

## Getting the Garden Right

By Richard C. Barcellos

Review on May 30, 2018

Not all book my reviews are going to be glowingly favorable. That is the case today; I am reviewing a book that I am not recommending. I recently read Getting the Garden Right by Richard C. Barcellos. I studied this book with a group of pastors who meet once a month. This is the fourth book we have finished since I arrived in Arkport in February of 2017. This book, like the other three books before it, is focused on the distinctions between and definitions of Covenant Theology, New Covenant Theology and Progressive Covenant Theology. The book is a theological workout, but the workout is very focused. It is kind of like going to the gym and only working on one muscle group.

There were two discussion threads in this book that I found informative. First, there was the rich discussion on whether or not there was a Covenant of Works that governed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Second, there was the discussion as to whether or not Christians are obliged to observe the (a) Sabbath. Our group did a video tele-conference with the author to discuss points in his book that were difficult to grasp or with which we strongly disagreed. He is a very thoughtful Bible scholar and argued for his position with grace and deep regard for the authority of Scripture.

### THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

I never cease to be surprised when I read a familiar Scripture passage and my mind is held captive by something that I never noticed before. That happened to me this week in my personal devotions time. I was reading James chapter 4 (the YouVersion Bible verse of the day came from that chapter). James 4:5 reads:

...do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? (NASB)

This verse has a variety of translations. Many translations have a lower case "spirit," but I think this makes little sense in light of the "which He has made to dwell in us."

Accepting the NASB translation, I delight that God jealously desires the Holy Spirit to fulfill His purpose in our life, which is to guide us out of faithless living (see James 4:4) and to transform us ever more completely into the image of Christ. As the Called Children of God, we should therefore expect that tepid

faith and careless living would be accompanied by dissatisfaction, because our jealous God will not reward our rebellion but rather chastise us in love. I rejoice that God loves his children enough to shepherd our lives and chastise us as needed.