

## Was Adam Mortal before He Sinned?

Romans 8:18 – 25 (v20 – 21) “...the creation itself was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption...” Either the universe was created with inherent decay (corruption, but not in the sense of sin, but in the sense of decomposition), or the universe became such when Adam and Eve sinned. If decay was introduced because of sin, then the fundamental physical laws of the universe were changed at that time, which God is fully capable of accomplishing. However, such a huge change might be considered a creative act, which Hebrews 4:3 – 4 says cannot be.

Genesis 1:27 – 30 God gave plants as food for animals, which includes man. When the plants were eaten, they died and decomposed through digestion. Unless the food supply was limited or God replaced each plant that was eaten miraculously, the plants must have grown and produced new vegetation. Seeds are mentioned specifically, so the rebirth function was present. Further, digestion produces food for cell replacement, repair, and growth. Unless people and animals were designed originally to become really huge, cells were dying as well.

Genesis 2:8 – 9, 2:16 – 17, 3:22 - 24 The Tree of Life was available to Adam and Eve. They were permitted to eat of it until God expelled them from the Garden. If Adam and Eve were physically immortal before they sinned, then the Tree of Life was not useful to them before they sinned. It would seem strange that God would produce a tree that had no function in its initial situation and then remove it when it would be useful. Rather, the context implies that Adam and Eve needed the Tree to remain physically alive.

Genesis 2:17 “...from 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.” Obviously, Adam and Eve lived physically for a long time after this (Genesis 5:5). So, the death that they experienced that day was spiritual “death.” Of course, spirits are eternal. But, their spirits experienced that separation from God that God has chosen to call “death.”

Romans 5:12 – 21 “...just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin...” Certainly, spiritual death entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned. The question is whether physical death entered at the same time, or if physical death already existed. Certainly, physical death existed for plants. If the death in this passage is physical death, the conclusions of the paragraph are tenuous. Jesus cured only spiritual death. Physical death remains even for the faithful. Jesus was perfectly faithful, yet He died physically. So, physical death is not a result of a shortcoming in righteousness. Either we are subject to physical death as a residual of Adam’s sin (to which even Jesus fell victim), or Adam was created mortal, too.

In each passage referring to death in the New Testament, the meaning is explained by its context. Some deaths are obviously physical. Some are obviously spiritual. Some are perhaps ambiguous. Physical death is often used as an illustration for spiritual death. My suggestion is that Adam was created mortal and that the universe was created with inherent physical decay. Until sin entered the world, Adam and Eve had access to miraculous regeneration through the Tree of Life, illustrating the regeneration of spiritual life (“there is sin not leading to death” 1 John 5:16 – 17). When we commit sin leading to death, we are cut off from the spiritual Tree of Life. Mortality is our reminder of our need for God.