

1. Education in the Garden of Eden (4Q 2020—Education)

Biblical Material: Gen. 2:7–23; Gen 3:1–6; 2 Pet. 1:3–11; 2 Pet. 2:1–17; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; Job 36:22.

Quotes

- Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil. *C. S. Lewis*
- Darwin demonstrated the falsity of this dogma. He shows that man has for thousands of ages steadily advanced; that the Garden of Eden is an ignorant myth; that the doctrine of original sin has no foundation in fact; that the atonement is an absurdity; that the serpent did not tempt, and that man did not “fall.” *Robert Green Ingersoll*
- Do you, good people, believe that Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden and that they were forbidden to eat from the tree of knowledge? I do. The church has always been afraid of that tree. It still is afraid of knowledge. *Clarence Darrow*
- This is where you first failed us. You gave us minds and told us not to think. You gave us curiosity and put a booby-trapped tree right in front of us... How were we supposed to resist evil when you didn't even tell us about it? *Richard Kadrey*
- As we read, ponder, and pray, there will come into our minds a view of the three gardens of God—the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Garden of the Empty Tomb where Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. *Bruce R. McConkie*
- It was not the apple on the tree but the pair on the ground that caused the trouble in the garden of Eden. *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

Questions

Why is it important to go back to the Garden of Eden when it comes to education? What was the problem with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? Doesn't this sound anti-education? What is the basis for Satan's system of education? How does this story and the educational process fit into the issues raised in the great controversy?

Bible summary

Gen. 2:7–23 and Gen 3:1–6 describe the situation in the Garden of Eden before and after the Fall. 2 Pet. 1:3–11 speaks of “continuing education” in our relationship with God and each other. False teachers and the way they undermine true education are described in 2 Pet. 2:1–17. Heb. 13:7, 17, 24 are verses that reference appreciation of leaders. There is no teacher like God (Job 36:22).

Comment

Let's admit we know next-to-nothing about education in the Garden of Eden. We are told that the Lord God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. However we don't know what they talked about. They were to work caring for the garden, so presumably some instruction was needed in this. The only clear command was to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—which has led some to see God as being anti-education, not wanting them to gain knowledge!

So much of this lesson is based on speculation, looking back from what we know now. We can of course imagine that both Adam and Eve started as “blank slates,” with only whatever

instincts had been “pre-programmed.” So they had much to learn, though they did not go through the usual childhood process.

In many ways the great controversy conflict for humanity can be summed up as the story of two gardens, Eden and Gethsemane. Let’s look at them and compare them:

<u>EDEN</u>	<u>GETHSEMANE</u>
Made by God	Made by man
Perfect	Imperfect
Beautiful	Marred
God visibly present	Not visibly present
Devil permitted	Devil rules
One temptation	Surrounded by temptation
Adam sins	Jesus does not sin
Scene of tragedy	Scene of triumph

Gethsemane is a reversal of Eden. In the picture of these two gardens we see humanity without God, and with God. For Eden, surprisingly, humanity is without God. Adam and Eve don’t go to God. They don’t ask his help. They try to deal with Satan’s temptation by themselves.

Gethsemane on the other hand, is humanity with God. Jesus goes to the Father in prayer. He asks for help. He realises that he will lose through his human strength. So he deals with all the threats, attacks, and temptations of the Devil by appealing to his Father, and understanding his will.

Eden is loss. Gethsemane is gain. Eden is the bitter experience of denying ourselves our home. Gethsemane is the wonderful experience of coming home.

Yet on looking closer, the gardens are also similar. Basically the problem is the same—do we follow God because we want to, or because we have to? Adam and Eve proved that they did not fully trust God. Jesus proved that he did. The sin question is always the same. Do we have trust in God based on evidence? Whether it is the subtle doubtings of Eden or the frontal attack of Gethsemane, we are still faced with the basic question: Do we love and trust God enough to always follow his way, or not?

Real education begins as we grapple with these fundamental questions from the gardens...

Ellen White comments

The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents. The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature was the lesson book, the Creator Himself was the instructor, and the parents of the human family were the students. {Ed 20.1}

The garden of Eden was not only Adam’s dwelling, but his school-room. As in that school, so in the school of earth today, two trees are planted,—the tree of life, which bears the fruit of the true education: the tree of knowledge yielding the fruit of “science falsely so called.” All who have a connection with Christ have access to the tree of life, a source of knowledge of which the world is ignorant. After sin entered this world, the heavenly Husbandman transplanted the tree of life to the paradise above; but its branches hang over the wall to the lower world... All who have tasted of the heavenly fruit, the Bread of Life, are to be co-workers with God, pointing others from the tree of knowledge to the tree of life, that they also may partake of its fruits. {GCDB, March 6, 1899 par. 5}