

Why Did God Place the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Middle of the Garden?

Question:

Why did God place the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the center of the Garden of Eden, knowing it would ultimately lead Adam and Eve to sin? Why didn't He simply remove that tree and leave only the Tree of Life?

Answer:

At first glance, it might seem wiser for there to be only one tree in the garden the Tree of Life. However, if only the Tree of Life had been present, its meaning and significance would not have been fully understood.

Theologically, this touches on the principle of moral dualism to truly recognize good, there must be an awareness of evil. God's creation included the freedom to choose, and moral knowledge required the possibility of disobedience. Goodness, by itself, without the contrast of evil, could become meaningless or taken for granted. The existence of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil served as a real choice, providing the context in which obedience to God's command would have real moral significance (Genesis 2:16-17, NIV).

Consider the analogy of light and darkness:

“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19, NIV)

Light cannot be known or appreciated without darkness. Similarly, good cannot be fully understood without evil. The presence of evil or its knowledge confirms and defines the goodness of God and His creation.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, whose fruit symbolizes death and separation from God (Genesis 2:17), contrasts with the Tree of Life, whose fruit represents eternal life and fellowship with God (Genesis 3:22-24). Adam and Eve needed this contrast to understand the gravity of life, death, and obedience.

Without knowledge of death, Adam and Eve could not fully appreciate life. This theological tension reflects God’s sovereign allowance of free will and the moral responsibility given to humanity. Even today, concepts like peace are understood only in contrast to conflict; health is known because of sickness; wealth because of poverty (Romans 7:15-25).

Pain and suffering, likewise, serve a divine purpose (Hebrews 12:5-11). If our bodies could not feel pain, we would not protect ourselves from harm. Pain reminds us to care for the body God has given us and helps us recognize the blessing of health and safety.

In the same way, the presence of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was not to trap Adam and Eve but to teach them the value of obedience and life itself, and to prepare the way for redemption.

Have you received Jesus Christ and had your sins washed away? Jesus is the fulfillment of the Tree of Life, offering eternal life to all who believe in Him. He restores fellowship with God, reversing the consequences of the Fall.

John 14:6 (NIV):

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

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Revelation 2:7 (NIV):

“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

Revelation 22:2 (NIV) further describes the restored Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem, symbolizing eternal life and healing:

“Down the middle of the great street of the city, on each side of the river, stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

May the Lord richly bless you

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