

Essay on the Garden of Eden

By Dan Jensen (2024)

(In order to fully benefit from this essay, I recommend reading through my “works for beginners” first. They can be found on my website.)

It is very common for Atheists (especially Atheists), Agnostics, and liberals of all stripes to make fun of the Garden of Eden narrative as found in Genesis 2-3. Comments such as “magical garden,” “dirt man,” “talking snake,” “the evil fruit,” along with many others, are commonplace. When I first started attending a believing and orthodox church, my father was dismayed that I could even entertain the possibility of taking the narrative literally. Hence, in this essay I would like to take a moment to discuss some of the reasons the narrative is not actually nonsensical when taken literally as so many so-called skeptics in our culture presume.

If Adam and Eve really were the first humans to ever live and if they really were entirely innocent, both in nature and deed, as the early chapters of Genesis teach, then the narrative makes complete sense. God creating us from the ground is clearly intended to convey that we have physical bodies with properties that come from the physical realm. We have a definite physical component to our beings. God breathing into us His breath of life is plainly intended to show that He was adding to this physical aspect our souls. No other creatures are created in this fashion, and this is because we alone are made in the image of God. I understand that some theologians try to advocate for the notion that animals have souls, but the arguments are quite weak. We alone have both bodies and souls. Angels are souls or spirits. They can take physical form, but physicality is not a part of their innate nature. As far as Eve being taken from Adam, this is plainly to show that men and women are one. Eve was not created entirely separately to show that she is just as much the image of God as are men.

As far as the forbidden fruit, how else was God supposed to provide a test for our innocent first parents? Anything else He would have given them would have seemed just as trivial to us who live in a world that is stained with the most unimaginable evil. Our first parents could not have been tempted by such things as hate, violence, stealing, etc., precisely because such categories would have been entirely foreign to them. The entire point of the test was to see if they would avoid the temptation to know good and evil in its fullness. They obviously did not know evil yet! That is a core component of the narrative. I am not saying that God was constrained to use fruit. I am saying that He was constrained to use something along those lines for the reasons just elucidated.

Now, it will of course be objected that if they were so ignorant of evil, they could not have even understood the concept of disobeying God. God did give them the most basic understanding of sin. The point is that they did not and could not have comprehended evil in all of its depths. God was not angry with them for sinning because they ate a piece of fruit. He was angry with them because they rejected Him. That was what was being tested. Would they choose God or themselves? They were telling God to get lost. They were saying that they wanted to know all about good and evil in its depths and that they did not care about the consequences. That is no small thing whatsoever. God did not curse the universe because of a piece of fruit. That is to entirely miss the point of the narrative. The fruit was merely the vehicle for the sin, it was not the sin itself. God could have told them not to go swimming in the local stream. He could have used any number of other methods as the vehicle for the test that, again, would have seemed trivial in the extreme to us today. The point was to see if they would trust in Him or not.

Many object as to why God would need to give us a test in the first place. He did not on some level. God was not obligated to do things this way. He could have created us without a test and allowed us to live for a long while. He could have put us to death quietly and peacefully, without any fear or dread on our part, in His good timing. But, it would have been unjust for Him to give us something so wonderful as eternal life with

Him without in any way earning it. To say otherwise is not a philosophically sound conclusion.

As far as Satan being allowed to enter the serpent so as to be the mechanism for the temptation, this also makes sense given what the narrative tells us. It would make sense for God to allow something that was familiar to them to come to them to talk with them. Our first parents would not have known if any of the animals could talk or not. If Satan was allowed to come to them in a form that was unrecognizable to them, how would this have allowed Satan to converse with them? As far as God cursing snakes, this is obviously symbolic of His cursing of Satan. I'm not saying God did not actually curse snakes. The narrative plainly says that He did. I'm saying that the purpose of this was to be a permanent reminder of what Satan did. From a biblical standpoint, it is very clear that Satan and the demons have the power to enter into physical objects and control them to some extent. It is also clear that God allows them to do this in many cases. If one presupposes that the Bible is mythological from the outset, and presupposes Darwinism from the get-go as well, then of course the Genesis account makes little sense. If one takes the Bible at face value, then the account is neither silly or absurd in the slightest.

The Bible says nothing about the Garden, the fruit, or the snake being or having any magical properties. That is being read into the text for comical effect. It is intended to make people feel stupid for believing in the narrative. The fact that the so-called skeptics have to add concepts to the narrative that are not there only serves to show that they have no interest in dealing with the text in an honest manner. If one wishes to take the narrative at face value, but say that he or she still does not believe it is historically accurate, fine. I am happy to have that apologetic debate with you. That is not the purpose of this essay. I have written extensively about the other topic elsewhere on my website. As far as presupposing a Naturalist worldview, I have written about the reasons why such a stance is thoroughly untenable. That can be found in my essay on the supernatural. That essay can be found on my website.