

THE TWO TREES OF THE GARDEN

The question - Adam and Eve could eat of all the trees of the garden except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When the angels blocked Adam and Eve from the Tree of Life, after they sinned and I am assuming they could partake of it, before the transgression, why block it if it couldn't give eternal life or hadn't already before the transgression. Eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil triggered a reaction in mind and body that was a result of disobedience. So eating of the Tree of Life was still possible unless its access were removed. It seemed to have no power of potential until after the transgression.

The following are the relevant dot points concerning the two trees in the Garden of Eden extracted from the document "The foundation of the world"

- The "garden" (*gan* – a place protected by a fence) of Eden ("delight") was the original "Paradise" (Lxx. translates it so – see also Luke 23:43). The carnal beasts were excluded (except for the serpent), and so it was a place of "joy and gladness", "thanksgiving and the voice of melody" – Isa. 51:3. So it becomes the symbol of the future reward of the faithful and obedient – Rev. 2:7.
- The fruits of the earth were created to satisfy every natural and lawful desire of the natural man. Used within the bounds of Divine law they are beautiful, satisfying and in their use without cause of regret. It is only when men ignore God's laws that evil, bitterness and regret accrue.
- The tree of life (*ets ha-chayim*) was the central focus of the garden – a beautiful symbol of immortality/eternal life – Rev. 2:7; 22:14. Hence, it was in the "midst of the garden".
- The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also in the "midst" of the garden (Gen. 3:3) and sadly it was to take centre stage in the downfall of the human race. In every era there is a choice to be made between what these two trees represent.
- Eve upholds the Divine law until she is utterly deceived by the serpent's lie – 1 Tim. 2:14. She even extrapolates the law – "neither shall ye touch it", showing that they had thought about its implications. Hence, "the woman" is chosen to represent God's mind and thinking opposed to amoral serpent thinking in Gen. 3:15. The brief account of the serpent's lie in Gen. 3:4 is sufficient for faith but Bro. Thomas expounds on this in *Elpis Israel* page 84 – "In reasoning upon these things, he concluded that, if they did eat of the forbidden fruit, they would not surely die; for they would have nothing more to do than to go and eat of the Tree of Life, and it would prevent all fatal consequences."
- There was an element of truth in the serpent's assertions – upon eating of the forbidden tree Adam and Eve would "know good and evil" like the angels. Good is only really appreciated when seen in contrast with evil. In their novitiate they did not know what evil was, nor did they understand what death really meant.
- *Elpis Israel* page 69 - All the posterity of Adam, when they attain the age of puberty, and their eyes are in the opening crisis, begin to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. Previous to that natural change, they are in their innocency. But, thenceforth, the world, as a serpent-entwined fruit tree, stands before the mind, enticing it to take and eat, and enjoy the *good* things it affords. To speculate upon the lawfulness

of compliance is partly to give consent. There must be no reasoning upon the harmlessness of conforming to the world. Its enticements without, and the sympathizing instincts of the flesh within, must be instantly suppressed ; for, to hold a parley with its lusts, is dangerous. When *one* is seduced by "the deceitfulness of sin "he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14,15) ; in other words, he plucks the forbidden fruit, and dies, if not forgiven.

- The exclusion of Adam and Eve from the garden was for their benefit. It prevented the unthinkable suggested by the serpent – perpetuation of their fallen condition. It also emphasized their true state needing redemption and restoration.
- Hence, the Cherubim kept (*shamar* – hedge about, guard, protect) so that it could be found by searching man in need of redemption. The flaming sword provided the means of accepting the sacrifices of those who came with the appropriate offerings in the hope that one day they might through forgiveness have access to the tree of life.

The answer to the above question is hinted at in the preceding selections. Created 'very good' and therefore not corrupting as mortals experience with all its attendant infirmities and weaknesses; not inclined towards sin as biased man now is in the wake of Adam's transgression, Adam and Eve felt no need for the fruit of the Tree of Life. The proximity of the two trees was also an element. They had decided that the law given that they should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was best kept by not even touching it. Thus they gave it a wide berth and in so doing would also distance themselves from the Tree of Life which was also in the midst of the garden. They felt no desire or inclination towards either tree. Similarly, Adam and Eve never looked at the fig trees in the garden as a source of covering for the shame they felt when sin brought shame and fear. They felt no need for a covering until then just as they felt no need for eternal life in their 'very good' estate.

THE TEACHING OF 'CLEAN FLESH' DOCTRINE

The east coast of Australia has been a hot bed of 'Clean Flesh' teaching on the Atonement since 1896 when Bro. Roberts encountered the doctrine in Victoria. A Bro. Cornish created a great deal of pain and agony for Bro. Roberts in their dispute over the Atonement as is outlined in "Diary of a voyage to Australia and New Zealand and other lands" pages 66-70. It is worth a read and can be located on Christadelphian Bookshelf. In the early 20th century Bro. John Bell in Sydney took up some of the ideas of Cornish, as did many who followed his line of argument thereof creating a stronghold for the 'Clean Flesh' doctrine along the entire east coast of Australia.

The Unity Agreement in Australia in 1958 did not resolve this matter. In 1969 and beyond some 40 ecclesias in Australia withdrew fellowship from the Petrie Terrace Ecclesia in Brisbane and a number of other ecclesias in Queensland who supported their doctrinal position. That rift with Petrie Terrace was not resolved until 1996. The document attached to the covering email was the foundation of the reconciliation. In

that document the matter of the "Medicine Tree" theory was addressed. The positive and negative clause read as follows:

2p. Adam and Eve manifested no decline towards death prior to sinning. They were not dependent upon eating of the Tree of Life to preserve them in their "very good" condition of nature prior to sin. Eating of the Tree of Life is set forth in Rev.2:7 as a beautiful symbol of the bestowal of immortality by Christ at his coming.

Gen.2:17, 3:17-19, 3:22-24; Ecc.9:2-5; Rom.5:12; 2 Pet.1:4; Rev.2:7.

2n. The Tree of Life was not a tree that would preserve Adam and Eve in their "very good" condition of nature prior to sin.

It was necessary to address this theory because it is fundamental to 'Clean Flesh' teaching that man was created mortal; i.e. his nature was actually corruptible and this corrupting process was arrested by regular eating of the tree of life in the garden. Some adherents of CF insist on this facet of the subject because they argue that the sentence passed by God in Gen. 3 had no physical effects. All that God had to do was remove access to the tree of life and the inherent corruptibility in their nature would take over and bring them to death in due time. This was necessary as a premise to argue that the sinless Christ was not subject to the 'legal' sentence of Gen. 3 and therefore had no personal involvement in his redemptive work. hence, he was (in their understanding) a substitute.