



June 16, 2023

A Very Different Tree

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

One of the blessings of living here on the Gulf Coast is the temperatures seldom reach extremes year long. Yes it can be humid and muggy, but not unbearable. Winter here it gets colder, but again not severe.

Because of this, I daily like to sit in the early morning and late afternoon early evening on my back covered porch and enjoy the backyard we have. I enjoy watching the various animals, especially the birds and rabbits, but also the various types of trees we have.

One thing my wife and I both noticed is that the trees that grow in this area are much different than those where we last lived in North Carolina, Nebraska, Wisconsin, or southern California. In my reflecting upon trees, and what God created, perhaps we can glean some things from scripture.

They are introduced in Genesis 1 in a positive light as providing fruit for part of the food for mankind. We understand from modern technical analysis that trees are part of the Creation mechanism for producing life-giving Oxygen in the atmosphere through the process of photosynthesis. The leaves of trees convert Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) into Oxygen. CO₂ is needed to provide the raw material for this important function. Phytoplankton found in the oceans also produce Oxygen from CO₂ possibly up to half of the total Oxygen production.

Scripture tells us that God placed various fruit trees in the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:8-9) We are similarly told that "*The Tree of Life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" (Genesis 2:9) The word "also" clarifies that these two special trees were located somewhere in the

Garden of Eden, (or like the other trees, in the midst of the garden), not outside of it.

The Hebrew word translated "midst" can refer to "middle, into, or among, etc." (Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon) The garden was planted "eastward in Eden" (Genesis 2:8) and was actually only part of the territory termed or defined as "Eden."

How big was this garden? I've heard a plethora of explanations and theories, but actually we are not told. No doubt there was a large variety of fruit trees, bushes, and other plants within the garden. The record does not specify that the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil were both located at the exact same spot, or even right next to each other within the garden.

It appears that God pointed out the "*tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" specifically to Adam. (Genesis 2:17) We can assume that Adam later showed the tree to Eve and told her about God's instruction of not to eat of it.

We are not told that God pointed out the "Tree of Life" in a similar way. Satan in the guise of a serpent spoke to Eve and questioned her about what trees she may eat of. She refers to "*the tree which is in the midst of the garden*" (Gen. 3:3) She is obviously aware of this tree and its location. Perhaps Satan appeared to Eve when she was walking or standing near the tree? In the next event we are told that Eve "*saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes*" (Gen. 3:6).

Here's a question to ask. Why didn't Adam and Eve partake of the Tree of Life? Maybe God designed it so that fruit was not yet present during the time that Adam and Eve were in the garden? Maybe the large size of the garden made it difficult to locate this specific tree within it? We can only speculate.

After expelling Adam and Eve from Eden, God "*placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the Tree of Life.*" (Gen. 3:24) The way would be the path leading to the Garden of

Eden and ultimately to the tree. This does not mean that there was a path complete with a large sign "This Way to The Tree!" leading right to the tree of life.

Interestingly, the "*tree of life*" is mentioned again in the final book of God's revelation to mankind. ". . . *To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.*" (Rev. 2:7)

Why did God block Adam and Eve from partaking of the tree of life? "*And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever - therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden*" (Gen. 3:22-23)

Partaking of the tree of life is symbolic of participating in the process of preparing for and receiving eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Christ's return and the "*times of restoration of all things*" will see a time of abundance and healing and well-being for mankind. (Acts 3:20-21).

The ultimate setting of the appearance of the Tree of Life is described in the closing chapter of the Book of Revelation. (Rev. 22:2, 14) This is the time when New Jerusalem will descend from the heavenly realm to the New Earth. Those who will be there and have access to the Tree of Life are described, "*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the Tree of Life . . .*" (Rev. 22:14) Unlike Adam and Eve, they will have resisted Satan's deceptions and held to obedience to God's instructions and commandments.

Just some thoughts to ponder, and share, as we seek the balance of God's truth in our lives.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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