

## Gardening in Eden



It says that the serpent was a pretty crafty animal but more than that it must have been very special too, since it could communicate with Eve. In the course of the conversation it asked Eve about God's restrictions within the "The Garden". We all know what that restriction was but what the serpent said in excess of "You Will Not Certainly Die" and "You Will Be Like God" to convince them to defy the Guy who created them and partake of the fruit is not recorded in the Bible but it seems that there must have been more. Never the less, when the conversation was over they saw the fruit in a different light and even lusted after its capacity to provide wisdom, its beauty and its nutritional ability. Eve ate and Adam ate but then came the sentence we may possibly read right over, *"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked"*. What did they see that they hadn't seen before, after all they had been "Naked" from creation? I suggest that the fruit didn't live up to the promises the "Serpent" made and that there may even have been an invisible component in the fruit.

Conviction, even at that earliest of times, God was able to dump a whole truckload of conviction onto the happy couple and now what they expected was going to provide them with great happiness and fulfillment only left them with emptiness and regret. They decided that, "Since their humanity had gotten them into this fix, it should certainly be able to get them out". Plants don't make good clothing, they are rough and don't hold up well. More than that though, there would be "The Explanations" to be made to God and what He would say about all of this. We may need an attorney!

Was God surprised? Based on what He said to the serpent it appears not. Even at that earliest of times He revealed His plan for Jesus to overcome this "Great Serpent" and bring humanity into a right relationship with Him. We have no clue what the happy couple looked like but based on their response to the questioning they sound more like adolescents than adults but I suspect from a spiritual perspective we are all more like adolescents than adults.

That still doesn't give us any insight as to what they saw upon eating "The Fruit" and because the "Creation Scenario" seems to indicate that time passed differently then than it does now we have no knowledge how long they had to contemplate their transgression before God confronted them. I suggest that what ever the secret ingredient contained in that fruit, it did give them "Wisdom", not the wisdom they expected but rather it gave them a clearer vision of what was contained in their hearts and minds and what they saw was alarming and embarrassing and convinced them to cover it up. Not the nakedness of the body but rather the felony of the spirit.

Paul put it concisely in Romans 7:14-25 where he laments his inability to do what is right in preference to that which is not right, he suggests that the law helps him to stay on track but because of his "Sinful Nature" he is regularly ending up off track. His diatribe certainly describes most if not all of humanity but I suggest that while in this writing Paul sounds as though he is sincerely striving to conquer this force that drives him to anguish and abandon.

The dynamic here is distraction and Adam and Eve may have been the first occurrence of ADD and while we may not all suffer from this condition, it is often very easy to lose focus and we find that what distracts us is never as important as the things we should be focused on. While those distractions that sidetrack us may not be bad and they might be important at a different time, at this time they are not as important as the issue that currently demands our attention. This may not apply to day to day events, although it might but there are those components of our lives that if you lose attention to, you may wake up some day wondering how you ended up

on the path you are following when it was never your intent to go that way as did Adam and Eve. So it's essential to separate out the everyday urgencies from what's important and concentrate the bulk of your energies on them and maybe even retire some of those things that you do (for a season) to insure the completion of those important objectives.

Nehemiah had a problem, he lived in Babylon but his heart was in Jerusalem. When Hanani his brother reported to him how bad the condition of the city and how poor the morale of the people was it drove him to tears and mourning. For days he fasted and prayed (You should read Nehemiah 1:5-11) five months later as he presented himself to King Artaxerxes, the king inquired as to his sadness. He then related to the king regarding the condition of the people of Jerusalem and requested approval to go there and repair the city.

Nehemiah was on his way with a "Passport", a pledge of material support and armed protection. There was obvious confrontation as to his presence in Jerusalem but Nehemiah went straight to his objective and inspected the wall and gates of Jerusalem. What he did next should inspire everyone to action, he circled the city to evaluate the dimension of the predicament and then he approached the leaders and population and presented his evaluation. He presents them with the "Problem" but he goes on to present the "Solution", that's not enough, then this is why we need to do something and why we need to do it now. Once he gets "Buy In" on his vision, **everyone** gets an assignment and the assignments are most convenient and consistent to each family's needs.

There was resistance to this effort to rebuild the walls and certain changes had to be made as these gangs threatened, intimidated and ultimately attacked the workers. While some of the workers would be armed to protect those working, amidst all of the assaults and even though the threats and attacks made the work more burdensome and exhausting it went on because it was important.

When the enemies of the Hebrews saw that the building project was coming to completion they approached Nehemiah to have a rendezvous on the plain of Ono, this wasn't to be a friendly meeting rather the plan was to kill him but this is the fulcrum point of the whole book. Nehemiah says, *"I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"*. Nehemiah was integrally involved in the project, had no time for frivolities and even though there were multiple attempts to frighten and dishearten him, he would not be swayed from his course. Nehemiah saw that the ultimate was more essential than the immediate, the essential took precedence over the optional and that the current effort was paramount over the here and now.

The job went to completion!! Nehemiah 6:16 says what to expect on completion of something important, "when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God." While no miracles occurred during this "Rebuild Project", Nehemiah's persistence, attention to his relationship with God and the people's endurance made the effort successful.

What is the metanarrative in this story? If you have identified something that is "Most Important" in your life (Hopefully it is Something God Has Laid On Your Heart) don't allow the myriad of daily distractions to persuade you to abandon the course that you know will lead to successful completion, retain your relationship with "Your Lord and Savior" through Prayer, **do not** come down because you are doing a **great** thing and read the book of Nehemiah. Some of it is difficult to read but all of it is filled with managerial insight. You may be required to say no to some things to complete the important things.