

# What is the Tree of Life

The tree of life, mentioned in the books of Genesis and Revelation, is a life-giving tree created to enhance and perpetually sustain the physical life of humanity. The tree was planted by God in the Garden of Eden: *"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"* (Genesis 2:9). The centrally located tree of life would have been easily accessible to Adam and Eve from any point in the garden. If Adam had passed the test of obedience, the tree of life would have been the means of God imparting eternal life to him without ever seeing death. It was a real tree, to be sure, but it was also symbolic of the fact that God was, and is, the source of eternal life and blessing. Adam and Eve were to have their life centered in Him, even as the Tree was in the center of His Garden.

More details concerning the tree of life come after Adam and Eve's sin: *"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'"* (Genesis 3:22). In his disobedience, Adam lost his eternal life. The tree of life in Eden must have had some role to play in maintaining the life of Adam and Eve (and possibly the animals).

## Why would God prevent Adam from eating from the Tree of Life after he had sinned?

Adam would "live forever," even in his fallen condition, if he had eaten the tree of life after his sin. God placed a sword-wielding cherub at the entrance to the garden specifically "to guard the way to the tree of life" (Genesis 3:24). It seems access to the tree of life would have prolonged Adam's physical life indefinitely, dooming him to an eternity in a cursed world.

The Bible tells us that the last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). But if death is an enemy, wouldn't it have been a good thing for Adam to live forever by eating from the Tree of Life?

When Adam sinned, mankind became estranged from God and physical death entered the world. In this way, through one man, physical death entered the world (Romans 5:12, 17), and through Adam, death now came to all men. If Adam had eaten from the Tree of Life after he sinned, he would have lived forever, but he would have lived in a state of eternal estrangement from God.

While death is tragic and an enemy to God's perfect creation, this same curse of death, is also what allowed Christ to become incarnate as a man and to actually die on the cross as a ransom for His people. If Adam had eaten from the Tree of Life after he had sinned, all mankind would have lived forever, estranged from God; and Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, would not have been able to die on the cross in redemption. In other words, if God did not subject sinful humanity with a curse of death, sinful man would not have any chance of being reconciled back to God. If God did not prevent Adam from eating from the Tree of Life after he had sinned, a future redemption through the physical death of one of Adam's descendants (Jesus Christ)

would not have been possible.

So the irony of it all is that while the wages of sin is death, and while death is the last enemy that would eventually be destroyed at the final consummation of all things, the entrance of physical death is also the mechanism that allows for the Gospel of redemption.

No physical death, no redemption by a Kinsman-Redeemer, no hope for a future restoration and union with Christ.

So while death is an enemy, and while creation itself was subjected by God to futility, and while the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23); through Christ, one day, at the final consummation, death will lose its sting (1 Corinthians 15:54–56). Through Christ, the entrance of physical death into the world as a result of sin, serves as the means through which the Messiah would be able to reconcile His people back to Himself by dying on the cross in redemption. Through Christ, creation itself would one day be restored to its former glory and more. Finally, through Christ, all who believe in Him would one day be redeemed, resurrected and restored in perfect union with God; God will recreate a New Heaven and a New Earth, and death itself would one day be destroyed forever (1 Corinthians 15:26).

As Romans 8:20–23 explains, the entrance of physical death in Genesis 3, through Christ, serves the purpose of bringing about the eventual spiritual reconciliation and physical resurrection of all believers; and so that creation itself would one day be set free from the curse.

When God created man, not only was he made in the very image of God, but he was then given unconditional authority over this earth:

*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26 NKJV)*

Adam forfeited his authority over this earth to Lucifer (the Devil or Satan) when he ate of the forbidden fruit:

*Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' " (Matthew 4:8-10 NKJV)*

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

The biblical account of creation in Genesis, the historical reality of the fall of man, and the entrance of physical sin, are all central to the gospel and our blessed hope.

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:1–5).*

One day, all of creation would be restored to its former glory. Death, suffering, sin, and the curse will be done away with. When that happens, believers will once again have access to the Tree of Life which will once again be present in the New Heaven and New Earth. (Rev 2:7 & 22:2,14,19).

The historical reality of Adam's exclusion from the Tree of Life in Genesis 3:22, the protevangelium of Genesis 3:15, and the God-Man of Genesis 4:1, all point us forward to what Jesus would eventually do on the cross 2,000 years ago, and how the curse of sin would one day be destroyed. Together, these verses paint for us the foundational elements of the Gospel. Through the first Adam, death entered the world. Through the last Adam, Jesus Christ, death on the cross becomes the means through which Creation is reconciled and restored; and when all is completed, death itself, the last enemy, will be forever destroyed. (1 Corinthians 15:26).

## **In Summary**

It was a mercy that God kept us from the tree of life. By barring access to the tree of life, God showed compassion in His omniscience. Knowing that, because of sin, earthly life would be filled with sorrow and toil, God graciously limited the number of years men would live. To live eternally in a sinful state would mean endless agony for humanity, with no hope of the relief that comes with death. By limiting our lifespan, God gives us enough time to come to know Him and His provision for eternal life through Christ but spares us the misery of an endless existence in a sinful condition.

Here is food for thought--->Could you imagine being caught in a raging building fire and not being able to die? The pain and agony would be unbearable.

But in His great love, God provided One who would redeem fallen mankind. Through one man, Adam, sin entered the world, but through another Man, Jesus Christ, redemption through the forgiveness of sin is available to all (Romans 5:17). Those who avail themselves of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross will be resurrected to see the tree of life again, for it stands in the middle of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, where it bears "twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2). In the eternal state, the curse will be no more (verse 3), access to the tree of life will be reinstated, and darkness will be forever banished (verse 5). Eden will be restored.