

## Genesis 2:9, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death

by Karl Kemp

This article is a supplement to my paper on Genesis chapter 3. I am borrowing most of this material from my paper on Genesis chapters 1-3 on my internet site. All quotations from the Bible were taken from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, unless I mention otherwise. I frequently make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [ ] or [[ ]] to make them more obvious. cf., e.g., means compare, for example

GENESIS 2:9. **"Out of the ground the LORD [Hebrew Yahweh] God [Hebrew "elohim"] caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; THE TREE OF LIFE [my emphasis] also in the midst of the garden** [[The NIV has, "And 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." There is an obvious distinction between the two trees in the middle of the garden and the other trees.

It is obviously very important for us to understand what is meant by the eating of the fruit of this very special tree, the tree of life (and of the other very special tree in the middle of the garden that is mentioned later in this verse, the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL). I'm confident that there never was, and that there never will be, a physical tree (or physical water, or physical bread, etc.) that can provide the spiritual, eternal life of God - there is no *magic* fruit (or anything else) that can provide this life. ((I had a footnote: The same Hebrew noun ("chayyim") that is translated "life" here in Gen. 2:9 was also used in Gen. 2:7 ("breath of LIFE"), and it is used in 3:14 and 17 ("all the days of your LIFE") and in 3:22 and 24 ("tree of LIFE").)) God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) is the ONLY source of life (spiritual life and physical life).

I had a lengthy footnote: See, for example, DEUTERONOMY 32:39 ("...And there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give LIFE. ...."); NEHEMIAH 9:6; JOHN 1:4 ("IN HIM [referring to the eternal Son of God] WAS LIFE, and the LIFE was the LIGHT of men."); JOHN 5:26 ("FOR JUST AS THE FATHER HAS LIFE IN HIMSELF, EVEN SO HE GAVE TO THE SON [speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, after He became a man, but not just a man] ALSO TO HAVE LIFE IN HIMSELF." The emphasis in context is on spiritual, eternal life, but verses 28, 29 speak of Him calling forth those who are physically dead to a "resurrection of life" or a "resurrection of judgment [condemnation]."); JOHN 6:26-58 ("... (40) For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son AND BELIEVES IN HIM will have ETERNAL LIFE, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. ... (48) I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE. ... (50) THIS IS THE BREAD WHICH COMES DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN, SO THAT ONE MAY EAT OF IT

AND NOT DIE. (51) I AM THE LIVING BREAD THAT CAME DOWN OUT OF HEAVEN, IF ANYONE EATS OF THIS BREAD, HE WILL LIVE FOREVER...." To eat of fruit of the TREE OF LIFE in the garden of Eden is comparable in meaning with eating of the LIVING BREAD OF LIFE (or, for example, drinking of the living water of life [cf., e.g., John 7:37-39]), but the level of the life of God available through salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ is on a higher level [especially after we are glorified], through union with the Son of God, than was available in the garden of Eden.); JOHN 6:63 ("IT IS THE SPIRIT [the Holy Spirit of LIFE] WHO GIVES LIFE; the flesh profits nothing; THE WORDS THAT I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU ARE SPIRIT AND ARE LIFE."); JOHN 14:6 ("I AM the way, the truth, and THE LIFE; no one comes to the Father but through Me."); JOHN 17:3 ("THIS IS ETERNAL LIFE, THAT THEY MAY KNOW YOU, THE ONLY TRUE GOD, AND JESUS CHRIST whom You have sent." Before the fall Adam and Eve had a LIFE-FLOWING RELATIONSHIP with GOD, who is the ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE.); 2 CORINTHIANS 3:6 ("[God] who has made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter BUT OF THE SPIRIT; for the letter kills [The letter of the Mosaic Law couldn't save man in that it couldn't solve the sin, spiritual death, problem. In fact, it intensified the sin problem in several ways (see Romans chapter 7, for example); in that sense it "kills."], BUT THE SPIRIT [who comes to believers through the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death] GIVES LIFE."); GALATIANS 6:8 ("For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption [eternal death], but the one who sows to the Spirit WILL FROM THE SPIRIT REAP ETERNAL LIFE."); COLOSSIANS 3:4 ("WHEN CHRIST, WHO IS OUR LIFE, is revealed [manifested at His second coming], then you also will be revealed [manifested] with Him in glory [which includes the FULLNESS OF ETERNAL LIFE]."); 1 TIMOTHY 6:13 ("I charge you in the presence of GOD, WHO GIVES LIFE to all things...."); and 1 JOHN 5:11-13 ("And the testimony is this, that GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS THE LIFE; he who does not have the Son does not have the LIFE. These things I have written to you WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD, so that YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.") (This is the end of the lengthy footnote.)

Adam and Eve enjoyed a LIFE-FLOWING RELATIONSHIP with GOD in the garden. (Adam and Eve enjoyed spiritual life, but they were in what could be called a probationary period; they did not have eternal life in the full and final sense, as it is pictured, for example, in Revelation chapters 21, 22.) A LIFE-FLOWING RELATIONSHIP with GOD is the ONLY SOURCE OF SPIRITUAL LIFE. As long as their life-flowing relationship with God continued, they were partaking of His life - THEY WERE EATING OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF LIFE. They continued to partake of the fruit of the tree of life as long as they put God first, stayed submitted to Him from their hearts, and obeyed Him. When they lost their right, life-flowing relationship with God through listening to the devil and rebelling against God (and eating of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and EVIL, which can also be called the tree of DEATH), on

that day they died (like God said they would); they died spiritually (we could say, using the words of Eph. 4:18, that they "were excluded from the life of God"), and at that time the physical death process was initiated (cf., e.g., Gen. 2:17; 3:24; and Rom. 5:12-21).

THE VERSES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION THAT SPEAK OF THE "TREE(S) OF LIFE" ARE QUITE IMPORTANT TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE TREE OF LIFE IN GENESIS CHAPTERS 2 AND 3:

REVELATION 2:7. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES, I WILL GRANT TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE WHICH IS IN THE PARADISE OF GOD." To say the same thing with different words, Christians who stay faithful to the end (until Christ returns or to the end of their lives) WILL PARTAKE OF THE FULLNESS OF ETERNAL LIFE in God's yet-future eternal kingdom. ((The Bible often says that born-again Christians already participate in eternal life, which we certainly do, but only in a preliminary, partial (incomplete) way (see, for example, John 3:36; 5:24; and 1 John 5:11-13). There are a large number of verses that make it clear we will not partake of eternal life in the full and final sense until the end of this age (see, for example, Luke 18:30; Rom. 6:22, 23; 2 Cor. 5:4; Gal. 6:8; and Titus 3:7).))

To say that we will eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the Paradise of God yields the same end result as saying, for example, that we "will inherit eternal life" and enjoy all that eternal life means forever (Matt. 19:29); that "in the age to come" we will receive "eternal life" and enjoy that life forever (Luke 18:30); "that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life" and we will experience eternal life forever (2 Cor. 5:4); that "from the Spirit" we will "reap eternal life" and abide in that life forever (Gal. 6:8); that we will "take hold of the eternal life to which" we have been "called" and enjoy that life forever (1 Tim. 6:12; cf. 6:19); that we will receive "the crown of life," which life we will then enjoy forever (Rev. 2:10); and that the Lamb "will guide [us] to the springs of the water of life," which we will enjoy forever (Rev. 7:17; cf. Rev. 21:6).

REVELATION 22:1-3. "Then he showed me a RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL, COMING FROM THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB, in the middle of its [new Jerusalem's] street. On either side of the RIVER WAS THE TREE OF LIFE, bearing twelve *kinds* [crops] of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. There will no longer be any curse; AND THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB WILL BE IN IT [The LIFE of God will be there because God (the triune God) will be there.], and His bond-servants [[the believers; all the people who are part of God's true Israel, who will be reigning with Him (Revelation 22:5 shows that we "will reign forever and ever")]] will serve Him."

I'll quote EZEKIEL 47:12 here (It seems clear that Rev. 22:1-3 build on Ezek. 47:1-12 to some extent, but the teaching on the tree(s) of life in the book of Revelation, and many other passages in the New Testament, help us understand the prophecy of Ezek. 47:1-12.): "By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow *all kinds of trees* for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing." It is important to see that THE RIVER OF EZEK. 47:1-12 FLOWS FROM THE TEMPLE OF GOD, WHICH IS COMPARABLE WITH THE RIVER OF REV. 22:1-2 FLOWING FROM THE THRONE OF GOD. LITERAL WATER IS NOT FLOWING FROM THE TEMPLE, BUT THE WATER IS A SYMBOL FOR GOD'S SAVING GRACE IN CHRIST, AND BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, GOING FORTH ACCOMPLISHING THE PURPOSES OF GOD. One difference is that whereas Revelation chapter 22 deals with salvation in its fully glorified dimension, Ezek. 47:1-12 shows some progression in God's saving work (cf. Ezek. 47:2-5), which isn't surprising. Ezekiel 47:12 makes it clear that the trees along the bank of the river are totally dependent on the spiritual/eternal water of life that flows from the temple, "because their [the trees] water flows from the sanctuary" (Ezek. 47:12). If the water is symbolic [symbolic of something that is very real and full of glory], so are the trees.

There is some application of this prophecy of Ezek. 47:1-12 for all new-covenant believers who have received the promised Spirit, but this prophecy zeroes in on Israel after they have been saved with new-covenant salvation (as in Ezek. 36:25-27; Jer. 31:31-34, for example), after the Lord Jesus has returned, and after He has established His kingdom on the earth. His kingdom will start with the millennial kingdom but will eventually (after the millennial kingdom) become His fully glorified kingdom in the new heaven and new earth, with its new Jerusalem, of Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

The river flowing from the temple is symbolic/spiritual of the work of God by the Spirit, but the very tangible results of the river will be very real with full salvation being manifested in every dimension (including the physical dimension in the millennial kingdom, including physical food for those still in physical bodies), providing God's people with everything they need (especially things like righteousness, holiness, and divine order), and more.

((I'll include a few excerpts from what C. F. Keil said under Ezek. 47:12 ("Commentary on the Old Testament," by Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 9 [Eerdmans, 1976 reprint of the set published in the 1800s in German], pages 357-361). Keil agrees that this prophecy goes with the days after God's kingdom has been established and "the lion shall eat straw like the ox," for example. "According to verse 12, its waters possess the life-giving and healing power ascribed to them because they issue from the sanctuary. ... the necessity for this explanation [the figurative or spiritual view of the river] is placed beyond the reach of doubt by

a comparison of our picture with the parallel passages. [Keil goes on to discuss the water flowing in Joel 4:18 and Zech. 14:8.] ...

The figurative interpretation, or spiritual explanation, is moreover favoured by the analogy of the Scriptures. 'Water'...is used in Scripture as a figure denoting blessing and salvation.... In Isa. 12:3, 'and with joy ye draw water from the wells of salvation,' the figure is expressly interpreted. And so in Isa. 44:3, 'I will pour water upon the thirsty one, and streams upon the desert; I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon your offspring'.... This salvation, which Joel had already described as a spring issuing from the house of Jehovah...Ezekiel saw...as water...which sprang from under the threshold of the temple...and had swollen at a short distance off into so mighty a river that it was no longer possible to walk through. In this way the thought is symbolized, that the salvation which the Lord causes to flow down to His people from His throne will pour down from small beginnings in marvelously increasing fullness. ...

... And lastly, the water of salvation also possesses the power to produce trees with leaves and fruits, by which the life called forth from death can be sustained and cured of all diseases. This is the meaning, according to the express statement of the text, of the trees with their never withering leaves, upon the banks of the river, and their fruit ripening every month."))

My discussion of these glorious verses (Rev. 22:1-3) will be relatively brief here; Revelation chapters 20-22 are discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in a paper on my internet site. The book of Revelation contains a lot of symbolic language, very much including chapters 21, 22. I believe it is very important to see that the "river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb" in new Jerusalem is a symbol for the Holy Spirit and His work. The Holy Spirit, who is united with God the Father and God the Son in the Trinity, with each of them perfectly fulfilling their roles, will be quite active continuously dispensing eternal life and all the blessings that come with it (including perfect righteousness and holiness, divine order in everything, and perfect health and fulfillment) in the new heaven and new earth, with its new Jerusalem. Instead of the curses that came upon mankind because of the fall of Adam and Eve and the many subsequent sins of man, there will only be blessings.

If the river is symbolic of the Holy Spirit, which seems clear to me (and to many others), then the TREE(S) OF LIFE along its banks are obviously symbolic too. We are talking about symbols that deal with REALITY, THE HIGEST POSSIBLE REALITY. For the record, I believe there is an important distinction intended between those called the "nations" and those called the "bond-servants" of God in Revelation chapters 21, 22. The "bond-servants" are the members of God's true Israel; they will be reigning; "and they will reign [with God] forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5). The "nations" are distinguished from true Israel (cf. Rev. 15:2-4; 20:3; 21:2-4, 24); the nations won't reign. ((Revelation 15:2-4 are discussed in some detail on pages 244-246 of my book, "The Mid-Week Rapture"; they are

also discussed in my recently published e-book, "Introduction to the Mid-Week Rapture" (both books are available at amazon.com) and in my verse-by-verse study of Revelation 14:6-19:21 on my internet site. On God's salvation plans for the nations (the nations being distinct from God's true Israel), see my paper on Revelation chapters 20-22; my paper, "More Regarding God's Salvation Plans for the Nations"; and my three papers that deal with selected passages from the book of Psalms, the book of Isaiah, and the book of Jeremiah. The papers are all available on my internet site (karlkemp-teachingministries.com).)

REVELATION 22:14. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to THE TREE OF LIFE, and may enter by the gates into the city [the city of God's new Jerusalem, the city that is filled to the full with God's glory, which includes His ETERNAL LIFE]." We "wash our robes" (and we keep them pure and clean) by becoming righteous and holy (and staying that way) through the atoning death of the Lamb of God (cf. Rev. 7:14) in the power of the Holy Spirit through faith. To say that a person has a "right to the tree of life" here is a symbolic way of saying that that person has a right to participate in God's eternal life in heaven. Revelation 22:15 goes on to show the eternal status of those who are not able to enter new Jerusalem "by the gates into the city": "Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying." This does not mean that the lake of fire will be located just outside the city of new Jerusalem. There is a strong emphasis here on the need for us to make it a top priority to live in the center of God's will, in His truth, righteousness, and holiness, through the saving grace of God in Christ, by faith.

REVELATION 22:19. "and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy [referring to the book of Revelation], GOD WILL TAKE AWAY HIS PART FROM THE TREE OF LIFE AND FROM THE HOLY CITY, which are written in this book." To say that God will take away a person's "part from the tree of life" is to say that He will deny them the right to participate in His eternal life in heaven. The only other option is eternal death, the second death of Rev. 20:14, 15.

As far back as I can remember, I have always (I'm speaking of the time since I became a born-again Christian in 1964) understood the tree of life and what it means to eat of the fruit of the tree of life in Genesis chapters 2, 3 in a symbolic/spiritual sense.

If the tree of life in the garden of Eden was symbolic, was there no physical tree called the tree of life in the garden? I don't know enough to dogmatically insist on this answer, but I don't believe such a tree existed. Most Christians believe there was a physical tree called the tree of life in the garden. The more you consider the details, however, details like the following: the Bible shows that THE TRIUNE GOD IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE (spiritual life and physical life); the use of the words "tree of life" in the Bible (the tree of life is used as a symbol for

blessing in Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; and 15:4; cf. Prov. 3:22; 11:19; 12:28), and ESPECIALLY IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION; the symbolic nature of the other tree in the middle of the garden and of the serpent (who is Satan, not a literal serpent that Satan spoke through); and the strong symbolic component of the words light and darkness in Genesis chapter 1, the more the symbolic/spiritual/non-physical nature of the tree of life in the garden begins to assert itself.

THE REALLY IMPORTANT THING is that the REALITY (THE LIFE OF GOD, which was/is symbolized by the tree of life) WAS THERE in the garden of Eden. THE LIFE OF GOD WAS THERE BECAUSE GOD'S PRESENCE WAS THERE. As I said, I AM TOTALLY CONFIDENT THAT THERE IS NO PHYSICAL TREE (NO MAGIC TREE) THAT CAN PROVIDE LIFE, AND ESPECIALLY SPIRITUAL, ETERNAL LIFE. THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR GOD THE FATHER, HIS SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT OF LIFE. We must have a LIFE-FLOWING RELATIONSHIP with GOD, who is the ONLY SOURCE OF LIFE. Adam and Eve had a LIFE-FLOWING relationship with God in the garden, until they rebelled against Him and ate of the tree that can be called the tree of DEATH. Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, in which they had enjoyed a LIFE-FLOWING relationship with God, and Gen. 3:24 speaks of the cherubim and the flaming sword guarding the way to the tree of life; I'm confident that the primary thing they were/are guarding (as the cherubim always are) is the way into the presence of God.

Excerpts from Henri Blocher on the Meaning of the "Tree of Life" ("In the Beginning," translated by David G. Preston (Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), pages 122-125):

"... Let us start with the tree of life.... God gives life. Life from him, constantly renewed, is necessary in order to enjoy all the other gifts. That, we believe, is the meaning of the text. ... [Blocher points out that Gen. 2:16 shows that Adam and Eve were permitted to eat of the fruit of all the trees, including the tree of life, except for the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL. Before the fall they were enjoying "the ceaseless communication of the life given by God."]

... The entire Bible...excludes the idea of any supernatural effect attached to any kind of food. It does not permit us to understand in literal terms what we read about the tree of life.

[Blocher rejects the idea that there could have been a literal tree with a "sacramental function." In other words, though the fruit of the physical tree can't impart life, when man meets God's conditions, He imparts life to man when he eats of the fruit of this tree.]

... The river of living water [Blocher is speaking of the river of Rev. 22:1-5, which, as he points out, has much correspondence with the river of Ezekiel chapter 47.] undoubtedly means for him [for John, who wrote the book of Revelation, which he received by direct revelation] the Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father and from the Lamb (*cf.* John 7:37-39). Similarly, in Revelation 2 and 22 the tree of life is obviously a symbol. ... ..the tree of life represents communion with God, the inexhaustible source of life. ...."], **and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.** [[God warned Adam in Gen. 2:17 that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL, he would in that day die. As the sad story unfolds in chapter 3, we learn that Eve, followed by Adam, listened to the devil and joined him in his rebellion against God - they rejected the light (and life) of God and submitted to the darkness (the darkness that must, with top priority, be kept separate from the light), and that very day they died (they died spiritually that day, having lost their life-flowing relationship with God, and the physical death process was initiated). I believe the tree could have been named "the tree of the knowledge of light AND DARKNESS" without changing the revelation in any substantial way. Or it could have been named the "tree of the knowledge of life AND DEATH," or more simply, "the tree of the knowledge of DEATH," or more simply yet, "the tree of DEATH." They ate of the forbidden fruit of that tree, and they died, as God had said they would (Gen. 2:17; 3:3).

There were two trees in the middle of the garden. ((I had a footnote: Genesis 3:3 confirms that the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL was also in the middle of the garden. These trees were IN THE MIDDLE of the garden because they were the most important trees in the garden; their importance far overshadowed all the other trees in the garden. They were, in fact, much more important than the physical garden itself. By saying that these two trees are to be understood in a non-physical, symbolic sense, we are not at all detracting from the supreme importance of these two trees or wandering off into a world of unreality. We are interpreting words in the highest possible sense, and we are dealing with the highest possible realities. The words "tree of LIFE" and "tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL" when understood in a symbolic sense communicate vital truth, and the communication takes place in a powerful, relatively easy to understand way.)) One was the tree of LIFE. The other was the tree of DEATH. Adam and Eve had to choose between them. (We, their offspring, also have to choose between the two trees.) To choose the one was to reject the other; God did not (and He could not) give them the option to eat from both trees. Christians may argue about the exact meaning of the words "the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL," but no one who believes the Bible can dispute the fact that for Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of that tree resulted in their death (both spiritual and physical death) - it was, therefore, the tree of DEATH.

Through rebellion Adam and Eve lost their LIFE-FLOWING RELATIONSHIP with GOD (the only source of life), and they died spiritually. (The physical death process was also set in motion.) They were cast out of the garden of Eden (the place where they, for one thing, had communion with GOD and His LIFE). They

were separated from God and His life, and the cherubim and the flaming sword (Gen. 3:24) enforced that separation. Man in rebellion and DARKNESS cannot have a life-flowing relationship with God in the LIGHT (cf., e.g., 1 John 1:5-7). This is not to say that God totally abandoned man. Clearly He didn't, and He already had a plan (before He created the world) to eventually restore spiritual life to man (not to all people, but to those who would repent and submit to His plan of salvation), and even to take believers to a place much higher than what Adam and Eve had before the fall.

((I had a three-paragraph footnote: It must be understood that the rebellion of Adam resulted in the death (the spiritual and physical death) of his descendents (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:12-15; 1 Cor. 15:21, 22). His descendants were born outside of the garden; they didn't have a life-flowing relationship with God. But new-covenant salvation in the blood of Christ and the outpoured Spirit makes spiritual life available to believers. A large part of the message of the gospel of the new covenant is that Christ has defeated sin, death (spiritual death and physical death), and Satan and his kingdom of darkness through His all-important atoning death (and resurrection).

The heart of the message of the gospel of new-covenant salvation is that Jesus, the Son of God, the sinless, perfect Lamb of God, bore our sins, back to Adam and Eve, with the guilt and the penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and the bondage to sin that comes with spiritual death. He bore the guilt, so we could be forgiven. He bore the penalty of spiritual death (I didn't say He died spiritually), so we could be born again and partake of the spiritual life of God. And He bore our bondage to sin in His atoning death, so we could walk with victory over all sin. "He Himself bore our sins [with the guilt and the penalties (including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin)] in His body on the cross, SO THAT WE MIGHT DIE TO SIN AND LIVE TO RIGHTEOUSNESS [my emphasis]; for by His wounds you were healed [referring to Isa. 53:5] (1 PETER 2:24).

"...that through death He [Christ] might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Old-covenant believers had salvation, but they had to wait for Christ to solve the sin/spiritual death problem in His atoning death and resurrection before they could enter into many of the benefits of that salvation. For example, though the Spirit of God was active under the old covenant, the new birth and the new-covenant dimension of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit were not available yet (see Rom. 6:14; 7:5, 6; 8:1-14; Gal. 3:21, for example; these verses, and many like them, are discussed in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ" and my recently published e-book, "Righteousness, Holiness, and Victory Over Sin." Both books are available at amazon.com). Also, when old-covenant believers died, they went to Sheol/Hades (the kingdom of death), but for them it was not a place of punishment (cf., e.g., Luke 16:19-31). Once Christ had conquered sin and death, He took the old-covenant believers to heaven (cf.,

e.g., Heb. 11:39, 40; 12:14; these verses from the book of Hebrews are discussed on pages 166, 167 of my book "Holiness and Victory Over Sin".))

Before Adam and Eve rebelled against God and ate of the forbidden fruit, they knew only GOOD, with No EVIL. (We discussed the nature of that very serious rebellion in my paper on Genesis chapter 3.) The creation account of Gen. 1:1-2:3 emphasized that everything that God created was GOOD. In the paper on Gen. 1:1-2:3 that follows this one, we will discuss in some detail that the EVIL of DARKNESS (speaking of DARKNESS in a symbolic sense, which includes sin, spiritual death, and Satan and his highly organized kingdom of rebels) was very much on the scene in the background, and that the LIGHT must be kept separate from the DARKNESS. It is very important to see that the angelic being who rebelled and became Satan, apparently one of the cherubim (cf. Ezek. 28:11-15), had been created, fell, and was judged (judged in a preliminary sense), along with those who joined him in his rebellion, all before Gen. 1:1. Genesis 1:2 undoubtedly shows some of the results of that judgment.

Before the fall Adam knew GOOD in the biblical sense that he always willed, thought, and did good (what was right, in accordance with the will of God), and in the biblical sense that he always experienced good (the blessings that came from having a right, life-flowing relationship with God). The GOOD goes with the LIGHT of God, which includes His truth, His righteousness, and His holiness. Adam and Eve were required to continue to live in obedience to God and to walk in His LIFE (and LIGHT); that is, God commanded them to not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL (and DARKNESS and DEATH).

Through rebelling and eating/partaking of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL, Adam and Eve increased their knowledge, but the knowledge they gained was All EVIL (bad). Adam and Eve came to know EVIL in the biblical sense of thinking, willing, and doing evil (they lost their innocence), and in the biblical sense of knowing the curses, consequences, and penalties that come with rebelling against God. They came to know the DARKNESS and DEATH that go with sin and rebellion. Before eating of the sinful (forbidden) fruit Adam and Eve knew only GOOD. Through eating the fruit, they came to know EVIL. Before eating of the sinful (forbidden) fruit, they had a life-flowing relationship with God and all the attendant blessings. Through eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of DEATH they DIED.

I'll quote DEUTERONOMY 30:19: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants." This verse, which conveys a dominant biblical theme, is quite parallel in meaning with the message God gave Adam and Eve in the garden by warning them that they must not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they stay faithful, they will continue to live - they will continue to partake of the GOOD fruit of the TREE OF LIFE. But, on the other hand, if they rebel and choose to follow

the devil in his rebellion against God and eat of the forbidden fruit, on that very day, they will forfeit life and die. How could it be otherwise? You can't be in rebellion against God and live in peace with Him. We shouldn't be surprised when things don't work right when we rebel against, doubt, and/or ignore the Creator.

The fact that sin brings death for God's people is a common theme throughout the Bible. See, for example, EZEKIEL 18:1-32 (I'll quote Ezek. 18:20a: "The person who sins will die."); EZEKIEL 33:10-20 (I'll quote Ezek. 33:11, 18, 19: "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the LORD GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?' (18) When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it. (19) But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them."); ROMANS 6:16, 21-23 ("Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience [to God and His word] resulting in righteousness? ... (21) Therefore what benefit [fruit] were you then deriving [having] from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. (22) But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive [have] your benefit [fruit], resulting in sanctification [an abiding state of holiness] and the outcome, eternal life. (23) For the wages of sin is death [If you serve sin, when it comes time to collect your wages, you will receive eternal death (no matter what the devil promises you).], but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."); ROMANS 8:13 ("for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit [the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9)] you are putting to death the deeds [works] of the body [of the old man], you will live." [To put to death the works of the flesh (of the old man) equals not doing the works of the flesh. On the works of the flesh, see Gal. 5:19-21; 6:8]); JAMES 5:19, 20 ("My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death...."); and 1 JOHN 5:16 ("If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not *leading* to death, he shall ask and *God* will for him give life to those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is a sin *leading* to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.").

As with the "tree of life," I don't believe there was a physical "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the garden, but there is no need to be dogmatic on this point. I understand this tree (along with the tree of life) in a symbolic (spiritual) sense: To eat of the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good AND EVIL was to rebel against God (DO EVIL) and suffer the EVIL consequences. If such physical trees did exist (and it is very difficult for me to see how they could exist), they would have been very subordinate to the reality of a right, life-flowing relationship with God in the light, or the reality of the awful

alternative of rebelling against God and siding in with the devil and his kingdom of EVIL, darkness, and death.

I'll include a brief excerpt from what Henri Blocher said on the Meaning of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" ("In the Beginning," pages 125-134): "If the tree of life is figurative, the same must be said for its counterpart, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ... No parallel for the second tree has been found outside the Bible. The idea that it was an apple tree rests solely on a Latin word-play, "malus"/"malum" (evil/apple)..." (pages 125, 126).

May the will of God be fully accomplished through this paper and His people be edified! We want the truth, the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! We ask you to deal with us as required to bring this to pass in us! In Jesus' name!

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