

PROJECT TITLE: HOPE AFTER DEATH  
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## TRANSCRIPT

Do you ever take time to think about the big issues, like the nature of life and death or the universal struggle between good and evil? Be careful. Questions like that can lead you into a weird world. Reason and common sense can get twisted into a tangle of assumptions and suppositions. You end up trapped in a maze of logical impossibilities and total confusion. But somewhere there are real answers. Absolute truth you can depend on. You can find that truth in the Word of God.

Come with me to the first few pages of the Holy Bible. The answers are right there, with Adam and Eve and the Creator. Their story is a love story, plain and simple. According to the apostle John, "God is love." 1 John 4:16. That's what God is by His very nature. So that's our starting point.

"So God created man in His own image." Genesis 1:27 NKJV. It was an act of love, that creation of Adam and Eve. And they WERE like their Creator. They were bound to Him by love. Pure and innocent, they reflected His character. God placed them in the Garden of Eden and provided for all their needs. He gave them fruit from the Tree of Life so that they would never die. They loved Him, trusted Him, depended on Him for everything.

There was no police department in the Garden. No judges or courts or prisons. But there was LAW. The Law of God. And that Law was LOVE. The Law assured the perfection of Eden. Under the Law of love, Adam and Eve could have an endless life of complete joy and contentment.

But they were not robots. They weren't programmed to love their Maker. They were perfect human beings with a moral nature and the power of choice. Their love for God – their trust in Him – was an expression of their FREE WILL. Funny thing about free will: When there is no choice, no alternative — it's meaningless.

Suppose you come to my place for dinner. After the meal I ask, "What would you like for dessert? It's your choice." You say, "I'll have pie." "Oh sorry. We don't have pie." "Well then, I'd like cake." But we don't have any cake. "Ice cream?" "Too bad. We finished all the ice cream yesterday. All we have is this cookie." So, do you really have a choice? I guess not.

Think about Adam and Eve. I said that their love for God was an expression of their free will. But was it? Did they have any alternative, any other option? Look at this: And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "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 you eat of it you shall surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17 NKJV.

The Creator had a good reason for putting this forbidden tree in the Garden. It gave Adam and Eve a chance to exercise their freedom. Day after day they could see this tree and choose not to eat its fruit. That was free will. God didn't build a wall around the tree to protect Adam and Eve. Instead, it was their love for God that would keep them safe.

The Bible doesn't tell us how long that primal perfection lasted. Instead, it skips ahead to the day it ended. Eve wandered near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There she met Satan disguised as a fantastic animal: a serpent, the most cunning creature God had made. The serpent called her attention to the tree and enticed her with its fruit. Eve recalled what God had said. "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Genesis 3:3 NKJV.

"Then the serpent said to the woman, "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." Genesis 3:4, 5 NKJV. What fell on the woman's ears was not subtle innuendo. It was an outright, blatant contradiction of God's words — an audacious assault on the character of the Creator. It cast doubt on God's motives, accused Him of hypocrisy, and turned His love into a lie.

These were new ideas to Eve. She had always believed God, trusted Him, loved Him with all her heart. She had never imagined that her Maker would hold back some good thing from her. But the serpent's insidious words planted a seed of doubt in her heart. "You will not surely die."

And that was the first lie. It's the lie that produced an entire system of fables and traditions that say we never die. It's a lie that denies the truth about man's mortality. It mixes folklore and superstition with sentimental hopes. It includes strange ideas of immortality like transmigration, reincarnation, preexistence, and so on. It was a lie, but Eve bought it. People have been buying it ever since.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Genesis 3:6 NKJV. They were free to abide by the Law of love and never die. They were also free to disbelieve that Law. That day they chose to believe the lie. It changed their relationship with God.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the LORD God sent him out of the Garden of Eden.... Genesis 3:22, 23 NKJV.

Evicted from the Garden, Adam and Eve could no longer eat from the tree of life. They had cut themselves off from their source of eternal life, triggering the downfall of the entire human race. Death came into the picture. The apostle Paul wrote it this way: "...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..." Romans 5:12. And he goes on, "The wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23 NKJV.

But, you say, Adam and Eve were not struck by lightning. They weren't executed by a firing squad. They lived on for hundreds of years. True. What prevented their immediate annihilation?

A substitute death. The death of the Son of God. The Gospel writer calls Him “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:8 NKJV.

Our eternal life does not come from some inborn immortal force. Rather, it comes from the restoration of a loving, trusting, dependent relationship that our first parents enjoyed with their Creator in the Garden of Eden. No one has yet said it better than Jesus Himself. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 NKJV.