

A HARD LESSON LEARNED FROM A TREE

August 10, 2014

Approximately six thousand years ago, God created the earth on which we live, all the plants, animals, and the first couple. Within the garden of Eden, God provided everything that Adam and Eve needed for their survival and happiness. He gave them plenty of delicious food to eat, companionship, and work so their time would be occupied. He left nothing out in His mission to make His greatest creation comfortable and happy. Among all the trees that God created, He made some that were good for food, He made some that were pleasant to look upon, He made one tree that would allow mankind to live forever if he ate from it, but He also created a tree that was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9). God has never left man to his own devices in determining what He wants from them, so He instructed the first couple on which trees they could use and which ones they should avoid. He told them, "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 that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17).

Though God made every effort to ensure that Adam and Eve understood His directives, they still sinned. In the process of time, Eve was "deceived" by the serpent (2 Cor. 11:3); she ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and also gave it to her husband to eat. The world's first man and woman allowed themselves to fall from the grace of God and into the sin of Satan (Gal. 5:4). The woman was tricked into sinning, but her husband participated in the sin with his "eyes wide open," so to speak. Because of their sin, God drove them from the Garden of Eden and multiplied their sorrows in the physical world.

That single tree should be a lesson to all that have come after the world's first parents! From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we learn that God does, in fact, make distinctions in the world. The modernists of our day gladly disagree with the Father of heaven on this matter. They would loudly exclaim that one tree is just the same as another! However, what must be kept in mind is that when God makes a distinction between things it is the difference that matters! God has distinguished His church from any other (Mt. 16:18), He has distinguished how one gains membership into His church from that of any other (Acts 2:37-47), He has distinguished between the man and the woman in their respective roles in the church and in the family (Eph. 5:23-24), and He has made the distinction between how to be saved and inherit heaven and how to be lost and be condemned to hell (Mk. 16:15-16). God has always allowed man to choose between good and evil, and when it comes time to choose, we must stand as Joshua when he said "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15).

Sadly, one of the local churches of Christ in our area has continued to depart from the old Jerusalem Gospel. The Sycamore View church of Christ has now expanded the role of women in their worship assemblies. On their website they state,

"We realize expanding the role of women in public worship is a refreshing and exciting aspect of "restoring" for many here at Sycamore View, and different, challenging, and even uncomfortable for others. Yet the goal as always is to honor God and glorify Him here, so we trust

that we all will be patient as the Lord has His way with us and the voices of our sisters are now welcomed here at Sycamore View” (<http://sycamoreview.org/grs>).

These brethren have left the faith and turned to the desires of men, taking upon themselves to alter God’s commandments; they defended their “new” way of worship by saying,

“In the summer of 2012, **a team of shepherds and ministers was formed** to study and discern the role of women in public worship. **As we considered the culture** and context of early Christians, we were forced to ask difficult questions about interpretation as we sought answers from scripture. Through a variety of settings, we have studied, prayed, fasted, and sought wisdom from other churches that have also reconsidered this important issue. The study has been an exciting, challenging, and sometimes uncomfortable process as any deep, objective study of God’s word often becomes.

As a result, we have concluded that before God, there is a calling and clear examples from Scripture to move in the direction of expanding women’s roles in public worship. We believe it to be in keeping with what would have been experienced in the early church as well” (emphasis mine, <http://sycamoreview.org/grs>).

The problem is that they did not turn to God for direction; instead, they turned to other men, and like Adam and Eve they have chosen the lies of Satan over the words of God! It is abundantly clear in the Scripture that God has made distinctions between men and women in our worship assemblies, and the elders at Sycamore View have gone beyond what has been written (1 Cor. 4:6). Paul commanded, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:12). It must be our prayer that our erring brethren will denounce this heresy and return to the “old paths” down which God has directed us (Jer. 6:16). It is a hard lesson, but one that can be learned from a tree!