LIFE, DEATH, AND RESTORATION

God placed two special trees in the Garden of Eden. Eating from one would cause death, and partaking from the other would perpetuate life (Gen. 2:9). When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, God pronounced the death sentence: “...for out of [the ground] you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Return to dust—what a fearful and depressing thought!

In order to assure that there would not be an immortal sinner, God cast Adam and Eve out and placed cherubim and a flaming sword at the east of the Garden to guard the way to the life-perpetuating tree (Gen. 3:22–24). Clearly, Adam and Eve were not inherently immortal. What good would it do for God to bar humanity from the tree of life if they already had an immortal soul? Immortality after sin would have to be sought (Rom. 2:7).

When all appeared lost, God gave Adam and Eve a glorious promise of restoration. The Seed of the woman, Christ (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16), would crush the serpent’s head, and humanity would be restored to the tree of life (Rev. 2:7). God had warned that the very day they ate from the forbidden tree they would receive their sentence to death (Gen. 2:17). Why did they not immediately die? Their death sentence was commuted because Christ offered to die in their place: “The instant Adam yielded to Satan’s temptation, and did the very thing which God had said he should not do, Christ, the Son of God, stood between the living and the dead, saying, ‘Let the punishment fall on Me. I will stand in man’s place.’ ” (Ellen G. White, *Bible Echo*, May 21, 1900.)
Review Genesis 3. But now write out Genesis 3:22–24 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
THE BATTERY CHARGER

God created perfect bodies, placed them in a perfect environment, with perfect laws of health, with a fully-charged “battery” (vital force) and a life-perpetuating tree (Gen. 2:9). Life was contingent on continuing to eat the fruit of the tree, however. Man was not immortal by nature. The tree worked like a battery charger: “The fruit of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden possessed supernatural virtue. To eat of it was to live forever. Its fruit was the antidote of death” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8 [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904], 288). Eating of the fruit only once was not sufficient. “In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct” (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1890], 60, emphasis supplied).

When Adam and Eve ate from the forbidden tree, God pronounced the death sentence upon them (Gen. 3:19), and they could no longer eat from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22–24). So to speak, they no longer had access to the “battery charger.” Furthermore, a deteriorating environment and intemperate personal health habits wore down the battery even faster.

At the beginning, God gave humanity a fully charged “battery.” During the first 1,600 years of human history, men lived between 777 and 969 years (Gen. 5). “The lives of the antediluvians were protracted because of the life-giving power of this tree, which was transmitted to them from Adam and Eve” (Ellen G. White, Ellen G. White Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7 [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957], 988). Eventually the “battery” wore down, and because there was no access to the “battery charger,” humanity ceased to function. According to Genesis 5, everyone from Adam to Noah died (except Enoch), as we can see in the repeated formula in Genesis 5, “and he died.” God was right when He said, You will surely die (Rom. 6:23: 5:12). Humanity was indeed mortal, and Satan was proved a liar.

According to Genesis 11 the life span of those who lived between the flood and Abraham was significantly reduced to between 148 and 600. The factors in the reduction of life spans included a deteriorating body, a degenerating environment, a violation of the laws of health, and above all, no access to the “battery charger.” Moses lived to be 120 (Deut. 34:7), and his brother Aaron died at 123 (Num. 33:39). In the days of David and today, the average life span is seventy or eighty (Ps. 90:10), and if it were not for modern therapeutics and hygiene it would be less. We are told that “if Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct” (Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education [Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1923], 23).
ETERNAL CONTINGENCY

What does the future hold for those who trust in Christ and abide in Him? When Jesus comes, the dead in Christ will rise, and they, with the living saints, will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:52, 53). If they have to put it on, they must not have had it before! The redeemed will then receive a fully charged battery, with full access to the “battery charger.” “The mortal, corruptible form, devoid of comeliness, once polluted with sin, becomes perfect, beautiful, and immortal. All blemishes and deformities are left in the grave. Restored to the tree of life in the long-lost Eden, the redeemed will ‘grow up’ (Malachi 4:2) to the full stature of the race in its primeval glory” (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911], 645).

Even in eternity, the redeemed must still eat from the tree of life to continue living. Their immortality will be contingent, not inherent. How frequently will the redeemed eat from the tree? Revelation 22:1, 2 gives us a hint: “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (emphasis supplied). Isaiah 66:23 adds that the redeemed will go to worship the Lord from one New Moon to another, and the New Moon marks the beginning of the month. Jesus promised that the overcomers will indeed eat from “the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7, emphasis supplied). All the citizens of the city will be commandment keepers and have a right to partake of the tree of life (Rev. 22:14).

The last enemy—death—will then be destroyed: “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people, He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken” (Isa. 25:8, cf. Rev. 21:4; 1 Cor. 15:26).

“Here we saw the tree of life and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again, and saw that they were united at the top in one tree” (Ellen G. White, Early Writings [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882], 17).
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Genesis 2:9
Isaiah 66:22, 23
Revelation 2:7
Revelation 22:1, 2, 14, 15
Proverbs 8:22–31

What other parables come to mind in connection with Genesis 3?

Review your memorized verse from Genesis 3.
THE TRUE TREE OF LIFE

People spend large sums of money to delay their inevitable death. They buy skin creams, get facelifts, exercise, use dietary supplements and multi-vitamins, and follow proper health principles, all in the hopes of cheating death for a while longer. Sooner or later, however, everyone must face the reality of their mortality. Dust we are, and to dust we shall return!

Many cultures have traditions about life-giving trees and fountains of eternal youth, yet no one has been able to find them because they are looking in the wrong places. Only the Bible tells us where we can find them. Jesus is the fountain of eternal youth, for He beckons with these words: “If anyone thirsts let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). Jesus promised, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

The tree of life is a symbol of Christ, and even now we can partake of His life-giving fruit. When Adam and Eve sinned, God barred them and their descendants from partaking of the tree of life, but even now believers in Him can partake of His life-giving fruit: “After the entrance of sin the heavenly Husbandman transplanted the tree of life to the Paradise above; but its branches hang over the wall to the lower world. Through the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, we may still eat of its life-giving fruit” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8 [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904], 288).

The book of Proverbs personifies Wisdom as a life-giving tree: “She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her” (Prov. 3:18). Proverbs 8 describes Jesus as the personification of Wisdom (Prov. 8:22–31), and Paul affirms that Jesus is made unto us the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30).

How can we drink from the fountain of eternal youth and eat the life-giving fruit if the fountain and the tree are in the New Jerusalem? The answer is simple. We first eat and drink spiritually on earth and then literally in heaven. If we have embraced Jesus and abide in Him, we are spiritually seated with Him in heaven (Eph. 2:6). We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem because our citizenship is there (Phil. 3:20, 21). We can enjoy the blessings of heaven even now, while we live on earth. In the future, however, we will be seated with Christ literally, in the literal New Jerusalem, and shall eat from the literal tree of life and drink the literal water that flows from the throne of God (Rev. 22:17). We can even now have the assurance of eternal life! “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12).
LIFE PERPETUATED

In order to possess an endless existence, man must continue to partake of the tree of life. Deprived of this, his vitality would gradually diminish until life should become extinct. It was Satan's plan that Adam and Eve should by disobedience incur God's displeasure; and then, if they failed to obtain forgiveness, he hoped that they would eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate an existence of sin and misery. But after man's fall, holy angels were immediately commissioned to guard the tree of life. Around these angels flashed beams of light having the appearance of a glittering sword. None of the family of Adam were permitted to pass the barrier to partake of the life-giving fruit; hence there is not an immortal sinner. (Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890], 60.)

The book of Genesis gives quite a definite account of social and individual life, and yet we have no record of an infant being born blind, deaf, crippled, deformed, or imbecile. There is not an instance upon record of a natural death in infancy, childhood, or early manhood. There is no account of men and women dying of disease. Obituary notices in the book of Genesis run thus: “And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” “And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died...”

God endowed man with so great vital force that he has withstood the accumulation of disease brought upon the race in consequence of perverted habits, and has continued for six thousand years. This fact of itself is enough evidence to us the strength and electrical energy that God gave to man at his creation. It took more than two thousand years of crime and indulgence of base passions to bring bodily disease upon the race to any great extent. If Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct. (Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education [Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1923], 22, 23.)

Here we saw the tree of life and the throne of God. Out of the throne came a pure river of water, and on either side of the river was the tree of life. On one side of the river was a trunk of a tree, and a trunk on the other side of the river, both of pure, transparent gold. At first I thought I saw two trees. I looked again, and saw that they were united at the top in one tree. So it was the tree of life on either side of the river of life. Its branches bowed to the place where we stood, and the fruit was glorious; it looked like gold mixed with silver. (Ellen G. White, Early Writings [Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882], 17.)
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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What did God place in the Garden of Eden to perpetuate life? Why did the antediluvians live much longer than we do today?

What did God do to assure that there would not be an immortal sinner?

What were the life spans of humans before and after the flood and the time of David? Make a list.

Why didn’t Adam and Eve die the very day that they ate from the tree?

When all is said and done, must the redeemed continue to eat from the tree of life forever? Why?

What are conditions we must meet in order to partake of the tree of life?

What factors have led to the shortening of human life spans?

What have been the most powerful and memorable insights from this entire quarter for you?