

Three Trees

Genesis 2.4-17

Can Jehovah's Witnesses use a Christmas tree?

If one of Jehovah's Witness does decide to have a holiday tree, this would constitute apostasy and such a one would be accountable to Jehovah God, who clearly states that it is Him alone one must worship. Of course, if another (unbelieving) member of one's household chooses to use a Christmas tree, the Witness member would want to show love to their family by accepting it, and simply not taking part in decorating or showing veneration to it in any way.

1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses

Like they are on Several Issues – JW's PARTLY Right HERE...

Surely NOT to WORSHIP TREES – at Christmas or ANYTIME

TREES – God's GIFTS to POINT US heavenward to HIMSELF

Seeing FESTIVE Tree can remind us to PRAISE & SERVE our UNSEEN GOD

3 Trees God WANTS us to LOOK AT and LEARN FROM this Christmas

1. The Lord God is Creator: Tree of Life

a. Fact? Shocking CLAIMS in SWEET CHORUSES this Morning

BIG, BEYOND our IMAGINATION, HARD to Believe CLAIMS! God! World!

Many ACADEMICS: HOW Reconcile Claims with Intellect? Fantasy, MYTH

Perhaps You – “Admit Xmas is GREAT Story, makes you FEEL GOOD!”

NOT REAL Story – NOT TIME & SPACE History – Not BRUTE Facts

Christmas Story of Bible Makes Bold, Clear, HISTORICAL Claims

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king Matthew 2.1

a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria...Joseph

also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of

David, which is called Bethlehem

Luke 2.1-4

And ANCIENT Text before us in Genesis ALSO makes Historical Claims
 Genesis / even these Early Chapters / Clearly Presented as Historical Document
 Eden is as Real as Beijing / Like any Garden ignored by Man / OVERGROWN

vs. 8,9 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Real Place inhabited by Real People ALL made by Real God

REAL TREES in REAL GARDEN > 2 Trees IMPORTANT SYMBOLS

Like PORTRAIT of Presidents & Kings hang in GOVERNMENT Buildings

TREE of Life > GOD is GIVER and LORD of LIFE

Book Written by MOSES – led Israelites thru wilderness to Promised Land
 EAST: Somewhere across great Arabian desert - Tigris / Euphrates River Valley

vs. 10-14four rivers. The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

1st & 2nd Rivers UNKNOWN TODAY, Lost during Flood? Tributaries of T & E?

“CUSH” known today as a section of Arabia and Ethiopia

“ASSYRIA” today the territory of SYRIA, IRAQ

MOSES used names of places known to his Israelite readers / Fact not Fiction

Word - Eden – Hebrew = DELIGHT

BELIEVING Bible is FULLY Word of God NOT MEAN Understand it ALL
NO ATTEMPT to RECONCILE > Chapter 1 with LATEST Scientific Findings

Jesus taught Genesis DID Not Attempt to Reconcile Moses and 1st C Scientists
NEITHER did Apostles – Augustine – Luther – Calvin – Edwards – Spurgeon

Aren't you GLAD they DID NOT TRY? > It would sound FOOLISH Today!

100 yrs from NOW – WISDOM of 21st C Scientists will be FOUND WANTING

Before the majestic declarations of Scripture we bow in humble reverence. How meager is our knowledge; how great is our ignorance! Dare we assert that only in such and such a manner the Creator could have worked? Are we really in possession of such knowledge that we can circumscribe him? Of course there is much in the first chapters of Genesis we cannot understand. There is one thing that by the grace of the Creator we may do, we can believe and never be ashamed.

E.J. Young

b. Filled v. 7 the Lord God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life

PICTURE OF A LIFEGUARD – Breathing into a DROWNED Man

God: “the breath of man that I have created” Isaiah 57.16

Hebrew / Greek / Latin - SAME WORD FOR BREATH AND SPIRIT

Jesus told Nicodemus “Spirit gives birth to spirit” John 3.6

We are Made for Communion with God who is Spirit

God shaped vacuum placed in the heart of every man Blaise Pascale

“you gotta serve somebody, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody” Bob Dylan

WE ARE MADE TO WORSHIP / Body has a Spirit to Meet with God

God is the CREATOR of All Earth's Creatures: “When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust”

Psalm 104.29

ADAM EXISTED BY BREATHING IN – Cannot Survive on His Own
 Our BREATH – Our LIFE – is ON LOAN from God for a SEASON

2nd Adam CHRIST BREATHES OUT – GIVES LIFE – LIFE IN HIMSELF

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. John 5.26

RISEN JESUS ENTERED LOCKED ROOM TO MEET DISCIPLES

Shows HE is “Everlasting Father” of a New Creation

“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit” John 20.21

c. Freedom v. 16 “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden”

All of Creation was Beautiful / Eden was ESPECIALLY BEAUTIFUL

Were 100’s, perhaps 1000’s, of trees and fruits available for man to Enjoy

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” Genesis 1.31

“trees that were pleasing to the eye” Genesis 2.9

“land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resins and onyx are also there)” Genesis 2.11

EVEN THE FALLEN WORLD IS BREATHTAKING IN MANY PLACES

Places BJ that can take your Breath Away – Biking BEHIND A CITY BUS

Our FIRST PARENTS COULD GO ANYWHERE AND DO ANYTHING

FREE TO DO WHAT THEY were MADE TO DO / Serve & Worship God
 LOVE for GOD is NOT FORCED or MECHANICAL > FREE and WILLING

Jesus “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” John 10.10

FREEDOM CONFOUNDS the UNBELIEVER > Think we are FORCED

‘Why SERVE the POOR, GIVE Freely, GO to Church, LOVE the Unlovely?’

WHO or WHAT is FORCING You? BRAINWASHED? FOOLISH?

“...in your service is perfect freedom” Book of Common Prayer

Sadly their GLORIOUS FREEDOM became their TERRIBLE FREEDOM

2. The Lord God is Judge: Tree of the Knowledge of God and Evil

a. Purpose WHY am I HERE? WHO am I? Great Questions of PHILOSOPHY

Some: IDENTITY and PURPOSE defined by STATE > Relation as CITIZEN

- Others defined by THINGS, POSSESSIONS > Stroll the Malls for MEANING

- Others defined by FAMILY > LOYAL Daughter or Son SWEEPS TOMBS

- Hugh Hefner defined by SEX > HAPPINESS comes from HOOK-UPS

ALL these SLIP through our FINGERS like SAWDUST > No LASTING Worth

Life is a theater for us to act for the glory of God.

John Calvin

Garden – 1st Theater - PERFECT for Duties and Responsibilities of Man

Heb “adaamah” = Ground / “Adam” = Man // Man is FROM G & FOR THE G

Created from the Ground / Called to Work the Ground

v. 15 “God took..man..put him in the Garden to work it and take care of it”

"Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him sees, That half a proper gardener's work is done upon his knees"

Rudyard Kipling

TROUBLES OF WORK / SWEAT ON BROW / RESULT OF THE CURSE

The purpose of man – the meaning of man – is to stand in love as a creature before the Creator. Francis Schaeffer

b. Prohibition > Freedom MAINTAINED in OBEDIENCE to God

v. 17 “you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”

ONE SMALL LIMITATION TO MAN’S FREEDOM

Possibility = deny God / disobey His Law / disrespect His authority

MARTIN LUTHER wrote "BONDAGE OF THE WILL" – FALLEN MAN

NOW - Free to Do what we Want to Do, What we Want to do is Disobey God

TREE was NOT EVIL – Made by God > ALL He made was VERY GOOD

But EVIL did EXIST as POSSIBILITY and would soon become REALITY

Beyond my PAY GRADE to ANSWER WHERE, WHEN, HOW Evil BEGAN

CONVINCED – God is TOTALLY Sovereign, Good, Just, Wise, Powerful, Holy

HOW God can DIRECT Evil in RIGHTEOUSNESS is within HIS ABILITY

LOVE for SUPERIOR – Child to Parent – Means OBEDIENCE to THEM

CHILD cannot say ‘Loves’ Parents AND BLATANTLY DISOBEYS Them

“God will give to each person according to what he has done” Romans 2.6

TREE WAS SYMBOL - God could have pointed to stone, "do not move"

referred to a river "do not jump across"

Tree – Issue of Source of Knowledge / Where will we learn Good and Evil?

Who will establish Moral Code? Friends? Society? Films? Parents? Tree? God?

TREE REMINDS THEM THEY ARE NOT GOD / RESPONSIBLE TO HIM

"tree is in the center of the garden" PRIMACY OF LAW AND JUSTICE

GOD & His STANDARD - NOT MAN & HIS DESIRES - at CENTERPOINT

c. Penalty v. 17 "when you eat of it, you will surely die"

1st Mention of DEATH IN BIBLE / 1st Mention of Moral Choice

PROBABLY Man was NOT NATURALLY MORTAL > Would NOT DIE

Symbolized by PRESENCE and ACCESS to the TREE of LIFE

Before the Fall, between Adam and death, which is part of his natural lot as an element in his human heritage, there stands the Living God; His presence is sufficient to ward off death... R. Martin-Achard

Death = SEPARATION / Increasing Effect...

1) Immediate v. 17 "when you eat of it you will surely die"

EVIDENCE "they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden" Genesis 3.8

Spiritual Separation of Man from God

"you were dead in your transgressions and sins" Ephesians 2.1

"separate from Christ...without hope and without God in the world" Ephesians 2.12

Because of PRESENT DEATH - LIFE BECOMES MEANINGLESS

Writing about Widows Paul said

"the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives" 1 Timothy 5.6

"just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" Romans 5.12

WE SINNED WHEN ADAM SINNED / Guilty LONG BEFORE OUR BIRTH

REPRESENTATIVE PRINCIPLE IN SCRIPTURE / We are in Adam

PERFECT MAN / PERFECT WORLD / PERFECT OPPORTUNITY

One Football Player JUMPS OFFSIDE / WHOLE TEAM is Penalized

2) Eventual Someday OUR BODIES WILL CEASE TO FUNCTION

“Adam lived 930 years, and then he died” Genesis 5.5 / Separation of Body & Soul

Our Death Warrant is written into our Birth Certificate

“For the wages of sin is death” Romans 6.23

“The soul who sins is the one who will die” Ezek 18.20

Many American Funerals / Nervous Chatting of Grieving Families at Viewing

“My doesn't he look so natural, so peaceful”

DEATH TERRIBLE ENEMY / NOT NATURAL / NOT PLAN OF GOD –

Dead people DO NOT LOOK GOOD they look DEAD!

TOMBSTONE IN CEMETARY

“Pause stranger, when you pass my by, As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be, so prepare for death and follow me”

ONE PASSERBY WROTE ON TOMBSTONE

“To follow you, I am not content, until I know which way you went”

3) Eternal SEPARATION OF SOUL AND BODY FROM GOD

TERRIBLE FUTURE FOR THOSE OUTSIDE OF CHRIST

“They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the
presence of the Lord”

2 Thessalonians 1.9

Thinking? Is he Threatening w/ HELL on Christmas Sunday? ABSOLUTELY!

“Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death”
Revelation 20.14

KEEPING People OUT of Hell is what Christmas is ALL ABOUT

IF only BORN ONCE you will DIE TWICE / BORN TWICE, only DIE ONCE

Many UNANSWERED WHY QUESTIONS

WHY? – Did God give Adam the freedom of choice?

WHY? – Were the consequences of Adam’s choice so severe and eternal?

3. The Lord God is Savior: Tree of Cursing

a. Punishment AN EVEN BIGGER WHY QUESTION –

WHY? – Did God send His own Son to redeem us from sin and give us new life?

Two Trees – Middle of Garden / One Leads to Death / Other Tree of Life

Fullness of Time God made another Tree – TERRIBLE Tree for his Beloved Son

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” Galatians 3.13

Paul quoting from LAW of Moses > Demanded PAYMENT be Made for SIN PUNISHMENTS for OFFENCES against a HOLY God – Sometimes DEATH

“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God.”

Deuteronomy 21.22,23

Some CRIMES so HEINOUS – Not only Deserved DEATH but Public SHAME HORRIBLE PENALTY for Terrible Acts was PLACARDED – HUNG on Tree
If so ARROGANT you IGNORE Holy God will be ABANDONED by God

Dead CORPSE on the TREE was SCANDAL, SHOCK – Person was CURSED!

Some SELF-DECEIVED People – Seeing Bloody Tree – Filled w/ PRIDE

“Look how much BETTER I am than that VICTIM of their SINFUL ACTS!”

More Humble, Honest Person – Seeing Bloody Tree – Filled with FEAR

“That COULD be ME – except for GRACE of GOD – I too DESERVE that!”

2000 yrs ago God’s CHRISTMAS Gift was PLACARDED on Bloody Tree

Some MOCKED Him as LIAR and PHONY – Some GLOATED in His Pain

Others WEPT and WONDERED why this HOLY INNOCENT should Suffer?

This was PLAN of God – ORDAINED before WORLD was MADE

when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law Galatians 4.4,5

When HIS MOTHER MARY was PREGNANT and UNMARRIED

Her FIANCEE Joseph wanted to DIVORCE her – Angel INTERVENED

“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1.21

Greatest CHRISTMAS Gift – Jesus on TREE – Bearing our PUNISHMENT

Suffered for our Sins – Died our Death – Paid our Penalty – Endured our Hell

CROSS is ALSO a Tree of the Knowledge of GOOD and EVIL

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2.24

Through TREE of JESUS EVIL People can be made GOOD

b. **Promise** - Apostle Peter to Citizens of 1st Century Jerusalem....

The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead--whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. Acts 5.30,31

This ONE who HUNG on a TREE > Gives REPENTANCE & FORGIVENESS

HS Student – New Christian – Youth Group – Caroling in Shopping Area of LA

Sang Well Loved Carols – Shoppers Smiled and Sang Along – Joyful Feeling

Pastor wrote a Tract to Explain Christmas Story – Handed them out to Listeners

People’s SMILES quickly turned to SCOWLS when Looked at TITLE of Tract

“Christmas is for SINNERS ONLY!”

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners 1 Timothy 1.15

Healthy People do NOT Need DR. JESUS – ONLY Sinners need a SAVIOR!

See HIM hanging on BLOODY TREE & Understand He died for YOU

Christmas is Really FOR YOU! He is God’s GIFT for YOU!

He can LEAD you to TREE OF LIFE

Way to that Tree was BLOCKED by God long Ago, Now INVITED...

LAST CHAPTER of BIBLE / BELIEVERS ACCESS THE TREE OF LIFE

“On each side of the river stood the tree of life....And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations...the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.” Revelation 22.2,3

3 Significant TREES DOMINATE the Bible’s ETERNAL HORIZON

Tree of Life, Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil, Cross

Jesus: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” Revelation 2.7

Genesis 2.⁴ These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. ⁵When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, ⁶and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground — ⁷then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷but 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.”