

The Tree of Life

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in the book of Revelation, chapter 22. And we read from the beginning.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God. And of the Lamb, and particularly the next verse, through the middle of the street of the city also, through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. We mentioned on Wednesday night of how life tends to be almost in some ways connected.

It doesn't seem to matter how far down the road you go, you come back to something that you met up with, or people that you met up with, or experiences or incidents that might have taken place many, many years before.

And you find yourself linked up to these things, linked up to people, linked up to places, linked up to circumstances. And as you look back on life, you often find it amazing.

[1 : 45] And you often stop and you say, you know, that's amazing. That takes me back years and years. On Wednesday night we're looking at Moses. And remember how 40 years earlier God had met him in the burning bush.

Not that it wasn't 40 years prior to that, but that God had met Moses in the burning bush and gave the commission to Moses to go and to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Moses wasn't for that. He was rebelling against it. And yet, as time moved on, he did lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. And he led them to the very spot where he had met with God in the burning bush.

We just saw how life goes like that. Well, again, we're coming across something of that in here because we are meeting here the tree of life.

And right at the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis, we read about the tree of life. And here in the very last chapter in the Bible, again, we meet up with the tree of life.

[2 : 53] And in between the tree of life in Genesis and the tree of life that we find in the heavenly city, we have all of life going on before us.

And I suppose I would like to stop for one second and ask the all-important question. What does this tree of life mean to you? What does the heavenly city mean to you?

What does glory mean to you? Because at the end of the day, it's not so much what we may have achieved or what we may have been able to do in this world that counts.

It's not the size of a house we have. It's not the amount of degrees we may have. While there are many things in life that are important, at the end of the day, everything we have to kind of leave behind, there is one thing that is important.

It's as Jesus said about Mary, Mary has chosen the one thing that is needful. And that's a question I have to ask you. Have you chosen, it's not just the one thing, the one person that is needful?

[4 : 05] Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Because it changes everything. It changes your life. It changes your future.

It changes your destiny. Everything is in Jesus Christ. Without him, there's nothing. With him, there is everything. And so it's very important that we see exactly where we are.

Now, the wonderful thing that we know is that if we go back to the Garden of Eden, we find that in the Garden, there were two trees.

And the two trees were in the middle of the Garden. There was a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And there was a tree of life. And God only made one commandment regarding these trees.

He didn't say anything about the tree of life. He said to Adam that everything in the Garden was for him, with the exception of one. And that was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[5 : 14] Now, we know that Adam ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Set out before Adam was life and death.

And he was told in the day that you eat of it, you will die. And we all know to our cost that death came into the world.

And that is why the Bible is so important. You know, there are so many people who think the Bible is irrelevant. Well, the Bible alone really explains to us the origin of death.

Because as God made us originally, we were made to live forever. But here is the invasion of death. Here is death.

Death has come in. And so many of the answers to the questions people have are actually to be found in the Bible. Where does evil come from? Again, the Bible shows us there are so many questions that people ask today.

[6 : 16] And we find the answer in the Bible. Because God has made these things known to us. He doesn't make everything known to us, but he makes some things known to us. And so there was this set out before.

Now, Adam, as we know, and Eve were perfect. With regard to their moral stance, they were made in knowledge and righteousness and holiness.

And as they were, in that state, they were able to give perfect obedience to God. And what theologians termed was that God had entered into, as it were, a covenant with them.

It was termed the covenant of works. So we don't actually find these words described. That is what people tend to call the covenant of works. Whereby Adam and Eve were able, through their continued obedience, to have this life.

And they were living in fellowship and favor with God. Of course, the moment they took of the fruit, it all changed.

[7 : 26] And it must have been that, some people have suggested, and I believe it to be true, the greatest anticlimax that this world has ever known.

Because Adam and Eve didn't know anything but good. And their lives were pure and innocent and right. And they didn't know anything but good.

Satan deceived them. There was one thing that Satan said was true. You will know evil as well as good. And they did.

But at that moment, everything changed. Didn't just change for them. Changed for the environment. The whole world. Everything changed.

The world, the whole world, came under the curse. And again, that is where we have the answer to the questions. People will often ask, when we see our earthquakes and our tsunamis and these, how come?

[8 : 28] And we go back to discover, you read in the Bible, and it tells us because of the fall, that the whole creation is groaning. And that groaning gives way in its volcanic eruptions, in its earthquakes, in its tsunamis, in all these things.

It's all come about because of sin. And we need to go back to the Bible and discover its origin. We see all these things. So you see, man and woman, they forfeited all that they had.

And they're no longer able to work. No longer able to work. Their own obedience, working towards satisfying God's law.

They are now under the curse of the law. And that's how you and I are born into this world. We have inherited. It's called original sin.

It's what we have inherited from Adam and Eve, who are termed our first parents. We cannot halt it. We cannot prevent it. There's nothing we can do about it.

[9 : 38] It's just the way that we are born. And so there is this, as the psalmist says, we are conceived in sin. And so that straight away into this world we come.

And sin has tarnished, has affected everything about us. And this all came about because of the disobedience in the garden. And because of the breach of that covenant, God, and this is a wonderful thing, God entered into and had purposed another covenant, a covenant of grace.

And that was a covenant that was entered into, not at that moment, but that was entered into way in eternity, where God, the Father and God, the Son, entered into a covenant to save sinners like you and me.

And the basis of that covenant is Christ, not me, not you. Because we're fickle, we're sinners, we can't, we don't have anything steadfast within us.

But you know, this is part of the problem. And this is where the whole area of self-righteousness comes. Because we were made at the very beginning to work for our salvation, to give that obedience, somehow that has stuck in with us.

[11:06] And that's the self-righteousness that exists in the heart, in the human heart, where people somehow think that they can be right before God.

I'll do my best. We have this inbuilt belief that God will accept us because of who we are and what we've done.

If we are good, upright citizens, if we attend church, if we do all the right things, God will accept us. That's deep within the heart of man. There is this inbuilt belief. And it comes from, I believe, how Adam and Eve were at the very, very beginning.

But that was shattered. That was broken. It's lost. We cannot. We have nothing within ourselves that we're able to go to the Lord and say, well, Lord, because of this, I must be accepted.

[12:09] And if this is where God has made this great provision in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. But side by side with the, well, I don't know if it's side by side with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but in the garden, in the middle of the garden, as I said, there were two trees and there was a tree of life.

And when man and woman sinned, remember that God cast them out of the garden. And an angel was put there with a flaming sword to prevent them going to the tree of life.

God was forbidding them to take of the tree of life. And it would appear from Genesis that they had never touched the tree of life, that they had never eaten of it, of its fruit.

Because the Lord is saying, lest they eat, lest they eat also from the tree of life. These are the words in Genesis.

So it would appear from that word also that they had never eaten of the tree of life. And again, there are different things suggested, but one of the things suggested, and I believe that it is true, if they had eaten of the tree of life after they fell, then that there is a strong possibility one of the things that could be is that man would go on to live forever in his fallen, hopeless, wretched condition.

[13:49] And that would be an awful situation. So, the Lord, as we said, had made provision. And that provision was made in Jesus Christ.

Christ. However, go right through the Bible and here we come now, and again we find the tree of life. And we find it again in the middle, not in the middle of a garden, but in the middle of a city.

And the tree and the river are inseparably bound to the throne. And the throne is the throne of God and of the Lamb. And the river flows out from that, and connected to the throne, and we could say, I believe, to be part of what is in the throne, we find this tree, which is in the center, which is in the middle.

And this tree brings to us all the blessings that are found in Christ. Because in the river, we have everything to quench our thirst, our spiritual thirst.

Thirst, and in the tree, we have everything to satisfy our spiritual hunger. And it gives us this idea of perpetual, continued blessing.

[15:09] And we see that it's at the center. And we've got to remember that Christ is at the center of everything. Christ is at the center of your life and my life, if we're believers.

Christ is at the center of the life of the church. And we've got to remember that. That it's his church. We are members. We are part of the body of Christ.

And everything that happens to any member of the body is felt in heaven. Nothing can happen to you, my friend, as a believer, that is not felt in heaven.

Remember when Saul was persecuting the church, Jesus met with Saul as he was racing down to Damascus. And Jesus said the exalted, risen Christ, he said, Saul, Saul.

He didn't say, why are you persecuting the Christians? He didn't say, why are you persecuting the church? He said, why are you persecuting me?

[16:15] The persecution of the church is ultimately the persecution of Christ. The touching of the believer is the touching of Christ.

In fact, the Lord says, whoever touches you touches the apple of mine eye. That most sensitive, tender part of us.

And that's how it is. The Lord, it's an extraordinary thing. And that is why we must exercise great care with one another. Because remember, every believer is blood-bought. every single believer, Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for. His love for every believer is so great that he willingly gave his life.

And straight away that should place upon us a great responsibility to every one of our fellow believers. believers. As we look at them, we have to say, Jesus died for you.

[17 : 23] You are so precious to Jesus that he didn't hesitate. He willingly laid down his life. And if we are to look at one another as we should, through us, if we can use, through almost the eyes of Christ, and may we pray that, that we will look upon one another with that love, because we belong to one another and ultimately we belong to Christ.

So we've got to remember that Jesus Christ is at the center of everything. But here we see this tree that is here in the garden, in the heavenly city.

And we find that the tree of life has 12 kinds of fruit, and it yielded its fruit every month. Now, of course, this figure 12 is very significant and prominent in the Bible, and it's very prominent here in the heavenly city, because we see that there are talks about 12 quite often.

Again, when you go through the Bible, we have the 12 tribes. Jesus had 12 disciples, the 12 apostles. In chapter 21, we read of the heavenly city, that it had 12 gates, and there were 12 angels at the gates.

The measurement of the city was 144 cubits, which, of course, is 12 times 12. This tree, which gives 12 kinds of fruit, it yields its fruit every month, and there are 12 months in the year.

[19 : 06] So, everything is speaking of the number 12. 12. And 12, of course, is the figure, the number for completeness, absolute completeness.

It's that you cannot add in any way. That is what this number stands for. And so, when we read here that 12 kinds of fruit, here we have a tree that bears everything that we can possibly need.

And that's how the blessings in Christ are. Because Christ himself is complete in himself. And the blessings that he pours out upon his people are complete blessings.

Now, of course, in this world, we are not able to experience the fullness of that blessing. Not because there is any fault within the one who is providing the blessing, the fault is within ourselves. It's because of sin. We so often miss the blessing. Or our blessings are only partial blessings. The fault is with ourselves.

[20 : 15] It's not with the Lord. It's not with the giver. All the blessings are in him because he is complete. But the wonderful thing is that there will be no disappointment in Christ.

There are many things that will disappoint us in this world. people will disappoint us. And I'm sure that as you go through in life, there is no person that you know that you're close to that hasn't disappointed you at some stage or another.

And I know that your friends and family, you overlook the faults, you overlook the failings, you overlook these wrongdoings because of love.

But you still know there are faults and failings. You've been disappointed by people and you've disappointed yourself. You look at your life and you say to yourself, you know, there are periods where you are disappointed in yourself because of what you did and what you said.

But here is one and there will never ever, ever be any disappointment at him. Never. But we see here that every month there is, that's where we find that there's a tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month.

[21 : 36] Now that's quite wonderful. I don't know, maybe some of you in here have the sort of the poly tunnels or large greenhouses and maybe you're able to produce fruit in them.

I remember when we were in Mutafor, we had an apple tree, pear tree, plum tree in the garden. Ground was very fertile there. But it was only once in a year that we got fruit off the trees.

It would be absolutely extraordinary if every month that there were plums and every month there were apples and every month there were pears.

But here we find that every month that there is, that's what it says, that with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month.

fruit. And that fruit is the most wonderful fruit of all. Because it absolutely satisfies. Here is a fruit that isn't only tasty, but it is nourishing.

[22 : 41] You know, sometimes you eat things because they're good for us, but they might not be the most tasty things in the world. Sometimes we'll eat something and we'll say, well, I'm eating it.

Maybe some people with the likes of porridge or bros, it might not be their favorite dish for some it might be. But they take it because they say, well, I know it's good for me. And quite often there are things in life like that we take them because we know they're good for us.

Because they're nourishing, they strengthen us. Well, here is this tree and its fruit is nourishing, it's strengthening, but it's beautiful to the taste.

And every month, and again when we see this completeness, really what it is saying, this is perpetual. There is no point where there is lack, there is no point where it is not producing, it is a continuous supply, all the time.

And then it says that the leaves or the trees were for the healing of the nations. Now that doesn't mean that here that's not speaking about curing diseases or restoring health, rather this is really speaking about the preservation or the continuance of perfect health.

[23 : 59] There is no illness in glory, there is no disease, there is no wasting, there is no depression, there is no sorrow, there is no sadness, none of the afflictions and troubles and illnesses and diseases that we have in this world.

world. You know, it's wonderful to think of an environment that will be absolutely perfect. You will never hear of anybody being ill again.

You know, we're living in a day where day by day we're hearing about somebody else who is ill, where troubles come into people's lives and into the family.

And day by day we're hearing of somebody else and it's so sad. you know, we're in glory, we will never hear that said of anybody. We'll never hear did you hear that so and so is ill.

We'll never be looking for somebody and then be told so and so has died. It's perpetual, continued health, strength, joy, happiness, blessing, life forever and ever and ever and ever.

[25 : 12] Surely, my friends, that's what you want. Well, supposing you were going to go away on holiday somewhere and you know, just now it's cold and you're going to go away on holiday to somewhere sunny.

You'd be saying to yourself, particularly if it was in the winter, you'd be saying to yourself, I can't wait, can't wait to get away from this cold, to experience a warmth in the sun. Well, you know, spiritually, the believer is like that, for a different kind of sun.

their longing for the sun of righteousness who arises with healing in his wings. And you know, there's a growing longing in the heart of the believer for glory.

Can I ask you tonight, is that something that's within your heart? And you're saying to yourself, you know, yes, I know I live in this world and I'm caught up with my family and my friends and my work and all these things, things.

But deep down, there is within my heart a sense of where I'm really going. There is a sense of what it's really about.

[26 : 22] And I'm looking forward to it. There are times maybe we lose sight of that a wee bit. There are times maybe we are captivated by what's going on in the world. But every so often we stop and we look forward to it.

and we say, I know, I know where I'm going. I know that my Redeemer liveth and I'm going to be with him. I can't wait. And it's a wonderful thing if that is the hope that's within your heart.

But could I say to anybody in here tonight who isn't thinking that way, you know, your life is really empty. Because what have you got to look forward to?

Now I know just now there might be things that you're looking forward to. God willing, next week, next month, next year, you might have plans and prospects in the future.

That's good and well. But beyond that, spared, and you reach all these things, beyond that, what is your ultimate future?

[27 : 29] when you come to leave this world? What is your hope? What are you looking forward to? Are you looking forward to something?

Or is it empty? Bleak? Is it uncertainty? Are you scared about it? Well, the Lord is saying, you needn't be.

Because in this chapter is one of the greatest invitations ever given. and where it says, the spirit and the bride say come, and let the one who hears say come, and let the one who is thirsty come, let the one who desires take the water of life that's without price.

Isn't that wonderful? Come, come, come. This invitation to come, it's as if the Lord Jesus Christ is saying, this is his last message, out as it were into the world from the Holy Scripture.

And it's an invitation of grace, an invitation of mercy, an invitation to come. Well, will you? How can you refuse?

[28 : 44] How can you say no? If you say no, it's the most absurd thing to do. Because you're cutting yourself off from life.

You're cutting yourself off from the most glorious future. We're reading about it. This is God's word to us. May we hear it, and may we seek to live upon the Lord who has given it to us.

Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we give thanks for this word. We give thanks for the great hope that is set out. we give thanks for a future that is in Jesus, a future that has been won.

Oh, Lord, we give thanks for that longing that is in the heart of the believer and the assurance of better things to come. Lord, bless us, we pray, and guide us and keep us as we journey on.

May our focus ever be on Christ and take away from us all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.