



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Matthew 15:9

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Dubitable Bible Passages and Hanna Math Are They What We Think They Are?

Dreams are so odd. I've been told that they are our mind's way of sorting out the junk we have to deal with during our life and then filing it away. It's nearing 2 a.m. and I just woke from a dream in which I was trying to explain just how old I am. I woke before giving the explanation but in my half-asleepness I continued to think and came up with a way to describe my age:

My son was born when I was 18. That is true. He is now 45 years old. If you take 18 years from 45 years you have 27 years. So my son was born when I was 27 and he's now 45. 45 plus 27 is 72. This is odd because I'm 63. Something about this equation seems off. It doesn't make sense. There is a better solution but I'm going to have to delve into this to figure out where the problem is.

My point: If something doesn't fully make sense then don't believe it just because you've been told it. Check it out and find what you can believe to be the truth.

While I was trying to figure out the logic to my math I had another thought come to mind and that was something that I said during the live streaming of the Bible study earlier tonight. We were talking about Eve telling God that the serpent gave her the fruit and she ate it.

Elkanah mentioned it, stating simply that the serpent gave her the fruit and she ate it, then he kept going on with what he was teaching. But in my mind he had left something out. What he had omitted was Eve's accusation to God "why did you make the serpent?" I spoke up and asked about that omission. He checked and said that it wasn't in the Bible.

I knew that Eve had made that accusation. Maybe it wasn't in the Bible version that he was using but it was in some version because I hadn't made that up. I had heard several sermons in which the pastor brought this very thing up and talked about Eve asking God why he had made the serpent. So, while Elkanah continued teaching I began checking other versions and found that the accusation that God was responsible for Eve eating the fruit because he made the serpent wasn't in the Bible.

So where did that come from? It didn't take long to find the source. I went to egwwritings.org, did a search and found 4 sources, all of them with the same accusation of "why did you create the serpent?"

When the woman was asked, "What is this that thou hast done?" she answered, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." "Why didst Thou create the serpent? Why didst Thou suffer him to enter Eden?"—these were the questions implied in her excuse for her sin. Thus, like Adam, she charged God with the responsibility of their fall. The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies; it was indulged by our first parents as soon as they yielded to the influence of Satan, and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Instead of humbly confessing their sins, they try to shield themselves by casting the blame upon others, upon circumstances, or upon God—making even His blessings an occasion of murmuring against Him. — *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 58

This was a teaching from Ellen White. When I had decided to quit trying to figure out my math problem and I began to think of that Ellen White gem, I had another thought. Ellen had added to the Bible and there is a text that says not to do that.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. — Revelation 22:18, 19 KJV

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. — Deuteronomy 4:2 KJV

That is found in Revelation and Deuteronomy, but shouldn't it be applicable for the entire Bible? The Bible is God's word to us explaining the reality of what is going on. Changing his message in any way gives a false view of what He is telling us.

Considering those texts, I will choose to ignore the teaching that Eve accused God of being at fault because he made the serpent. Yet, I'm thinking there is also something in the story of the fall of humans that has something added and the whole world has fallen for this addition.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. – Genesis 3:6

I once sent this text to an online Bible teacher and asked why the world is taught that Adam had allowed Eve to wander from his side which put her at risk because if he had been with Eve then he would have seen what was going on and would have stopped her from eating the fruit. The response I got was an eye-opener. It was, “she gave to her husband who was with her **in the garden.**”

He had added words to the Bible in order to keep the blame on Eve rather than taking the Bible as it read which showed Adam to be present when the conversation with the serpent occurred.

Ellen wrote out the story of the fall and has added much, a lot, to what the Bible actually says. There are things in her story that give me reason for thought beyond this “in the garden” business.

The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the

instruction which He had seen fit to impart.

In order to accomplish his work unperceived, Satan chose to employ as his medium the serpent—a disguise well adapted for his purpose of deception. The serpent was then one of the wisest and most beautiful creatures on the earth. It had wings, and while flying through the air presented an appearance of dazzling brightness, having the color and brilliancy of burnished gold. Resting in the rich-laden branches of the forbidden tree and regaling itself with the delicious fruit, it was an object to arrest the attention and delight the eye of the beholder. Thus in the garden of peace lurked the destroyer, watching for his prey.

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree. The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them. Now was the tempter's opportunity. As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak. Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe.

To the tempter's ensnaring question she replied: "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: 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."

By partaking of this tree, he declared, they would attain to a more exalted sphere of existence and enter a broader field of knowledge. He himself had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and as a result had acquired the power of speech. And he insinuated that the Lord jealously desired to withhold it from them, lest they should be exalted to equality with Himself. It was because of its wonderful properties, imparting wisdom and power, that He had prohibited them from tasting or even touching it. The tempter intimated that the divine warning was not to be actually fulfilled; it was designed merely to intimidate them. How could it be possible for them to die? Had they not eaten of the tree of life? God had been seeking to prevent them from reaching a nobler development and finding greater happiness.

Such has been Satan's work from the days of Adam to the present, and he has pursued it with great success. He tempts men to distrust God's love and to doubt His wisdom. He is constantly seeking to excite a spirit of irreverent curiosity, a restless, inquisitive desire to penetrate the secrets of divine wisdom and power. In their efforts to search out what God has been pleased to withhold, multitudes overlook the truths which He has revealed, and which are essential to salvation. Satan tempts men to disobedience by leading them to believe they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. But this is all a deception. Elated with their ideas of progression, they are, by trampling on God's requirements, setting their feet in the path that leads to degradation and death.

Satan represented to the holy pair that they would be gainers by breaking the law of God. Do we not today hear similar reasoning? Many talk of the narrowness of those who obey God's commandments, while they themselves claim to have broader ideas and to enjoy greater liberty. What is this but an echo of the voice from Eden, "In the day ye eat thereof"—transgress the divine requirement—"ye shall be as gods"? Satan claimed to have received great good by eating of the forbidden fruit, but he did not let it appear that by transgression he had become an outcast from heaven. Though he had found sin to result in infinite loss, he concealed his own misery in order to draw others into the same position. So now the transgressor seeks to disguise his true character; he may claim to be holy; but his exalted profession only makes him the more dangerous as a deceiver. He is on the side of Satan, trampling upon

the law of God, and leading others to do the same, to their eternal ruin.

Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. Notwithstanding the sophistry of Satan to the contrary, it is always disastrous to disobey God. We must set our hearts to know what is truth. All the lessons which God has caused to be placed on record in His word are for our warning and instruction. They are given to save us from deception. Their neglect will result in ruin to ourselves. Whatever contradicts God's word, we may be sure proceeds from Satan

The serpent plucked the fruit of the forbidden tree and placed it in the hands of the half-reluctant Eve. Then he reminded her of her own words, that God had forbidden them to touch it, lest they die. She would receive no more harm from eating the fruit, he declared, than from touching it. Perceiving no evil results from what she had done, Eve grew bolder. When she "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." It was grateful to the taste, and as she ate, she seemed to feel a vivifying power, and imagined herself entering upon a higher state of existence. Without a fear she plucked and ate. And now, having herself transgressed, she became the agent of Satan in working the ruin of her husband. In a state of strange, unnatural excitement, with her hands filled with the forbidden fruit, she sought his presence, and related all that had occurred.

An expression of sadness came over the face of Adam. He appeared astonished and alarmed. To the words of Eve he replied that this must be the foe against whom they had been warned; and by the divine sentence she must die. In answer she urged him to eat, repeating the words of the serpent, that they should not surely die. She reasoned that this must be true, for she felt no evidence of God's displeasure, but on the contrary realized a delicious, exhilarating influence, thrilling every faculty with new life, such, she imagined, as inspired the heavenly messengers.

Adam understood that his companion had transgressed the command of God, disregarded the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love. There was a terrible struggle in his mind. He mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. But now the deed was done; he must be separated from her whose society had been his joy. How could he have it thus? Adam had enjoyed the companionship of God and of holy angels. He had looked upon the glory of the Creator. He understood the high destiny opened to the human race should they remain faithful to God. Yet all these blessings were lost sight of in the fear of losing that one gift which in his eyes outvalued every other. Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation. He did not realize that the same Infinite Power who had from the dust of the earth created him, a living, beautiful form, and had in love given him a companion, could supply her place. He resolved to share her fate; if she must die, he would die with her. After all, he reasoned, might not the words of the wise serpent be true? Eve was before him, as beautiful and apparently as innocent as before this act of disobedience. She expressed greater love for him than before. No sign of death appeared in her, and he decided to brave the consequences. He seized the fruit and quickly ate. -- *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53-56

First thing I wonder is where Ellen got her information. Since religions other than Seventh-day Adventists teach that Eve ate then took the fruit to Adam, I'm inclined to think that Ellen was relating what was the well-known teaching for her day. Or, is this perhaps a case of her plagiarizing from some other author? She is dead so I can't ask her.

When I scanned this passage of hers looking for the term "in the garden" I stumbled upon something else that caused me to pause. Let me share that.

The angels had cautioned Eve to beware of separating herself from her husband while occupied in their daily labor in the garden; with him she would be in less danger from temptation than if she were alone. But absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone, she felt an apprehension of danger, but dismissed her fears, deciding that she had sufficient wisdom and strength to discern evil and to withstand it. Unmindful of the angels' caution, she soon found herself

gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the forbidden tree. The fruit was very beautiful, and she questioned with herself why God had withheld it from them. Now was the tempter's opportunity. As if he were able to discern the workings of her mind, he addressed her: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve was surprised and startled as she thus seemed to hear the echo of her thoughts. But the serpent continued, in a musical voice, with subtle praise of her surpassing loveliness; and his words were not displeasing. Instead of fleeing from the spot she lingered wonderingly to hear a serpent speak. Had she been addressed by a being like the angels, her fears would have been excited; but she had no thought that the fascinating serpent could become the medium of the fallen foe. – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53

So Eve, who was without sin and completely innocent experienced fear? Does that make sense? Does this not contradict the Bible? (We're told that Ellen never made a mistake and some people will even use Ellen to prove the Bible's accuracy.)

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. – 1 John 4:18 KJV

If we put this Bible text with Ellen's passage then Eve didn't have perfect love. Clearly Adam didn't have perfect love because he threw Eve under the bus, so to speak, and blamed her for the whole fiasco.

So what really happened? The book of Genesis wasn't written until hundreds of years after it had occurred. The story had been passed down from generation to generation. How accurate is it? Yes, it's true that the ancient people had stronger minds than we do, and they lived longer. But it's also true that stories change in just the telling from one person to the other.

When my child was probably a tween, we got word that someone we knew had lost her husband in a bizarre accident. Just a few weeks later we received word that this person was getting married to a friend of hers who had lost his wife a few months earlier.

Well, I goofed in judgment when I told Samuel she was getting married. I made the mistake of telling him that a lot of times when a marriage is announced that fast it's because the woman is pregnant. But never did I say that she was

pregnant. I never thought she was. I didn't see her to be the type of woman who would sleep around.

Samuel's response was to get all excited because he thought I had just told him she was pregnant.

Realizing my goof I began telling him repeatedly that I did NOT say she was pregnant. I had no reason to believe that she was, she wasn't someone who would do that. But no matter what I said he refused to believe me, instead he insisted that I had said she was pregnant and he was so excited about this new baby!

"I've got to go call Mamaw."

"No, you don't."

"Yes, I do. I have to go call Mamaw!"

"No."

"Yes. I have to call her!"

"Don't you dare tell her that I said our friend was pregnant. I didn't say that."

"But you did say that."

"No, I didn't. What I said was..."

"No, you said she was pregnant."

"No, I didn't and you can't call your Mamaw."

"But I have to talk to her and it isn't about our friend."

"I know you. If you call you're going to tell her what you think I said but I didn't say it."

"No. I won't tell her that. I need to tell her something else."

"You better not say that she's pregnant."

"I won't."

“Do you hear me? Don't you dare tell anyone that she's pregnant. She isn't.”

“I won't.”

“Promise?”

“I promise I won't tell Mamaw that you said our friend is pregnant.”

So Samuel called his grandmother and the first words out of his mouth were:

“Hey, Mamaw, guess what! Mother just told me that our friend is pregnant!”

I grabbed the phone out of his hand, told his grandmother that I hadn't told him that then hung the phone up. Samuel and I had a row. And his grandmother, who was known to embellish things, went straight to the friend's mother to report that I was spreading rumors about our friend.

Guess what; like I thought, she wasn't pregnant. Samuel heard what he wanted to hear and reported it to someone who heard what she wanted to hear then she reported it to someone else. How much of that happened with those old Bible stories that were handed down before writing had been invented and it could be given a place on parchment or whatever they used when writing? Then after the Bible was written, how much changing did the translators do which gave different meanings to different passages in the Bible?

We have a dilemma in that we don't really know what the truth is. What we know is the flawed teachings that have been handed down through the ages and the world is now worshiping a god that has satanic characteristics yet they believe it to be the Creator God who loves us yet wants to zap us. When you think it through it makes about as much sense as my math problems.

Thankfully God understands our situation and knows how to best lead us. He shows us the things we are ready to see and guards us from those things we aren't ready to see.

As for Samuel, who is now 45, a few months ago I had a discussion with him about the facts of life. I brought up speedy marriages and asked if getting married fast meant that a woman is pregnant. He responded that it didn't mean that at all. I asked a few more related questions and he admitted again that getting married fast does not necessarily mean that the woman is pregnant.

Then I told him what he had done to me when we found out that our friend was getting married. I again told him that I hadn't told him she was pregnant nor did I have any reason to believe that she was, I simply stated that a lot of times when a marriage is rushed it's because the woman is pregnant.

Samuel was mortified. He was so apologetic but despite his chagrin the damage had been done. His twisting of my words could not be taken back and I should never had said something like that to someone of his age.

We need to guard our beliefs and not base them on what others have taught us. If that teaching shows God to be acting in any way less than loving then we need to reject it and search for a better answer. That said, there was another something that I saw in the passage from Ellen's writings that I shared.

The tree of knowledge had been made a test of their obedience and their love to God. The Lord had seen fit to lay upon them but one prohibition as to the use of all that was in the garden; but if they should disregard His will in this particular, they would incur the guilt of transgression. Satan was not to follow them with continual temptations; he could have access to them only at the forbidden tree. Should they attempt to investigate its nature, they would be exposed to his wiles. They were admonished to give careful heed to the warning which God had sent them and to be content with the instruction which He had seen fit to impart. – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 53

I have a bit of trouble with this passage because the way it's written can make you think that the tree was placed in the garden as an arbitrary test of obedience. If that's true then that would make God arbitrary and as I have pointed out in earlier blogs, one of the definitions of arbitrary is “tyrant.”

So, what is the truth about the tree and the sin of eating its fruit? I'm going to reject the teaching that it's only purpose was to be a snare for our grandparents. Something more was going on than what we have been told. Perhaps the story is hyperbole. This is something I intend to someday ask Jesus when I have some face-to-face time with him. That is a day I anxiously await.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Hannah

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