



Christian Questions

Think about the Bible like you never have before

Dear Joanna,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions. You wanted to know about the two trees in the Garden of Eden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The first mention of these two trees is found in Genesis 2:8-9. “Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

God gave Adam instructions as to which trees he was allowed to eat the fruit of and from which tree he was not allowed to eat. “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’” (Genesis 2:16-17) This was a commandment from God, which, if disobeyed, would have dire consequences, ending in death. This was a simple test of obedience, which Adam completely understood.

After Eve came on the scene, Adam told her that they were not allowed to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, Satan, in the guise of a serpent, tempted her. Below is the story from Genesis 3:1-13:

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” 2 The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” 4 “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. 5 “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?” 10 He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” 11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” 12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” 13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have

done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Punishments were then levied on Adam, Eve and the serpent (Satan). See Genesis 3:14-20. These punishments have impacted all of Adam's progeny to this day, the end result of which is death.

Due of their sin, Adam and Eve were not allowed to stay in the Garden because the Garden contained the tree of life. If they ate from it they would continue to live on forever. Furthermore, the ground outside the Garden was cursed (verse 17) or imperfect. By feeding on plants grown in that environment, man would eventually suffer the penalty of death. Below is the last part of the story regarding the tree of life from Genesis 3:21-24:

21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

God created man in his "image" (Genesis 1:26-27), which means that man has the ability to reason and to make choices. God could have made man a robot to always do what is right, but then he would not be in God's "image." God could have shielded man from Satan's temptation, but then man would still have been subject to ambitions from within. In God's wisdom, He foreknew that Adam would sin. However, Adam was master of his own God-given free will and could have chosen to obey God's command.

God always allows humankind the option of choosing righteousness or sinfulness, just as He allowed Adam that choice. When God expelled disobedient Adam and Eve from his fellowship they began to "know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22) and to appreciate the difference. During all the centuries thereafter humankind has been learning the same lesson as well.

If God had not planned to send his Son to die in order to pay the price as a ransom for Adam, all humanity would have been doomed to die with no chance of a future life. But Jesus paid the price at Calvary, assuring us that every person who has ever lived will have the opportunity for either eternal life in heaven or everlasting life on earth during the Day of Judgment. Knowing that God had a well-devised and thought out plan in place since the foundation of the earth (Revelation 13:8) helps us understand why He permits misery and death in this present evil world so that each individual can learn the lesson of the sinfulness of sin.

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