

## Adam and Eve

The Church has always taught that Adam and Eve were real people and were the first human beings from whom all other human beings are descended. In 1950, Pope Pius XII, in Paragraph 37 of an encyclical entitled *Humani Generis*, states, "...the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains either that after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from [Adam] as from the first parent of all, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents." In other words, the Church teaches that all humanity descended from Adam and Eve. They had to be real for that to happen. And again in the Catechism it states Paragraph #404: "By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin". How do myths commit personal sins?

However the Book of Genesis is not teaching science but theology. The creation stories are full of figurative language. Most Catholics would accept that. Adam and Eve (names the biblical authors gave the first 'Homo Sapiens' man and woman) would have appeared on Earth about 200,000 years ago. But of course at that time there were other humans around which anthropologists called Neanderthals. They were human but 'homo sapiens', that is us, have some added-on human traits. The Neanderthals buried their dead and looked after their sick. But Adam and Eve were definitely the first humans like us to appear on the Earth. Everything has to start somewhere. There had to be a first pair of everything (preferably male and female) a first pair of cats, a first pair of mice, a first blade of grass, a first potato, a first computer a first human male and female like us. But since our First Parents had only two sons where did the rest of us come from? That's simple. Cain and Abel would have married Neanderthal women who were also human.

No one knows exactly why Neanderthals went extinct and why Homo sapiens survived. Some scholars theorize that gradual or dramatic climate change led them to their demise, while others blame dietary deficiencies. Some theorize that homo sapiens humans killed the Neanderthals. Until recently the hypothesis that Neanderthals didn't go extinct but simply interbred with humans until they were absorbed into our species was popular.

Yes, I would say that Cain and Abel definitely married Neanderthals. Bones of Neanderthals were recently found, I think in China, and their DNA was taken.

Recent experiments have found that we have traces of their DNA in our genetic make-up.

Since Adam and Eve were the first and only creatures with free will, conscious of their own existence and masters of their own destiny, it was well within their range to rebel against their maker. The story of the forbidden fruit and the serpent is, of course, figurative language but it teaches us how a dark force (the serpent) did cloud Adam and Eve's judgement and question their creaturely standing which, as we know, led to their downfall and all their descendants after them.

Was Eve a 'real first woman'. Well, yes according to one piece of scientific data:

*In 1987, a worldwide survey of human mitochondrial DNA was published by Nature magazine. Its main point was that "all mitochondrial DNAs stem from one woman" and that she probably lived around 200,000 years ago in Africa. When the media picked up on the story one of the authors of the paper said that they had found the "Mitochondrial Eve" or "African Eve", the story became a sensation. Have scientists found "the mother of us all"?*

Best wishes

Paddy