

Garden of Eden Parable

The story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is the greatest parable in the Bible. It is supremely important because it explains the real nature of our life here on earth. It tells us about ourselves and how we bring about the conditions in which we live. When you thoroughly understand the Garden of Eden story you will understand human nature, and when you understand human nature, you will have dominion over it.

This parable is placed almost at the beginning of the Bible because it is the foundation upon which the whole of the Bible is built; and all the rest of the Bible, to the end of Revelation, assumes an understanding of the Garden of Eden parable.

The Bible is not primarily intended to teach history, or biography, or natural science. It is intended to teach psychology and metaphysics. It deals primarily with states of mind and the laws of mental activity; and anything else is only incidental.

Each of the principal characters in the Bible represents a state of mind that any of us may experience; and the events that happen to the various characters illustrate the consequences to us of entertaining such states of mind, either good or bad.

Some of the Bible characters, such as Moses, Elijah, and Paul, are historical figures. They were real men who lived on earth and did the deeds attributed to them; nonetheless they represent states of mind also, and, of course, they outpictured different states of mind at different times as their lives unfolded.

Other Bible characters, such as Adam and Eve, the Prodigal, the Good Samaritan are, of course, fictional and never had an actual existence; but they express states of mind too, and always in a remarkably simple and graphic manner.

Now a state of mind cannot be viewed or pictured directly as can a material object. It can only be described indirectly, by a figure of speech, an allegory, or a parable, but, unfortunately, thoughtless people have always tended to take the figure of speech or the allegory literally, at its face value, thus missing the real meaning, because it lies hidden beneath.

Another problem that follows from this course is that, since many parables obviously cannot be literally true, such people, unable to accept the authenticity of the story, proceed to reject the Bible altogether as a collection of falsehoods. The fundamentalist, on the other hand, does violence to his common sense in trying to make himself believe that these parables are literally true.

You cannot take a pencil and draw a picture of fear for instance; but you can draw a picture of a human being, and depict terror on his countenance. You cannot take a brush and paint remorse, or envy, or sensuality as such; but you can take a pen and write about a great fire, and about a soul suffering torment in the flames, and then you will have an excellent description of suffering. So the Bible uses this method to impart its teaching. It uses outer concrete things to express inner, subjective or abstract ideas. As Paul says, these things are an allegory.

Adam and Eve

In the Garden of Eden story many people seem to think that Eve symbolizes woman as a sex and that Adam somehow stands for man as a sex, but this is absurd. Adam and Eve represent one person. They represent you and me and every other man and woman on the globe. They stand for

the human being as we know him. Adam means the body, and Eve means the soul or human mind, which consists of the intellect and the feeling nature.

In the Bible, woman always means the soul. The story says that Eve ate a certain fruit, and that as a result of eating it she and Adam were turned out of Paradise, and incurred all the pains and sorrows that human nature knows. This is the great parable because it lays down the Great Law at one stroke.

The fact is that the body cannot experience anything that does not first appear in the *mind*; and the mind cannot entertain any conviction without its effect appearing upon the body or embodiment.

So it is not by chance that the fatal fruit was first eaten by Eve (mind) and not by Adam (body). The body cannot do anything to the soul because the body is effect and not cause. The body is a shadow cast by the mind, and the shadow cannot do anything to affect the object by which it is cast.

At this point you should note carefully that the word body means the complete embodiment of the subject, and includes not only his physical body but all his material surroundings of every kind.

The Great Law of human nature is that one's surroundings at any time are but the outer expression or outpicturing of his conscious (and subconscious) mind at the moment. States of mind never result from outer conditions (although, of course, they seem to do so until we analyze the situation thoroughly), but it is always the outer picture which is produced by the mental state. Eve (mind) can bring trouble upon Adam (body) or she can present him with harmony; but Adam cannot do anything to Eve. Unless the soul (mind) first eats the forbidden fruit of fear, anger, greed, etc., the embodiment will be harmonious and free; but anything that the soul (mind) does consume or entertain must and will appear on the body.

There seems to be a popular belief that it was an apple that Eve ate, but the Bible knows nothing about this.

This is the essential significance of the Garden of Eden parable, and we will now consider the details in logical order, at some length. Every one of these details is extremely important and instructive. Each one of them gives us an important clue to our own nature, but they are still secondary to the great central theme that: *This is a mental universe, and that it is the mind that produces all phenomena.*

Of course, Eve (mind) tempts Adam (body), and Adam blames Eve because, as we have seen, nothing can happen to the body that does not first find itself in the soul (mind).

You may say that something has happened to your body that you knew nothing about previously, but there must have been a corresponding thought or mental equivalent in your mind or the thing itself could not have happened to you. The explanation is that it was in the unconscious part of your mind and so you knew nothing about it, but nevertheless it was there.

"Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." [Genesis 3:23](#)

Our belief in the reality of evil and limitation is the cause of all our troubles. It is the cause of sickness. It is the cause of quarrels and inharmony. It is the cause of poverty. For when we *know* the Truth of Being instead of only *believing* it, we shall not have to toil and drudge for a living, but our thought will be creative, and we shall demonstrate what we need.

In the meantime, because Eve has eaten the forbidden fruit—because the race believes in limitation—we have to toil for a living.

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." [Genesis 3:16](#)

As a result of the fall—the belief in limitation—the soul (human mind) produces new ideas with much labor and trouble. Artistic creations and new inventions come to the race slowly and with difficulty. The real, spiritual man, can have anything he needs at any moment by speaking the creative Word.

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." [Genesis 3:24](#)

Eating the forbidden fruit—believing in limitation or separation from God—is the fall of man, and by it we are driven out of Paradise and must remain outside until the false *belief* is relinquished. The law of harmony prevents the holder of a false belief from getting into Paradise, no matter from what direction he may try.

The Fruit

The first point that we have to note is the nature of the fruit that Eve ate. It is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Note this very carefully.

What kind of tree is specified?

It is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and so the meaning is obviously allegorical. No such tree grows literally on the earth. This point proves beyond question that the story is an allegory and is meant to be taken as such.

There seems to be a popular belief that it was an apple that Eve ate, but the Bible knows nothing about this. What she ate was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Fall of Man

How people could ever have taken this wonderful allegory for historical fact it is hard to see, but such has happened, and all the orthodox theologies are founded upon a supposed "*fall of man*" caused by literally eating the fruit of an actual tree.

The account says:

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." [Genesis 2:16-17](#)

This clearly means that if we indulge in the knowledge of both good and evil we will suffer; that is to say, if we entertain both good and evil thoughts, trouble will come to us.

The trouble lies in the mixed fruit. It is the mixture of good and evil (negative) in our thinking that brings about our downfall.

When people think evil, the carnal (ego) mind always furnishes what seems to be a good reason for it.

When people criticize others, when they entertain thoughts of resentment and condemnation, when they fill their minds with thoughts of sickness, lack, and so forth, they are very apt to invent seemingly good reasons for so doing thereby deceive themselves, thus eating mixed fruit.

The law is that we must not think evil or wrongly under any circumstances or we will suffer the consequences.

Man has free will to think good or evil and he constantly chooses to think evil, and it is this evil thinking that is the "*fall of man.*"

Thus the fall of man is going on all the time, whenever we allow ourselves to think wrongly. It is not an event in the past but constant occurrence, and it is to be overcome by *training* ourselves to think rightly at all times.

The Serpent

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." Genesis 3:1-4

The serpent represents the lower nature. It stands for the carnal (ego) mind. The carnal mind, an expression which we owe to Paul, is the belief that we are separate from God, whereas in reality we are one with Him.

It (ego mind) is the belief that inner things are subservient to outer things, instead of the reverse, or that there is power in matter. This mistaken belief is well called the "*fall of man,*" for it is the cause of all our problems and difficulties.

That belief is an extremely subtle one. We all know only too well how easily it creeps into our thinking, without our being aware of it.

We accept the Jesus Christ teaching; we think we understand it; and yet we constantly catch ourselves forgetting it at important times. Such error is therefore very well depicted as a serpent or snake, which, with its silent, subtle movements, strikes its victim without warning.

They Were Naked

The world thinks that by analyzing evil, studying it, filling our minds with it, we shall obtain power over it.

"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." [Genesis 3:5](#)

Of course, the opposite is the truth. The only way to overcome evil is to refuse to touch it mentally—or, if we have already done so, to un-know it.

The great parable goes on to say that when the couple had eaten this fruit they realized that they were naked and they were afraid. As soon as we allow evil or negative thoughts to obtain a hold on our minds, fear grips us and we feel unprotected or "naked" in that sense, and we look about for some material thing to save us—whereas our only salvation is to know that evil is not real.

Before eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were not conscious of being unprotected or naked. The parable goes on to explain that in the cool of the day they heard the voice of God challenging them. This means that after the harm has been done, when we have entertained negative thoughts and begun to suffer the consequences we have time to reflect, and then we turn to God and wonder what He will think or do about it.

What Is Your Ego Personality?

Adam and Eve represent the human being as we know him. This is not the real spiritual man who is perfect and eternal, but the person that we know here on this plane.

Now, what is the human being? What is your human personality, for instance?

It is your sincere opinion of yourself, or, to put it philosophically, it is your concept of yourself, that and nothing more. You are what you *really* believe yourself to be.

You experience what you *really* believe in. All there is to any phenomenon is our belief in it.

There is no difference between the thing and the thought of the thing. We often hear it said that thoughts are things, but the actual truth is that things are thoughts. From this follows that when you un-think a thing it disappears.

The world you live in is the world of your own beliefs. You created it by thinking it, and you can destroy it at any moment by un-thinking it. This is the meaning of the startling statement,

"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." [Genesis 3:19](#)

Again I would impress upon the reader not to forget the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind is that part of your mentality of which you are not aware.

You may be unaware that you have been holding a certain thought or a certain belief, and yet it may be in your subconscious, and if so it will affect your life, in spite of the fact that you did not consciously know of its existence. You probably picked it up in childhood.

The importance of prayer lies in the fact that prayer, and prayer alone, can and does redeem and re-educate the subconscious. Human belief is a temporary thing, always changing, falling into dust.

Your real spiritual Self understands; your temporary human self only believes.

Understanding is of Truth and is therefore permanent. It is the "firmament" of Genesis 1:6. The first chapter of Genesis deals with the spiritual man and eternal Truth. This section, the second and third chapters, deals with man as we know him, or think we know him, for the time being.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." [Genesis 3:15](#)

The enmity between the human soul and the serpent is easily understood, and here is a prophecy that mankind will ultimately overcome limitation and fear; that it shall bruise the head of the serpent.

Meanwhile, until this happens, the serpent will continue to give man a good deal of trouble. The "heel" refers to whatever is the most vulnerable spot—this may be a love of money, a tendency to criticism and condemnation, it may be sensuality, or anything else. The heel has always been a symbol of man's weak spot, for it is the place where he contacts the ground.

The Dream

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'" [Genesis 2:21-23](#)

"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living." [Genesis 3:20](#)

A deep sleep fell upon Adam and there is no mention in the Bible of his having reawakened, and indeed, our material lives are very little more than a dream of limitation, fear, and separation from God.

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." [Ephesians 5:14](#)

It is very interesting and significant to note that the word woman really means "one with" or "a part of" man, and emphasizes the fact that body and mind are one—that in fact the body is only the embodiment or outpicturing of the mind.

Many philosophers have spoken of the body as a garment which the soul assumes, or a vehicle in which it travels, or as a vessel which contains it as a vase may contain water; but these similes are totally false.

The body is no garment or independent vessel. It is the true picture of the soul or mentality. The body, if you like, is a shadow cast by the mind, copying it in every detail.

Adam feels intuitively that he and the woman are one, and he calls her Eve because she is the mother of all that is—the mind is the sole creator.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." [Genesis 2:24](#)

In the Bible, one's parents usually mean one's own past, because it is the common belief that our conditions today are caused by past events and that in this sense yesterday is the parent of today.

When Jesus told the man not to go back to bury his father he was not, of course, suggesting that the duties and decencies of life should be neglected.

He meant that the man was to stop thinking that he was limited by past mistakes. The man in question was probably burdened by some remorse or resentment concerning his past and was keeping himself out of the Kingdom in consequence.

The lesson here is that the only thought we have to deal with is the present one, and that if we heal that we shall experience harmony; for yesterday has no power over today, unless we think it has.

Today's experience is caused only by today's thoughts and beliefs, and not by the thoughts or by the events or conditions of yesterday, appearances notwithstanding. You are positively not in bondage to yesterday. Any bondage can only come from today's bondage thoughts.

Change today's thought and today's conditions must change to correspond, for Adam (body) and Eve (mind) are one. Just as Adam represents the human being who is deceived by the serpent, so Jesus represents the Christ power which is the understanding of truth that ultimately sets Adam free. When we suffer from a false belief it is the recognition of the Truth that liberates us.