walled enclosure that is probably lush. On the inside of it, they're probably growing things. But it's a walled enclosure. And it's obvious that the Medes are linked to the Persians in the Old Testament and, in turn, other Second Temple literature, because the Persian period butts up right against the beginning of the Second Temple period. Those things are obvious.

But I just want to sort of throw out one thing. If somebody in this audience that's listening to this wants to presume that the biblical paradise motifs and ideas come from Persia... In other words, “Oh, the Torah was written during the Persian period. None of it existed prior to the exile,” and all this kind of stuff, well that's extreme and they'd be mistaken. They'd be *quite* mistaken. For instance, Schaper's article gets into this a little bit. He just wants to say the same thing, but I'm going to belabor it a little bit. He quotes Jan Bremmer's work, for instance. And Bremmer is a familiar name, at least to me. He specializes in ancient Near Eastern and Greek connections. He has an essay entitled “Paradise: From Persia, via Greece, to the Septuagint”. And he also notes the Median origin of the term and the overreach of the data when people try to say that “all this biblical stuff is Persian.” So just a little snippet from the citation of Bremmer. He says:

The term *paridaeza* entered Hebrew as פֶּרְדִּים and Greek as παράδεισος. Unfortunately it is virtually impossible to arrive at certain conclusions regarding the usage and meaning of the term in Median since, as Bremmer points out, being faced “with the absence of early Iranian material [MH: in other words, that's literature that's old enough to sort of precede the Septuagint here, and we don't have a whole lot of that for Persian] we will have to take recourse to its use as loanword in more or less contemporary Akkadian and Elamite texts in order to reconstruct its meaning in the oldest period of the Persian, multicultural empire.” Indeed, neither the Median nor the Old Persian form of the term is documented in the extant Old Persian material.

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You don't have a single instance of this term in the Persian literature that actually exists that predates the Septuagint. So again, for those internet theologians who would list to this and, “Oh yeah. It's all late. None of this stuff existed prior to the

Persian era. This is where the Hebrews get all their theology.” No. No, no, no, no, no. Just try again.

So I just wanted to throw that out because I think it’s important, at least for this audience. Now in some regards, some of this is going to be familiar for another reason, and that is we’ve had Rusty Osborne on the podcast before, and he spoke at our Naked Bible Conference. Rusty is the guy who did all the work on ancient Near Eastern kings and trees. Well, trees are parts of gardens. So we actually, back in episode 222, touched on a little bit of this (Rusty did) as we interviewed him about this topic. So again, I’m just hoping that some of this is stimulating some memory and also for those who didn’t listen to that earlier material or don’t have *Unseen Realm*, what we’re trying to do here is set up a simple thought. The gods (or God) dwell(s) in a garden. God is king. The kings (the leaders who follow and the institutions of divine presence) are going to be characterized in garden terms because this is paradise. This is utopia. This is Eden. And it’s very natural for things that come later on in the Old Testament that are going to take our minds back to Eden because they are part of the restoration path toward the ultimate Eden (in the future)... This would be just the most normal thing to do, if you want to keep this in people’s heads, keep this in the mind. We have a temple here because this is God’s presence and ultimately this is headed somewhere. Messiah is going to come and all these different thoughts that are going to culminate in a garden with a king. God is king. And for New Testament Christians, that’s going to be the returning Christ. So this is the framework that we’re creating here, and we’re going to take it back to John 20, right after the resurrection.

Now I want to get into a few specific references here because *paradeisos* is not the only Greek term that is used to translate *gan* (the Hebrew word for garden). There’s another one. And scholars like to argue about “Is this significant?”. But the other one is *kepos*. And this, it turns out, is the word that’s actually used in John. John doesn’t use *paradeisos*. He uses this word. So a little snippet here from Schaper:

The Septuagint at times translates גן with κηπος, and it also does so when royal or other leading characters are involved in one way or another.

Then he cites a couple passages. He cites 2 Kings 21:18. Let’s go to 2 Kings 21:18 and take a look at that. This is stuff that’s just so easy to read over. Manasseh has died. Manasseh was a horrible king. But we read this in 2 Kings 21:18:

¹⁸ And Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza, and Amon his son reigned in his place.

And a few verses later, when it comes time for Amon to kick the bucket, we have verse 25 (same chapter):

²⁵ Now the rest of the acts of Amon that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²⁶ And he was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza [MH: basically, the same place as his father], and Josiah his son reigned in his place.

So it's kind of odd. We've got this... The king's palace would naturally be in Jerusalem. And there's a garden there, and that's where they're buried (at least these kings, anyway). A couple of other references to this sort of thing (the king's garden) that are just interesting. You have Jeremiah 52:7:

⁷ Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled and went out from the city by night by the way of a gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah.

This is just a reference to the Babylonian invasion. Esther 7:7: now this one's going to be outside of Jerusalem, obviously. So it's not an Israelite context, but the same thing is going on here. This is Haman. Haman's going to get hanged.

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⁷ And the king arose in his wrath from the wine-drinking and went into the palace garden, but Haman stayed to beg for his life from Queen Esther, for he saw that harm was determined against him by the king.

So the king (Ahasuerus) to whom Esther is married, and they set up Haman.... You know the story of Esther. That king has a palace garden. It's kind of normal.

Now the next one is really interesting. We're going to come back to this a couple of times. But Nehemiah 3:16. And for those who... I'm going to mention the Septuagint here again, because all of these in the Septuagint that I'm reading are *kepos*. They're not *paradeisos*. They're *kepos*. And this one turns out to have some real interest here. Nehemiah 3:16. If you have an English translation of the Septuagint, there is no Nehemiah 3:16 in the Septuagint. The reference is 2 Esdras 13:16. That's the name for Nehemiah in the Septuagint and the numbering system is just quite different. But that's what it is. And it's *kepos*. Let me just read the verse. And I'll read it from the Lexham English Septuagint here. It's going to be verse 16. So 2 Esdras 13:16 or, if you're in Logos, you can just link these two together (Nehemiah 3:16).

Behind him Nehemiah, son of Azbuk, a ruler around the area of Beth-zur, took possession as far as the garden [MH: now catch this] of the tomb of David.

Isn't that interesting? Where David (to whom is given the Jerusalemite dynasty) is buried, there was a garden. Lo and behold. Who would have expected that? And again, since our subject today is Jesus being "mistaken" for the gardener, yeah, Mary made that mistake, but the question is, "Did John?" Or is John deliberately including this episode with its details, not so that readers like us would wonder, "Well, we've going to figure out how Mary didn't know him. We've going to do apologetics now." Or is he doing it to make his readers think, "Oh, okay. Jesus, son of David, Messiah, buried where he is. The whole story." [laughs] And then "he's the gardener." [laughs] "Of course." This is what we're angling for here. But we're still in the Old Testament. I'm just telegraphing that—that the Nehemiah reference is interesting. And it's *kepos*. It's the same word used in John, the garden there at the tomb of David.

So the question where we are in the episode obviously is, "Is there significance to the use of both terms?" So we've got *paradeisos* used most of the time for *gan* (garden) but then you also get the *kepos*. Is there any significance to the two terms? Is there some, like, crucial difference between them? Or is it a distinction without a difference? Just a couple of thought trajectories. To telegraph this a little bit, I think it's sort of a distinction without a difference. And you'll figure out why as we go through here.

A couple of thoughts here.

1) Both terms are used of the residence of kings. Both of them. You'll see *paradeisos* and you'll see *kepos* used of the residence of kings. One is frequently more abstractly the cosmic mountain idea (that's *paradeisos*). At least it's more explicit. But as we're going to see... And we sort of already have, because here we have a *kepos* with the tomb of David. David's in Jerusalem (Zion). So really the terms overlap. But again, just to proceed through some of the data (because the data is interesting), both of the terms do get used of the residence of kings and then sometimes the lines blur.

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A footnote here—a little sidebar. Prior to the time of Hezekiah, David and other Davidic kings of Judah were buried in the city of David. That would make sense, because again, with the Davidic monarchy thing going on... There are a couple of exceptions. And I'm going to reference an article here. And I believe I did put this in the protected folder. S. Yeivin. This is an older article. It's called "The Sepulchers of the Kings of the House of David." This is the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 7:1. It's 1948. And it's about 15 pages (30-45). So what Yeivin does is he goes through all the places where the kings are buried. Really it's all of them post-David. He mentions a little bit what going on before David. But once David conquers Jerusalem, we've got the Davidic dynasty going on there, and... He and the kings that follow him are typically (if they're from his line) are going to be buried in the city of David, which would make sense. Now Yeivin goes through the exceptions. I'm not going to worry about the exceptions now because for our purpose, they're not important. But there were just some episodic things that a

couple of kings wound up not being buried there. And it isn't because they were wicked. There are just some more odd circumstances. But if you were a Davidide, you're going to get buried in the city of David. If you were a bad guy, you may not be buried in one particular sepulcher. You might be buried somewhere else. Like Manasseh is buried in the garden of his palace, but it's still in the city of David—that sort of thing. So Yeivin's article does a nice job of going through all that material. I'm going to quote from it in a little bit.

2) Second point: There are connections. This is a little bit repetitive from what we had said a little bit earlier about how the terms *paradeisos* and *kepos* (these two Greek terms that show up in the Septuagint, both translations of Hebrew *gan* — garden)... So this is a little bit repetitious, but there are connections between those terms, not just because they overlap in a few places, but also because of the way in particular you've got one of these things sort of qualified. For instance, in Ezekiel 36:35, we read this. This is the Septuagint. I'm reading from the Lexham English Septuagint.

They will say, "The land became destroyed like a garden of delight and the deserted and blotted out and utterly destroyed cities sat secure."

Now that's a bit of an odd translation. But if we go over to the English Bible (something rendering the Hebrew text), you'll get the point.

And they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden..."

So in Lexham English Septuagint, because the Greek verb there has "the land became destroyed like a garden of delight." That doesn't make much sense. But again, it's awkward there. But what the real idea here is, this is Ezekiel talking about the demise of Jerusalem. We did a whole series on Ezekiel and this is the chapter that Jerusalem gets destroyed (and the temple). A lot hinges on this particular chapter. And the whole point is that this place (Jerusalem) was supposed to be like Eden, and then we had the exile and it got destroyed. But on the other side of that, Ezekiel 36 is going to go into Ezekiel 37 and talk about the resurrection of the nation and so on and so forth. Basically, Ezekiel doesn't want to leave them hopeless, and he says, "Look, yeah, there's going to come a day..." If we go back to verse 33,

"On that day I will cleanse you from all your iniquities," says the Lord God.

"Eventually I'm going to forgive you. You're going to come back here, and the reverse is going to happen. The land that is destroyed currently is going to become like the Garden of Eden. And everything that's waste and desolate (the ruined cities) are going to become fortified and inhabited. There's going to be this total reversal."

Now why bring this up? Because in the Septuagint, even though it's kind of clunky, the word for garden here is *kepos* (the one that's not "paradise"), but the garden (*kepos*) here in the Septuagint is followed by another word. If you remember in the Septuagint translation it was the "garden of delight". There's a Greek word there (*tryphe*). That's the word for delight. And that word is used in the Septuagint in Genesis 2 and 3 to describe Eden. So here you have an instance where *kepos* (the Greek word that's not "paradise") is described in the same way that Eden is. It is paradise. The point I'm trying to make here is that yes, these terms are different, but I think it's a distinction without a difference. I don't think that you can... And some scholars... There are very few scholars (as Schaper pointed out) that even notice—even think about—John 20 (the garden) with the king as gardener in the ancient Near East. Very few scholars have even stumbled across that and tried to run it down. And among the few that have, there will be some that say, "Well, you know, John isn't doing anything here with Genesis or anything like that. He's not using anything in the Old Testament because he doesn't use the word *paradeisos*. And that's the Genesis word. That's the Garden of Eden word." Well, big deal. He uses *kepos* and *kepos* is described the way Eden was, anyway. So this is why I think this is a distinction without a difference.

40:00

So I wanted to get that out of the way, because some of you, if you follow up this episode and you do your own study, you're going to run into that. There's more to it, though. There's even more to it. Remember the references I read to you in 2 Kings? Manasseh and Amon are buried in the garden of Uzzah. Well Yeivin has a discussion... This is the article on "The Sepulchers of the Kings of the House of David" in Jerusalem. In his article, he discusses this phrase. And there's basically a debate here. Uzzuah. A lot of scholars think that that's a variant spelling of King Uzziah (and I'll telegraph right away, that's where I'm at). And then others will say, "No, it's Uzzah, the guy who got killed because he touched the ark. He had a garden somewhere. He's buried somewhere." Okay. Well, Yeivin comments on this. And he says:

Can this Garden of Uzzah, where the last kings of Judah were buried, be identified with any plausibility? It has already been noted that Uzziah [MH: the king] was buried "in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings"; it is just possible that this field had been called, ever since Uzziah, the Field of Uzziah (or Uzzah) or the Garden of Uzzah. David resided in the citadel, in which he felt safe even in the event of war or siege [MH: the citadel in this place]. Solomon, too, had his residence there [MH: in this field or in this garden] at first [MH: this is where Solomon lived early on]; however, since he did not wage any wars and peace prevailed during his reign, he built himself a palace in what in his time was the northern part of Jerusalem. During the reigns of Solomon's successors, however, Jerusalem was almost constantly waging war and in danger of possible sieges; it therefore seems reasonable to expect those kings to have had a preference for

the old residence within the precincts of the fortified citadel [MH: where this garden was], and they may even have erected a new palace there. Such a palace could have been built either by Azariah (Uzziah) or Hezekiah, for both had carried out large building programs in the realm generally and in Jerusalem in particular. Whether a new palace was or was not erected within the citadel, it seems probable that the later kings sought to increase the amenities of their residence and to find room for a garden adjoining their place of abode. Open ground within the citadel could not have been too extensive.

What would have been more natural than to convert “the field of burial belonging to the kings,” which must have been in the vicinity of the palace, into a garden adjoining the residence? Water for such a garden could have been obtained through the old Jebusite *sinnôr*. Now it will not be difficult to identify the Garden of Uzzah [MH: or Uzziah] of the royal residence with “the field of the burial belonging to the kings,” where King Uzziah was buried.

So there’s a way (this is why I read this) to connect this Garden of Uzzah with a royal residence. And it’s not just idiosyncratic to Manasseh or Amon (his son). But this place—this garden—is associated with other kings (David and Solomon). They’re not buried there, but they lived there, at least in part. During different times of their reigns, there was a residence there. So there are these connection points. The terms overlap.

45:00

Now for our purposes, to summarize the point, there are connections between David, post-Davidic burials, an enclosed garden, the royal residence, and paradise language in both terms (*paradeisos* and *kepos*). These things overlap; they are points of connection in the Old Testament. In passages that are pretty obscure... Like who cares about the king’s gardens and what his house looked like and all that kind of stuff? But for the sake of this purpose, if you’re an Israelite and you know where the king lives and you know these things, there’s going to be, if you’ve at least been taught anything by your rabbi or your teacher or wherever you’re getting your religious knowledge from (the priesthood somewhere), there’s going to be these associations that form a matrix of ideas in your head about the king’s house and the garden and who he is and why he’s here and all these sorts of things, especially if it’s David, because of the promise given to David about the legitimacy of the throne in Jerusalem and then ultimately a messiah figure. So why this is important is because John 20:15 uses *kepos*, as does John 19:41. Let’s just back up a little bit. John 20:15 is mistaking him to be the gardener. This is the scene, there in the *kepos*. But there’s an earlier verse (John 19:41).

⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

“In the *kepos* a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.” And this is where Jesus gets buried and where he rises. He’s in the *kepos*. And if you go back to the Septuagint, this is by virtue of the Nehemiah 3:16 (or if you’re reading the Septuagint, it’s 2 Esdras)... I’m going to read it to you again. This is from the Septuagint.

Behind him Nehemiah, son of Azbuk, a ruler around the area of Beth-zur, took possession as far as the garden [MH: the *kepos*] of the tomb of David.

Okay. At this point, you should be thinking, “Okay, garden tomb. David had a garden tomb. How about that? Jesus had a garden tomb as well.” There’s actually direct connection [laughs] between John 19 and John 20 and this obscure reference to this particular garden associated with the tomb of David. Now I want to switch gears a little bit here and say a few things about—specifically drill down into the New Testament side of this. So Schaper writes this. He’s getting into the New Testament part of his article and he’s quoting C.K. Barrett, who was a famous New Testament commentator.

As Barrett rightly points out, [John] 19.41 is “preparing for [John] 20.15” where Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene as the gardener... [MH: he says, “We’re going to return to this in a moment, but...] the interesting point is that Barrett, Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and all the other great commentators on the Gospel of John—certainly all those I have been able to consult—fail to see the royal and messianic connotations of [MH: these verses]... The only commentator who comes close to realizing it, but then he takes a wrong turn, is Raymond Brown...

This is Father Brown in his massive John commentary in the Anchor Bible series. It’s two volumes. He discusses it when he’s talking about some of the views of the church fathers and Aquinas. So Schaper is lamenting the fact that... Here this is. This is just laying the table for a direct association with David. And you’ll scarcely ever find it in a commentary. Continuing, he writes this:

It is indeed a remarkable fact that the ancient world is full of examples of royal burials in palace gardens. This is a general observation, but there is also the special significance of the garden of 2 Kings 21:18, 26 [MH: which we read, connected with Manasseh and Amon, and the mention of the King’s Garden in various verses] ... and Nehemiah 3.16 [MH: of course, through the Septuagint] links the King’s Garden with the tomb of David. Acts 2.29 actually refers to that tomb, as does Josephus (*Jewish War* 1.61). As Stordalen [MH: he’s quoting another source now who has done a lot of work on Edenic imagery in the Old Testament] rightly points out,

Assuming that the short notes [i.e., in the passages just quoted] contain historically reliable information, one would concede that the King’s Garden

was located in the Kidron Valley, outside and to the south-east of the Jebusite citadel. Judging from archeological remains, such a garden would have been watered through channels and aqueducts from the Gihon source, possibly also from En-rogel near the floor of the valley.

Again, this is more connection. This is another scholar that connects this with David and his time at the citadel. All of this blends together to create an identification between Jesus and David.

One more article here just to reference this. This is also in the protected folder. James Cregan. It's called "Jesus the Gardener: A Revised Perspective of a Favourite New Testament Scene," and this is in a collection of conference papers from the University of Notre Dame in Australia in 2012. He writes this. And he interacts with Schaper, which is why I wanted to include this. He says:

50:00

...[A]ccording to Schaper, is the point that John is making both implicitly and explicitly through a combination of references [MH: goes in a specific direction to David]... These references would have been accepted and understood by his [MH: the Gospel writer, John's] audience [MH: they would've understood these things], both historically, and also religiously through their connection to the Hebrew Scriptures where, for example, the King's Garden features as the resting place of both Manasseh and Amon. Extending this point, the Septuagint translation of Nehemiah 3:16, in particular, connects the King's Garden, in the Kidron Valley, next to the site of the ancient Temple, with the tomb of David, as does Acts 2:29, which simultaneously draws a connection between the presence of David's tomb among the faithful with the resurrection of Christ. John, describing the burial of Jesus (19:38b-42) implicitly references this through placing Jesus's body in a new tomb within a garden, that was also the place of Jesus's crucifixion. We should also note that the Gihon, one of the four rivers of creation issuing from Eden, which fed the gardens of the Kidron valley, through the King's Garden, was also the site of royal coronations. [MH: What about that?] Thus Solomon is anointed and proclaimed king at the Gihon (1 Kings 1:33-34, 44-45); similarly Psalm 110, depending on your translation, describes the messiah, king and priest, drinking from the Gihon, either as part of a victory procession or a ritualistic aspect of a coronation rite.

Now there's a lot in that quote. But not only do we have a direct association (by virtue of the garden and Jesus being the gardener) with David, just in terms of a garden tomb, but now we get coronation. And isn't the resurrection... [laughs] We talked about this two episodes ago—the crucifixion and the resurrection as the coronation of Jesus. It's what validates him as king. All of this is just floating right beneath the surface. You're looking at the garden tomb—the garden tomb where Jesus is crucified and is buried and rises again, where Mary encounters him and doesn't recognize him right away. But that isn't John's point. John's point

is, “Do you see where Jesus was crucified? Do you see where he was buried? It’s a garden tomb. Does that ring any bells for you, folks? And you know, this garden tomb is watered by the Gihon. You know what happened at the Gihon? Yeah, that’s right. That’s where kings were crowned.” This is what he’s angling for. [laughs] It’s really kind of crazy, when you think about it. All these little threads that sort of converge in these sorts of situations. So there it is. The point of the scene in John 20:15... I’m going to go back to Schaper now and read his conclusion.

Taking all the above into account, and realizing that the location of the historical King’s Garden is likely to have been in the Kidron Valley, it becomes extremely likely that the mention of the garden, and indeed of a garden in the Kidron Valley (John 18.1)...

We haven’t even brought up that verse yet. John’s tracking: 18:1, 19:41, 20:15-16. He leads you by the nose to this conclusion, to this scene. He’s setting you up, as a writer. Back to the quote here:

...in the Gospel of John was intended to make an extremely important symbolic point: the tomb of Jesus, like that of David and other Davidic rulers, is located in a garden (most likely, in the traditional King’s Garden mentioned in the Scriptures). Also, the amount of spices Nicodemus is said to have provided for the grave is appropriate for a royal burial. The implicit statement is that Jesus is the legitimate heir of David and the Messiah of Israel. This is reinforced by the fact that the risen Christ appears to Mary Magdalene as the...

We haven’t even... I waited until this quote just to give you this. But the word for garden is *kepos*. What’s the word for gardener? *κηπουρός*. Even the choice of that term takes you back into these other things.

This is reinforced by the fact that the risen Christ appears to Mary Magdalene as the *κηπουρός*, the gardener. This, too, carries royal overtones, since kings in the ancient Near East were... often depicted as gardeners.

Now I would *love* to go down into the “king as gardener” point, but I’m going to... I know there are those in the audience who just can’t wait to find these sorts of sources. And most of these, I believe, are online.

1) Nicolas Wyatt, “A Royal Garden: The Ideology of Eden,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament: An International Journal of Nordic Theology*, 1-35. He’s going to have material in that article about kings in the ancient Near East portrayed as gardeners.

2) There's a Trinity Western dissertation by Jeehoon Brian Kim called *YHWH as Gardener in the Old Testament with Special Reference to Psalm 104*. That is in the protected folder.

3) There's another article by Duk Joon Park, "YHWH IS A GARDENER AND ZION HIS GARDEN: A STUDY OF THE GARDEN METAPHOR IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH." That's a Westminster Theological Seminary dissertation. Also in the protected folder.

4) Donald Patrick, who is a horticulturalist, "Imperial Gardens of Mesopotamia: Landscapes of Power". He has material in there about how kings in the ancient Near East are portrayed as gardeners. It's an obscure subject, but there's actually a lot of material there. This one is on academia.edu.

There's a lot of this material out there, but I think for our purposes, the real conclusion is the point... Might as well throw Cregan in here. I've given you the other two conclusions. Here's Cregan's conclusion in his article:

The mention of the garden in John 19 and 20 was intended to make an extremely important symbolic point. This is to argue that in locating Jesus's tomb in a garden, like that of David and other Davidic rulers, Jesus is depicted by John "as a true Davidide and King Messiah, buried in the King's Garden and demonstrating his messiahship by rising from the grave in the very same garden in which, according to tradition... David's tomb was located."

"I'm the Davidic heir. I am the messiah. I am the king, and my kingdom will have no end. I just rose from the dead. Are there any questions?" You know? The theological telegraphing that's going on here in this simple phrase in John 20 is why I wanted to do this topic. I mean, there are things like this... And I know you probably get tired of me saying it. But there are just things like this in the pages of your Bible just lurking there, waiting to be discovered. Because when you go to John 20, I'm like anybody else. I went a lot of years without ever reconsidering John 20 because I was prone to read it the same way. "Well Mary should know that. What's going on here? I've got to go dust off my Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties and try to figure this out for an apologetic purpose." That isn't even remotely in John's mind. John is doing what he's doing and using this episode with Mary... Of all the things he could have used, he uses this episode in the garden with Mary not to make his reader... This isn't Final Jeopardy for the people reading his Gospel. That isn't what John's doing. [laughs] "You know, here's a great Final Jeopardy question. How did Mary not know...?" That's just not even on the table. What he wants people to see is the *location*. And again, how she just mistook him for the *gardener*. He wants that term. He wants that word in there because of what it's going to do to the readers' head in connecting these theological dots.

So again, it's kind of an obscure topic, but there you go. Maybe... Is it less...? We could have a poll, Trey, as we wrap up here. Is this one less obscure or more obscure than the honeycomb? Which is it? But we've been dealing with some obscure things here, but there's a lot packed into this subject, as there was in that one.

TS: Yeah, I'm going to say it's more obscure. But how many more are out there? You know? It's like... [MH laughs] I feel like now the Bible's riddled with this.

MH: There are a lot of things hidden in plain sight. And to us, it is. And I like these things because it illustrates how... "Well, sure, Mike. If I'd have lived back then, I would be seeing this stuff, too." Yeah, that's kind of the point.

TS: Yeah.

MH: [laughs] That's what we do here. To try to convince you to do the work, to try to get them in your head so that you *do* notice these things. And if you notice enough of them... I'm glad. I *want* you to be suspicious. I want you to suspect that there's something going on in just about every paragraph. [laughs] That's a good thing. It puts you into thinking mode, which is always a good thing with Scripture.

TS: Yeah. I feel like we're *really* Indiana Jones of the Bible now, going treasure hunting for these. [MH laughs] Because literally every word now, you could tinker with the translation or something. So I feel like there's just too much. I'm overwhelmed right now, Mike. You're overwhelming me. [MH laughs]

MH: Well, let's go back to quarantine. [laughs] Oh, my, the safety of quarantine. There you go.

1:00:00 **TS:** It feels like we're treasure hunting now. We're finding these rocks and overturning them.

MH: That's not a bad metaphor. Honestly.

TS: Do you know what we're going to go hunting for next week? Any ideas?

MH: Nope. I have a list. I look over the list about midweek and it's like, "Yeah, let's do that." You know? I have a short list, but I don't know what's going to jump out at me.

TS: Alright. Well, we'll be looking forward to that. These are always good. I like these episodes. And I know our audience does, too. So with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.