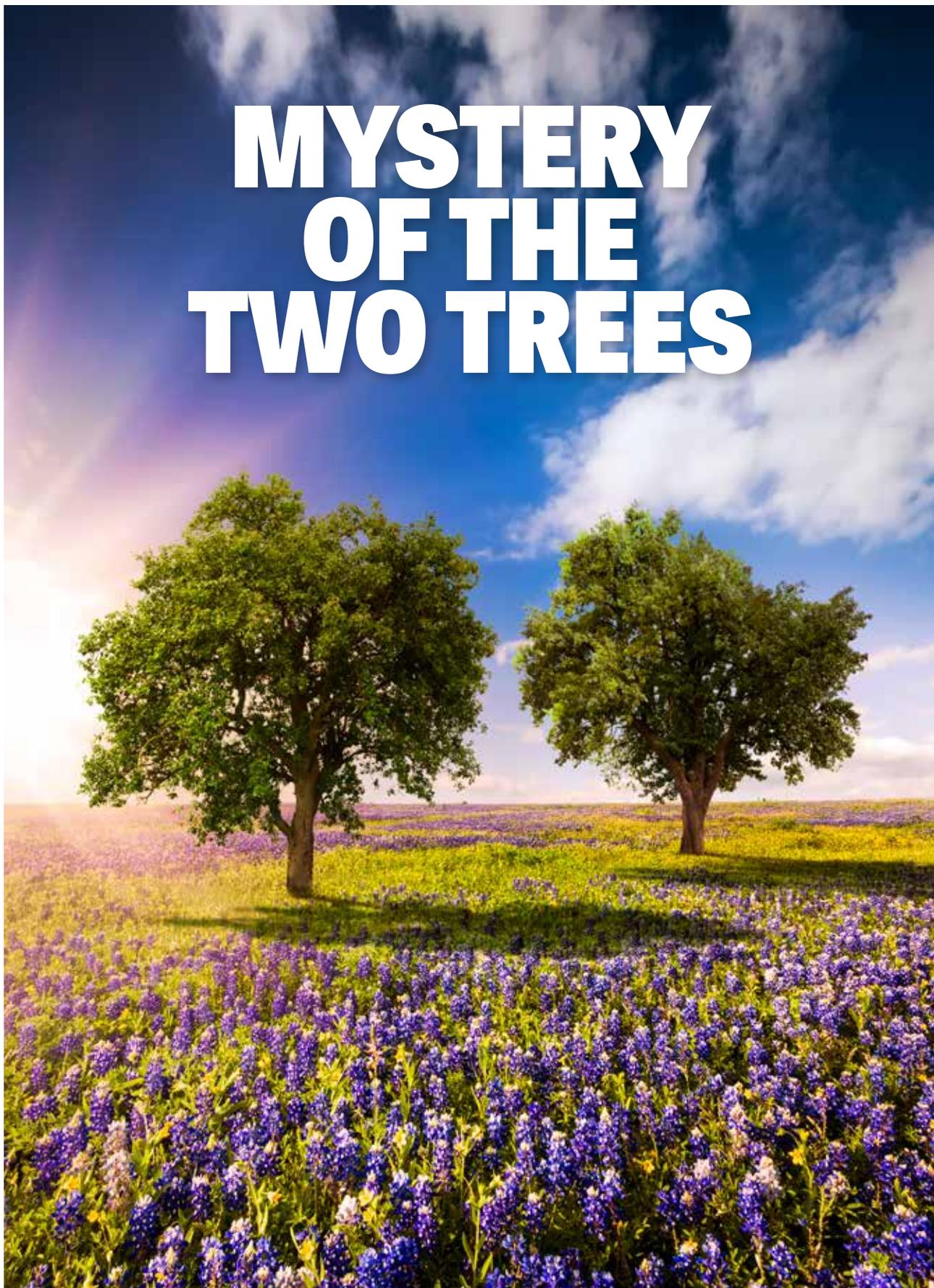


# MYSTERY OF THE TWO TREES



# Mystery of the Two Trees

BY GERALD FLURRY AND BRAD MACDONALD

**H**AVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED ADAM'S MENTAL STATE at creation? We know he was created a mature man with a wonderfully designed, perfectly formed physical body. But his mind was completely devoid of knowledge, a blank slate. Doesn't this make you wonder: What was the very *first* piece of knowledge God taught Adam?

Remember, God knows everything. Adam, on the other hand, knew nothing about God or the universe above him, or even the spectacular ecosystem he was created to be a part of. His mind was blank! So what subject did God believe superseded all other knowledge such that it had to be the first instruction put into the mind of Adam?

You can read the answer in Genesis 2:15-17: "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TWO TREES WAS THE VERY FIRST TEACHING GOD GAVE TO ADAM!

It was the most important piece of information Adam could know immediately after being created. This should stun our minds and help us begin to see how important this subject is to God. He wanted the TWO TREES to be at the FOUNDATION of Adam and Eve's existence AND OF THE WORLD THAT THEY WOULD BUILD!

Herbert W. Armstrong explained about these two trees in a sermon in 1981: "Now I don't question that there were two actual, literal trees that really grew out of the ground in that garden, but the fact of being literal trees is not the point: It is what they symbolized, what they meant, what they represented" (Dec. 5, 1981).

Events in Genesis 2 and 3 show that the meaning of the two trees became a mystery to Adam and Eve, despite the fact that they were taught this subject directly by God. Today, the two trees are even more mysterious—they have become a hazy, virtually forgotten figment of mankind's imagination.

But our rejection of this knowledge does not make this truth any less important to God than it was the day He gave it to Adam. The MYSTERY OF THE TWO TREES remains the heart and core of the Bible, and the foundational knowledge explaining human civilization.

No one in modern history understood the truth about the two trees more deeply than Mr. Armstrong. It was the STRONGEST THEME of his messages and literature in the last few years of his life.

Not until the last seven to eight years of his life did Mr. Armstrong begin to deeply and profoundly

understand this subject. It wasn't until around 1978–79 that he began to talk and write extensively about it. **BUT THEN HE NEVER STOPPED DISCUSSING THE SUBJECT!**

The more he meditated on the two trees, the deeper his understanding grew. He spent hours, even days, thinking on them. During a sermon in 1985, Mr. Armstrong admitted that even as late as 1982, though he had been talking about the two trees for years, he still was not devoting enough attention to them, particularly the *tree of life*.

During a trip to South Africa in 1982, while discussing the subject over dinner with some ministers, Mr. Armstrong realized, he "hadn't thought as much about [the tree of life] as I should. And I didn't realize I didn't think about it either" (April 6, 1985). Mr. Armstrong had been talking about the two trees since the late '70s, but in 1982 God showed him that he needed to think about and discuss the subject **EVEN MORE!**

It took Mr. Armstrong years of in-depth thinking, heartfelt prayer and dedicated Bible study before he really began to comprehend the truth about the two trees. How **WELL DO WE UNDERSTAND THIS SUBJECT?**

The doctrine of the two trees is the premise of the entire Bible!

Yet it could also be the **MOST NEGLECTED AND UNDER-REPORTED SUBJECT** of the *BIBLE!*

## What Are the Two Trees?

The teaching of the two trees is as deep as the oceans and as broad as the universe. It took Mr. Armstrong years to understand it deeply. We should thank God that Mr. Armstrong shared his profound understanding of this subject with us.

Mr. Armstrong explained the symbolism of the two trees regularly. But on February 4, 1984, he delivered a sermon in which his explanation was especially practical and riveting. During this message, he used a diagram on stage to illustrate his description of the two trees. We have reproduced the diagram (see pages 3 and 4), which you should look at as you consider the following excerpts from Mr. Armstrong's 1984 sermon (emphasis ours throughout).

"Now ... at my right is a chart of the tree of life and, as I look at it, *the root of that tree—from which it gathers all of its life, and everything comes from the root—IS GOD. Then the main trunk of the tree is the SPIRIT OF GOD. And ... on one side, are four main branches off of that trunk. The four main branches are the first four of the Ten Commandments, and they express love toward God. Then there are six other major branches, not quite so large because they are really not as important as those first four; and they denote love toward fellow man, the last six of the Ten Commandments.*"

Isn't that a beautiful description of the tree of life?

*“So from God flows LIFE in the form of the Holy Spirit that is injected into those who take of this tree. And with life comes the knowledge of the WAY OF LIFE (of good and evil)—love toward God and love toward neighbor. Then the very many other branches are all of the other things that come under love toward God and love toward neighbor. In other words, other ways that you love God and that you love neighbor. Then it comes out to the branches and the final fruit. And the FRUIT borne you'll see is ... LOVE, and JOY, and PEACE, and HAPPINESS, and ACCOMPLISHMENT, UNITY, and TOGETHERNESS, and all of [the other fruits of God's Holy Spirit].*

*“Now if Adam had taken of that fruit, he would have taken what came from the ROOT and up through the trunk of the tree. He would have had the SPIRIT of the LIFE OF GOD. He would have done the WAY OF GOD—and [had] the SPIRIT OF GOD to give him the knowledge of that way—to give him the LOVE to fulfill that way—to give him the POWER to live that way and then to produce the fruit of PEACE, and JOY, and HAPPINESS, and of every kind of abundance and everything that mankind could want.”*

But what happened? Satan the devil was given access to Adam and Eve. And how did he appear? “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made ...” (Genesis 3:1). Satan “appeared in the form of a serpent .... [H]e was speaking in and through the serpent,” Mr. Armstrong explained in a sermon on September 26, 1981. God allowed Satan to speak through this snake to test Adam and Eve, to prove them, whether they would believe and obey God. They failed that test.

Can you fathom how different mankind's existence would have been if Adam had eaten from the tree of life? Mr. Armstrong later wrote in *Mystery of the Ages*, “*Had Adam taken of the proffered tree of life the whole course of civilization would have been entirely different. Peace, happiness, joy, health and abundance would have spread over the Earth.*” Adam rejected this way of life for mankind when he turned his back on the tree of life and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or the tree of death, as Mr. Armstrong called it.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil appeared beautiful and good for food, but inside it was vile and rotten. “[T]he *root of that tree*,” continued Mr. Armstrong in his 1984 sermon, “is Satan, and the *spirit of Satan coming up through the trunk*. And then the various ways that it leads to are the ways of COMPETITION, of VANITY, exalting the SELF EVEN ABOVE GOD, of COMPETITION, of STRIFE, of ENVY, of JEALOUSY, of BITTERNESS, ... of OPPOSITION, of DISHARMONY and DISUNITY in every way; and that ENDS IN DEATH.” This was the course set for mankind when Adam ate from this tree. Then Mr. Armstrong concluded this section of the sermon: “The one tree was the TREE OF LIFE, the other the TREE OF DEATH. One is the way of GOD; the other is the way of SATAN.” It's that simple!

*Adam and Eve's decision to reject the tree of life and partake of the tree of Satan was the act that SEPARATED mankind from God.*

God closed off access to the tree of life after Adam and Eve's sin (Genesis 3:22-24). By eating of the wrong tree, Adam decided it would be man's prerogative to decide for himself what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong. Man had turned his back on the Holy Spirit of God, flowing from the roots of the tree of life through the trunk. He had rejected the law of God, pictured by the branches; he rejected the fruits of the Spirit, symbolized by the fruits hanging from the tree.

ADAM REJECTED GOD ON BEHALF OF MANKIND!

Have you ever heard the two trees explained this way? Doesn't Mr. Armstrong's description make Genesis and the Garden of Eden so much more real?

### **The Roots**

Think deeply about the symbolic meaning of the ROOTS of these two trees. The roots are the most important part of a tree: They anchor the tree to the ground. The roots are the source of nourishment for the branches and fruit. The roots determine how large a tree can grow, how many branches it can support, what kind of fruit it produces and how much.

Trees can survive without fruit, and sometimes without branches, BUT NO TREE CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT HEALTHY ROOTS!

The roots of the two trees are the most important part of this picture.

The two trees were a test of character. God wanted to see what *root* Adam would eat from because all of mankind was destined to eat from the same tree. If Adam had taken from the tree of life, he would have eaten fruit produced by the tree with God at its roots and received the Spirit of God. Eating from the tree of life meant obeying God, accepting God's revealed knowledge—obeying God's law.

But eating from the tree of death meant taking of fruit produced by the spirit of Satan, originating from Satan at its roots. Satan rejected God and decided for himself what was right and wrong. By eating from Satan's tree, Adam made it his prerogative to decide what was good and evil, right and wrong. Adam made the choice that mankind was to be influenced and led by the spirit of the devil.

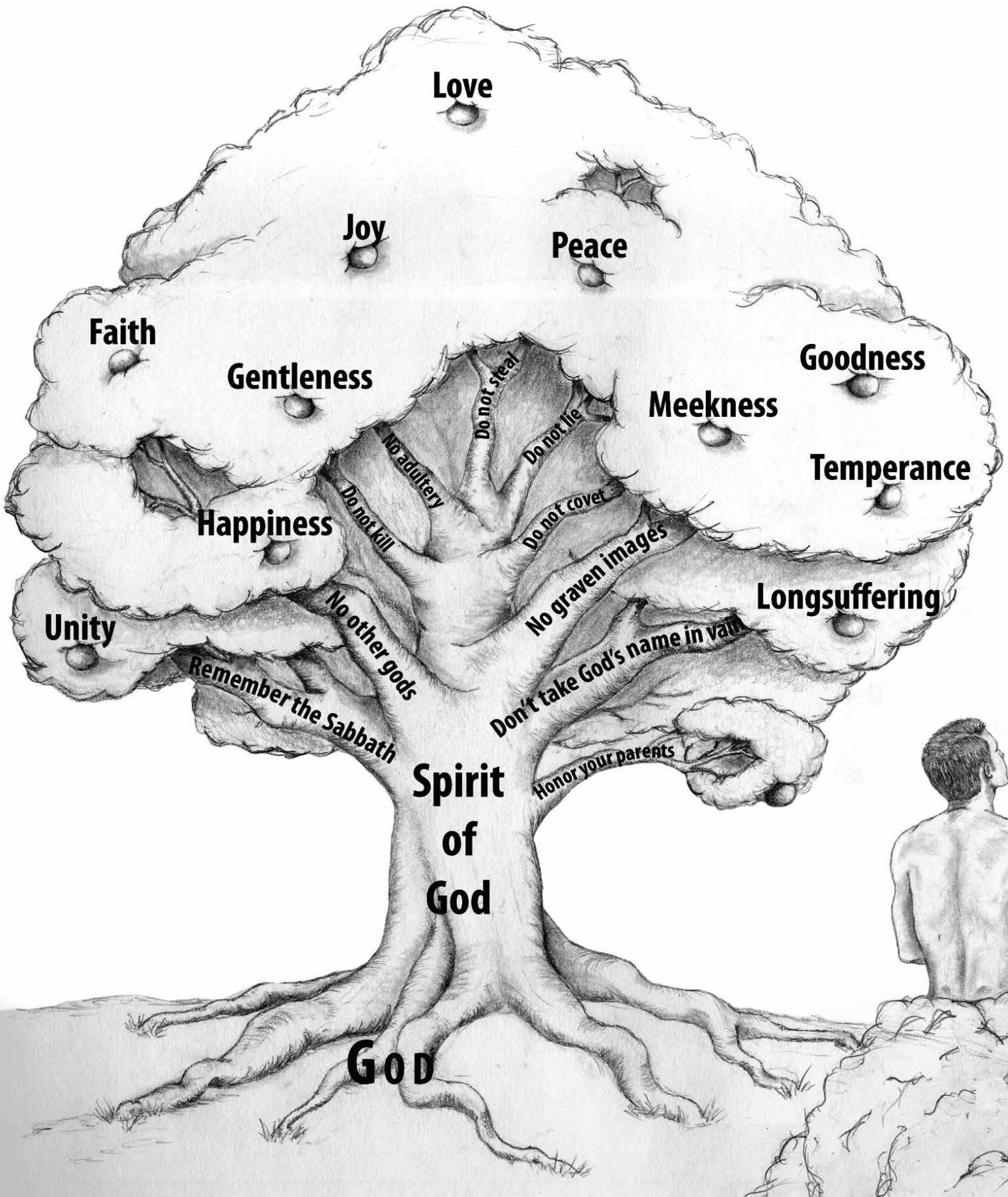
What happened on that day in the Garden of Eden is so simple to understand. God gave man a choice: He could choose life, or he could choose death. Man chose death.

THAT DECISION UNDERPINS OUR HUMAN CIVILIZATION!

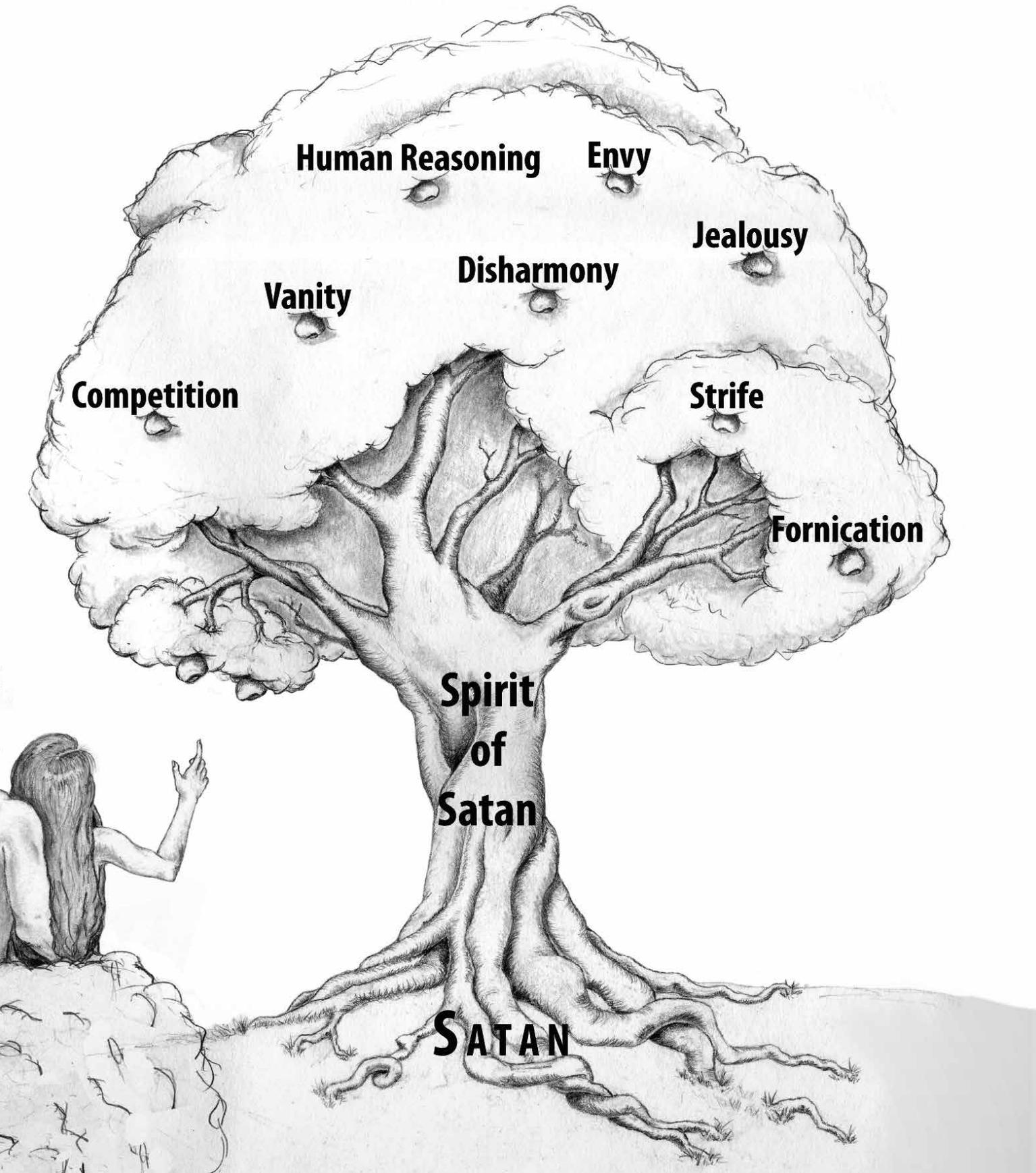
### **The Premise of All Knowledge**

During a sermon in 1983 about the two trees Mr. Armstrong said: “You have to go back to the origin and see how it all started. *We have to get the premise right, or else our conclusions based on that premise are going to be false*” (July 30, 1983). Mr. Armstrong often talked about making sure our knowledge is founded on the right premise.

# Tree of Life



# Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil



God wants the two trees to be the premise on which we build our knowledge: THAT'S WHY THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TWO TREES WAS ESSENTIALLY THE FIRST PIECE OF INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ADAM.

The more we understand the two trees, the better we will grasp other doctrines, Bible prophecies, world history, current events and even *human nature*. Think about that. Learning about the two trees can help us get to know our own hearts and minds. People ridiculed Mr. Armstrong for constantly going back to Genesis, for "harping on" the two trees; but did you know that understanding this fundamental teaching OPENED DOORS for him to understand OTHER profound truths of God?

During a sermon titled "Rely on God" in 1985, Mr. Armstrong said, "We learn gradually. I hadn't learned it all at once, but gradually. Back here about four, five years ago I began talking to you about the two trees; and I began seeing. And I had seen prior to that time ... about the spirit in man. Well, I thought the spirit of man is something in man; and I said then that it seemed to me, *at that time*, that the spirit is no part of man at all" (April 6, 1985).

It appears Mr. Armstrong began to think about the spirit in man doctrine around 1969 or 1970. He mentioned it a few times in some of his writings from this time. During the '70s, he began to think about it more and more. But, as he admitted in that 1985 sermon, his understanding at that time wasn't completely accurate. "I finally had to come to see that God created the first man with a spirit in him, and the man is NOT wholly physical!" he confirmed.

IT WASN'T UNTIL MR. ARMSTRONG BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THE TWO TREES THAT THE DOCTRINE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT BECAME ABSOLUTELY CLEAR IN HIS MIND! Notice: "Now the SOLE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE is that [human] spirit, because every bit of the rest of you is going to die," he said. "[T]hat spirit is of EVERY possible importance, because [it] makes possible a connection with God. God's Spirit comes into us and it joins with our human spirit. The two join together!" Then Mr. Armstrong began talking about the two trees again. "If Adam had taken of the Spirit—of the tree of life—HE WOULD HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD! AND THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD COULD JOIN WITH HIS SPIRIT. It couldn't join with the physical brain; it couldn't join with his big toe or his little finger, but it could join with his spirit. GOD GAVE US A HUMAN SPIRIT SO WE COULD BE UNITED WITH GOD."

Mr. Armstrong never quite explained the human spirit like that during the '70s. It wasn't until he began understanding the two trees that he put it that way.

Later in the same sermon, Mr. Armstrong gave the audience a summary of the book he was writing, *Mystery of the Ages*. "The third chapter is the mystery of man," he said. "Man is a mystery. He doesn't understand himself. That goes into the spirit in man. That goes into the two trees. That goes into the sin of Adam, and how the whole world was kidnapped and is being held captive." Again, he connected the spirit in man to the two trees.

Those trees sit at the FOUNDATION of all SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE!

Mr. Armstrong made the connection between understanding the two trees and receiving new revelation in another sermon, "Aversion Therapy," on October 16, 1982. "I've been discussing for a great deal for the last year about the two trees," he said, "and some ... very important new knowledge has been revealed to this Church during the past year, and now I wonder if this afternoon you can bear a little more new light that throws still more new light on ... this subject, if we can take a little more new knowledge." He then proceeded to give additional insight about the history of man and the beginning of creation and new revelation about the human spirit.

The point is, WITH THE TWO TREES AS HIS PREMISE, MR. ARMSTRONG BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND OTHER DEEP TRUTHS OF THE BIBLE.

The doctrine about the human spirit is one of the most PROFOUND, UNIQUE and THRILLING truths ever revealed. In *Mystery of the Ages*, Mr. Armstrong wrote, "The real value of a human life, then, lies SOLELY within the human spirit combined with the human brain." Mr. Armstrong's explanation of the human spirit in *Mystery of the Ages* makes that book different from any other that he wrote.

And the TWO TREES are the premise of Mr. Armstrong's understanding of the human spirit. That means the two trees are at the foundation of Chapter 3 of *Mystery of the Ages*. Is it merely coincidence that God's apostle began to write his most comprehensive and powerful, his most convincing, moving and thrilling work at a time when he was constantly thinking about the two trees?

*Mystery of the Ages* and the two trees are connected in a very special way. The two trees are at the foundation of that book. We cannot understand *Mystery of the Ages*, particularly Chapter 3, if we don't understand the importance of the two trees. THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT THE TWO TREES, THE MORE YOU WILL SEE THAT THEY PERMEATE THAT ENTIRE MASTERPIECE!

The two trees were at the heart of Mr. Armstrong's spiritual success. They are at the foundation of godly education. Everything we do must be considered and viewed through the prism of Genesis and what happened on that fateful day in the Garden of Eden. That history *explains the chaotic universe around us!*

### **The Two Trees Expose Satan**

The more Mr. Armstrong talked about the two trees, the more people complained and accused him of focusing too much on Genesis. Mr. Armstrong knew people were growing tired of hearing about the two trees. He addressed these people during a sermon on Atonement in 1981: "Does it mean anything to you?" he asked. "Or is it, *Ah I wish that Armstrong'd just quit hammering back, going back to Genesis again. There he is back to those again.*" It was as if he could hear the audience's sighs of annoyance when he broached Genesis and the two trees.

But notice how he reacted to the naysayers: “YOU BETCHA! I’LL GO BACK TO IT AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN! I want to get you into the Kingdom of God with me! I didn’t call you in the first place, but I’m somewhat responsible for feeding you now that you’re here. You know that? God is going to hold me responsible.”

FOCUSING ON THE TWO TREES WILL GET US INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

Do you think Satan was behind the sighs of annoyance and the accusations (Revelation 12:10) and criticisms against Mr. Armstrong for talking too much about Genesis and the two trees?

NO DOUBT HE WAS!

Satan hates the truth about the two trees with intense passion. Why? Because it EXPOSES HIM and the fact that he is the CAUSE of mankind’s tainted, madly depressing, painful existence.

Genesis reveals the history of the world. The tree of life symbolized the way of God, the law of God, the knowledge of God. If Adam had eaten from that tree, mankind could have thrived on the fruits produced by the tree of life; he would have been given access to the Spirit of God and developed the mind of God. Peace, abundance, joy and stability could have encompassed the Earth.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the other hand, was the tree of Satan—the tree of death. With this tree, Adam would make it his prerogative to decide for himself, under the influence of the devil, what was right and what was wrong, what was good and what was evil. If he made the decision to eat from this tree, he would be eating the fruits created by the spirit of Satan, a spirit of

envy, vanity, self-centered lust that results in sickness, violence, jealous rage and, ultimately, death.

THIS WORLD IS FILLED WITH EVIDENCE SHOWING WHAT TREE ADAM ATE FROM!

Satan works tirelessly to snuff from existence knowledge of the two trees because he knows that when people understand what happened in the Garden of Eden they will see the truth about the devil!

The two trees were the first piece of instruction God gave to Adam. THEY WERE ALSO THE FIRST PART OF GOD’S TRUTH THAT SATAN ATTACKED! Satan’s perverted viewpoint about the two trees was the first dissident message disseminated on Earth.

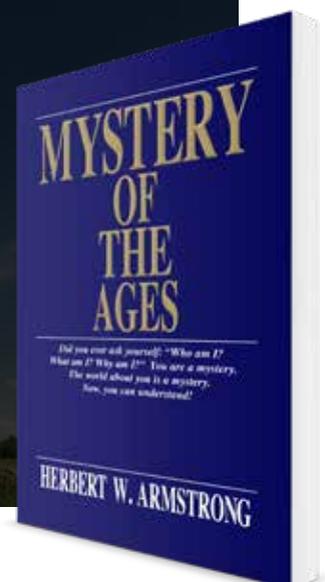
Read the account at the beginning of Genesis 3. The teaching of the two trees was the first test mankind faced. Adam and Eve’s first major decision was to choose which of the two trees they would eat from. That decision set the course of human civilization!

When Mr. Armstrong began to understand and talk about the two trees, Satan grew furious because he knew those two trees would expose his dictatorship over the world. The devil knew that God’s apostle would begin to teach this knowledge to the world, so he convinced some of God’s people to accuse, scorn and discredit Mr. Armstrong for talking too much about Genesis and the two trees. The more Mr. Armstrong discussed the two trees, the harder Satan worked to counter his message.

THE DEVIL WORKS HARD TO KILL THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE TWO TREES BECAUSE HE KNOWS THIS TRUTH WILL EXPOSE HIM! That Satan’s first attack on man was on his understanding of the two trees SHOULD TELL US HOW IMPORTANT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TWO TREES IS TO GOD!

## God’s first instruction to mankind was about the two trees.

Start your spiritual education by learning more about them.  
Order our free book **Mystery of the Ages**  
by visiting [theTrumpet.com/go/mystery](http://theTrumpet.com/go/mystery).



## The Two Trees and You

What happened in the Garden of Eden appears illogical. God had created a spectacularly beautiful, amazingly intricate planet, with its vast menagerie of flora and fauna operating in a climate and system governed by complex physical and mathematical laws. Then He created man and educated him *personally*, beginning with instruction about the two trees.

YET THEY STILL DECIDED TO EAT FROM THE TREE OF DEATH! Then the knowledge of the two trees became a mystery to them and all mankind thereafter.

Their decision doesn't make sense. But doesn't it tell us something about the human mind? The human mind is deeply flawed, easily misled and swayed, painfully ignorant and, above all, INCOMPLETE.

Even the world around us should teach us this lesson. The pace with which mankind's knowledge has increased is dumbfounding. God said that it would be this way in the end time. But as this knowledge has increased, so have mankind's problems. Hunger and disease prevail, violence and crime blanket the Earth, wars and conflict rage on, divorce, child abuse, teenage pregnancy and other societal crises are everywhere, economic catastrophe looms, and depression and mental illness are pervasive. Human survival is our number one concern.

You'd think mankind's knowledge explosion would solve these problems. Instead, it's making them worse. This should make us wonder: WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE?

The mystery of the two trees answers that fundamental question. Here's how Mr. Armstrong explained it in *Mystery of the Ages*: "The real significance of these two symbolic trees explains the very foundation of the world. In them is the answer to the great mystery of our time in this modern 20th century. Today we live in a world of awesome progress and advancement, yet paradoxically of appalling evils. The baffling question today is, why cannot the minds that can learn to fly to the moon and back, transplant hearts, produce computers and technological marvels, solve their own problems? Why no peace in the world?"

*"We cannot understand the mystery of today's events and conditions unless we go back to the very foundation of the world, and learn what developed from its origin to the pulsating, confused present."*

WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THIS WORLD IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND THE TWO TREES!

This applies personally: You and I cannot understand our own minds, why we act the way we do, our emotions and thoughts, our motivations and feelings, if we don't look to where it all began, and deeply consider Genesis and the two trees.

God wanted Adam to understand the two trees before

he and Eve acquired any further knowledge. He wanted this subject to form the premise of Adam's education. GOD WANTS THE TWO TREES TO FORM THE PREMISE OF OUR EDUCATION, TOO. The two trees are a test of our character, and God wants to see if we are going to eat from the tree of life, or if we are going to follow Adam and the rest of civilization and eat from the tree of death.

The tree of life still lives today, despite Satan's vilest attempts to cut it down. Mankind, like Adam, has turned its back on the tree of life and is gorging itself on the fruits of the tree of death. MANKIND IS EATING FROM THE WRONG TREE AND DOESN'T EVEN KNOW IT, because Satan has done a masterful job hiding the truth about the two trees.

Most people don't even know that the tree of life exists. They don't know that eating from it will lead to developing the mind of God and receiving the fruits of God's Holy Spirit. God's Word shows you can stop eating from the tree of death and start eating from the tree of life.

In Revelation 2, God told the Ephesus Church era, "To him that overcometh will I give to *eat of the tree of life*, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (verse 7). If you turn your back on the tree of death, and stop consuming the spirit of the devil, GOD WILL OPEN THE TREE OF LIFE TO YOU!

The last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, talk about the establishment of new Jerusalem and a time of universe-wide peace and happiness—a time when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21:4).

THE TREE OF LIFE IS A CENTRAL THEME OF THESE TWO CHAPTERS!

The TREE OF LIFE is the "FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE" that shall flow freely in new Jerusalem. Revelation 22:2 is even more specific: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the TREE OF LIFE, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The tree of life sits at the center of new Jerusalem. *It heals nations!*

GOD OPENS AND CLOSES HIS WORD BY TALKING ABOUT THE TREE OF LIFE! The truth is, THE THEME OF THE BIBLE—from BEGINNING TO END—is the TREE OF LIFE being OPENED TO MANKIND!

The entire Bible is based on the premise of the two trees. The two trees were the first piece of knowledge ever given to Adam. The two trees were the foundation of revelation given to Herbert Armstrong. And God concludes the Bible with a vision of the tree of life. It's powerfully obvious that the two trees are critically important to God.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THEY TO YOU?