

## THE SERPENT IN THE GARDEN

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*Lessons: Genesis 3, Revelation 22*

*“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said, to the woman, has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to 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 has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die” (Genesis 3:1-3).*

The second chapter of Genesis teaches us about the beautiful garden of Eden. The Lord made that garden, and in it were all the most beautiful trees and flowers and grasses. Then the animals from all the earth were gathered into it, and the birds and fishes, so that everything made a beautiful place for Adam and Eve to live. And here the Lord brought Adam and Eve, and He gave the garden for their use, and told them they might eat of the fruit of all the trees of the garden, except only the one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of this they must not eat, lest they die.

As long as Adam and Eve obeyed the Lord their God, they were happy in this beautiful garden. They loved the Lord and talked with angels. But in the garden there was a very cunning animal. This was the serpent or snake. He was sly and subtle, and he became disobedient and evil. And the snake talked with Eve. He said, “Has God said you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Eve said: “We may eat of the trees of the garden, but only of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, may we not eat, lest we die.” And the serpent said, “You shall not die, for God knows that on the day you eat of it, then your eyes will be opened, and you will be as gods, knowing good and evil.” And Eve listened to the talk of the snake, and she looked at the fruit of this tree. It looked beautiful to her and she wanted it. And she thought, “The snake says it is all right to eat of that tree,” and she forgot that the Lord had said she must not eat it. So she picked one of the fruits of the tree, and she ate some of it, and she gave some of it to Adam to eat also. When they did that they suddenly knew that they had been disobedient, and that the Lord had forbidden them to eat of this fruit. They were ashamed, and they knew that they had done evil.

Then, suddenly, they heard the Lord walking in the garden, and they hid in the bushes, lest He should see them. He called unto them. Finally they answered Him, and said they were ashamed, and were hiding. Then the Lord called them out, and asked them: “Have you eaten of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?”

Adam said: “Eve gave it to me and I did eat.” And Eve said: “The serpent told me, and so I ate.” And then the Lord cursed the serpent that had caused Adam and Eve to do evil. He told him that he must crawl upon the earth and be cursed. And then God had to drive out Adam and Eve from the beautiful garden, lest they should disobey again and do more evil. And He placed angels with drawn swords, to guard the way to the garden.

So by their disobedience Adam and Eve did evil, and, lost the beautiful garden they had so loved. No longer could they eat its fruits and enjoy its beauty. Instead they had to work hard for their food. They must dig, and plant, and protect the vegetables they planted, and pull out the weeds and brambles.

Now the Lord has taught us that we can have all the beautiful things of the Garden of Eden, if we will obey His teachings. He does not want to make us unhappy, nor to take away the things of beauty and joy which we love. But if we disobey, then He must take them away from us for our sake, to teach us to obey Him. If He did not take them away and they had caused us to do evil, then we would do more evil, and become more and more unhappy. That is why He placed guards at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, to keep Adam and Eve from going back and doing even worse things.

It is just the same with us. We should obey the Lord and our parents. If we disobey, and do evil, then our parents must punish us, to keep us from doing more evil. It is just as if we loved to walk in a park near a lake or pond, and our parents told us to stay away from the edge of the lake lest we should fall in and come to harm. And if we do go near the edge of the lake and fall in, and nearly drown, then our parents must take us away and not bring us back to the park or lake, for fear we should fall in again at a time they might not be able to get us out and save us from drowning. And so, because we have disobeyed we are unable to enjoy the park anymore, lest even worse things should happen to us. Our parents will not take us again to a lake, until we have learned to obey them—to do what they tell us to do even when we want very much to do something else.

Often we don't intend to disobey and do wrong. But the ideas creep in just like a snake creeps in the grass, and perhaps into the house! And sometimes we do wrong before we have time really to think about what we are going to do. And so in the Word the Lord has told us the story of Adam and Eve. We should learn it well and remember it. And we should try hard never to disobey and do wrong. For when we really try hard not to do wrong—not to disobey—and to obey and do what is right and good—then the Lord can save us from all evil and trouble, and can make our lives full of happiness and joy. *Amen.*