

Adam and Eve and the Two Trees

One of the first stories in the Bible is one of the best known but least understood. Adam and Eve's choice between the two trees changed the course of history.

The story of Adam and Eve and their choice to eat fruit from the only tree that God told them *not* to eat from is one of the best-known stories of the Bible. This sad beginning has touched the lives of everyone who has lived ever since.

Let's look at this true story and why it is still important today.

The main characters

There are four main characters: One good, one bad and two people who had to make a vital choice.

- God: The Creator who made everything.
- Adam: The first human being God created.
- Eve: The woman God created using one of Adam's ribs.
- The serpent: This tricky, talking snake was the devil in disguise. The last book of the Bible tells us Satan the devil is "that serpent of old" (Revelation 12:9).

The creation of Adam and Eve

The Bible starts with God, who decided to create people who were like Him, who could become His children (1 John 3:1). He made the first man, Adam, out of the dust of the ground; but His plan was for people to actually become His sons and daughters if they made the right choices and tried to think and act like He does.

God breathed into the dust He had shaped into Adam, and Adam came alive! God gave him the job of caring for a beautiful garden with every type of tree and fruit imaginable. Then God gave him an important rule:

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

God then let Adam name all the animals God had created. Perhaps while watching all the animals with their mates, Adam realized that he was alone as the only human being. In this way it seems God showed the value of companionship before He created Adam’s beautiful companion.

God put Adam into a deep sleep and took one of his ribs to use in making Eve. When God brought Adam and Eve together as husband and wife, He created the first marriage. This close relationship, like everything God created, was very good!

We wish that the idyllic story had continued and that we could say “they lived happily ever after.” God wanted them to choose life and happiness, but God’s enemy did not.

The temptation

Satan the devil hates God and hates human beings who have the potential to be God’s children. So he intruded on Eve one day in the garden. Eve probably hadn’t heard a talking snake before, but it seems she hadn’t learned to fear any of the animals in the peaceful garden.

The tricky serpent asked her, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” (Genesis 3:1). He wanted her to start thinking that God was unfair.

But Eve said, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die’” (verses 2-3).

Satan, disguised as the serpent, then lied to Eve. “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (verses 4-5).

Satan called God a liar. He said, in effect, “You can’t really believe God.” He made it seem like God was keeping good things from Adam and Eve. He made the fruit seem very appealing; and when Eve looked at the fruit, it looked good and tasty. She began to believe that the serpent was right. If she ate it, she would become as wise as God!

So she touched it, and nothing bad happened. She took a bite, and she was convinced the serpent was right. She encouraged Adam to eat some too. He wasn't convinced by the serpent, but he decided to eat as well.

The results

God was right, of course. Adam and Eve's choice led to their death.

They chose the way of *get*. They chose to selfishly take things for themselves. They chose to decide for themselves what they thought was good and evil, but it didn't make them more like God. God really knows what is right and wrong. People, following the lead of the devil, often get these things wrong. As the story of Adam and Eve shows, there are very bad results when people ignore God's instruction and choose for themselves what they think is the right way to live (Proverbs 14:12).

After disobeying God, Adam and Eve were ashamed of their bodies and tried to hide from God. They felt guilty and had lost their closeness to God.

When God asked what happened, Adam blamed Eve (and basically blamed God, since He had given her to him). Then Eve blamed the serpent.

Along with death, Adam and Eve also earned other bad results. Their sin brought sorrow and conflict to families. They lost their home in the beautiful garden and had to work much harder to live.

Because their choice would make their lives miserable, God didn't want them to "live forever" in misery (Genesis 3:22). God put angels and a flaming sword at the entrance of the garden "to guard the way to the tree of life" (verse 24). Their sin cut them off from God and from the gift of eternal life He wants to give.

Adam and Eve chose the way that leads to death for themselves and all their children.

But thankfully God had a plan to turn that around. Jesus Christ was willing to pay the death penalty for us. If we reject the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and accept what God says is right and wrong, God will open the way to the tree of life.

What the two trees mean for us today

Every person since Adam and Eve has also chosen the way of *get*. We have chosen to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong. In that way we have listened to the lies of Satan and chosen to sin. We have eaten the forbidden fruit. We have earned death.

But the Bible says Jesus came to the earth as a second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45). He was willing to pay the death penalty for those who will repent. That means to turn around, stop going Satan's way of *get* and start going God's way of *give*—of love.

The apostle Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

When God forgives our sins, He gives us the help of His Holy Spirit to change our lives. When we accept that gift and grow the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives, it is like eating from the tree of life. It is choosing the way of giving and of outgoing concern for others. We must always choose that tree.

At the end of the Bible we see the tree of life again. Jesus told those who were striving to overcome sin and to obey God's commandments: "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7; see also 22:14).

When we choose to obey God's law, the result is real happiness. God will be happy to have us live forever when we come to Jesus Christ the Savior in true repentance and do the good things that make us and the ones around us happy.

For more about what the two trees mean, see the article "The Tree of Life" and the article "The Fruit of the Spirit."