

The Tree of Life and River of Living Water

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In the opening chapters of the Bible and in the closing chapter, the phrase *tree of life* is mentioned. In an article entitled, “*What Tree Did Eve Eat From?*”, it is explained that God can use the word *tree* to symbolize one of the spirit-beings He has created, especially if He is describing a heavenly scene or activity. An example of this is found in Revelation 22:1-2,

And he (an angel, cf. Rev. 21:9) showed me (i.e. John, cf. Rev. 21:2) a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Jesus Christ, cf. Jn.1:29).² 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. And the leaves of the tree (of life) were for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:1-2; NKJV throughout unless noted; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The heavenly scene described above is the result of God our Father’s kingdom being established on earth. Consequently, all activities taking place are spiritual and not physical, even though some of the words being used can also be associated with familiar physical realities,

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:1-2).

In this scripture the New Jerusalem, which is spiritual, is pictured symbolically as a bride. This bride represents those who were faithful to Almighty God and His law during their lifetime (Rev. 12:17) and because of her faithfulness she will be united with her husband, Jesus Christ (Rev. 21:9-14). The apostle Paul understood God’s symbolic language when he described this future marriage to members of the body of Christ in Corinth,

Oh, that you (Corinthians) would bear with me (Paul) in a little folly – and indeed you do bear with me.² For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I betrothed you to one husband (Christ), that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2Cor. 11:1-2; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So the scene being pictured with familiar physical words in Revelation 22:1-2 is not describing any activities taking place in the physical realm. This principle needs to be considered anytime God uses the phrase *tree of life*, or the word *tree*.

In Revelation 22:1, a *river of water of life* flows from the throne of Almighty God. As this is a heavenly event, it cannot be a literal river consisting of physical water. Instead, this river of water must represent a spiritual reality,

Jesus answered and said to her (the Samaritan woman), 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water'(Jn. 4:10; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

Christ pointed out to the Samaritan woman that the living water he spoke about was a gift from God our Father. This fact is confirmed in greater detail later in the book of John,

He who believes in me (in who he was and what he taught), as scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.³⁹ But this he spoke concerning the Spirit (of Almighty God), which those who believed would receive; for the Spirit (of Almighty God) was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (resurrected from the dead) (Jn. 7:38-39; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is interesting to note that a similar event occurred in Genesis 2:10,

Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four (river) heads (Gen. 2:10).

In this account, Eden could be a word used to describe the throne and city of God, which is mentioned in Revelation 22:1, 14 and the river could be describing the action of God's Holy Spirit in the heavenly realm prior to the rebellion of Adam and Eve. This would explain the change that occurred to Adam and Eve after they sinned,

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked (a significant change had occurred); and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings (Gen. 3:7; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

Prior to sinning they were amongst the trees (spirit beings) in God's garden (spirit realm). As flesh and blood beings cannot exist in the spirit realm, Adam and Eve would have been created in God's image, which is spiritual not physical, and then changed to flesh and blood after they sinned,

Then God said, "Let us make man (kind) in our image, according to our likeness..." (Gen. 1:26a).

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption (1Cor. 15:50).

Before Adam and Eve sinned, they were able to partake of the tree of life, but after they sinned they could not have access to this same tree because it was located by Almighty God's throne, and they were being removed from this location due to their sin,

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden (including the tree of life) you may freely eat;¹⁷ 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; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

So He (God) drove out the man (from the presence of God); and He placed cherubim (angels) at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24; Ed. notes in parentheses).

This tree of life is located in close proximity to God's throne and it is central to the plan of God,

In the middle of its street (God's Holy City; cf. Rev. 21:2), and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruits every month. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

Leaves are produced as part of the tree's growth, and this growth would benefit all the nations. As this tree is not physical, it represents a spirit-being whose growth (action) will benefit others,

But he (Jesus Christ) was pierced through for our transgressions (sins), he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace (reconciliation to Almighty God) was upon him, and by his "blows that cut in" *we are healed* (Isa. 53:5; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Mankind needs to be healed because it is sick, and that sickness is due to eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). This sickness is lethal because it results in death,

For the wages of sin is death... (Rom. 6:23a).

So the only way to be healed and restored to life is by the action of the tree of life,

...but the gift of God (our Father) is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23b; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is through the sacrifice of the spirit-being, represented by the tree of life, that all sinners can have an opportunity to be restored in their relationship with Almighty God,

Now all things are of God (our Father), who has reconciled us to Himself through (the action of) Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,¹⁹ that is, that God (our Father) was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses (sins) to them...(2Cor. 5:18-19; Ed. notes in parentheses).

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

In addition to the symbolic leaves that the tree of life produced, it also bore twelve fruits which then grew into twelve trees. So the tree of life through its action (sacrifice) enabled twelve new spiritual trees to grow and also produce fruit that will benefit others,

Also she (God's Holy City) had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel (Rev. 21:12; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

It is into this spiritual family, that used to consist of twelve physical tribes, that all nations will inherit everlasting life provided they repent of sin and deeply desire to live in accordance with God's law,

And if some of the branches (of the physical tribes of Israel) were broken off (due to persisting in sinful practices), and you (the Gentile nations), being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them (due to repentance of sin), and with them became a partaker of the root and richness of the olive tree (Rom. 11:17; Ed. notes in parentheses),

And they (Israel after they repent of sin) also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.²⁴ For if you (Gentile nations) were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), and were grafted into a good olive tree (Jesus Christ), how much more will these (tribes of Israel), who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree (Jesus Christ who is the one responsible for dealing with Israel; Rom. 11:23-24, cf. Deut. 32:8-9).

When the Most High (God Almighty) divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons (descendants) of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the (angels of God, from the Septuagint).⁹ For the Lord's portion (Jesus Christ) is his people; Jacob (father of the twelve tribes of Israel) is the place of his (Jesus Christ's) inheritance (Deut. 32:8-9; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The scripture above explains why all nations have to be grafted into spiritual Israel. Israel is Jesus Christ's inheritance and he will rule over it, and through it. Christ expressed his desire for Israel during his earthly ministry,

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and casts stones toward those sent forth to her. How often I wanted to bring together your children (tribes of Israel) in the manner a hen brings together her young under her wings, but you did not want it (they were determined to remain rebellious) (Mt. 23:37; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses).

As mentioned previously, the tree of life was positioned in the middle of the street in God's Holy City because it represented the one spirit-being who took upon himself the responsibility of becoming a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Rev. 13:8). Therefore, the tree of life was central to Almighty God's plan of salvation,

Jesus said to him (Thomas), 'I am the way, the truth, and the (tree of) life. No one comes to the Father except through (the sacrifice of) me (Jn. 14:6; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, his (Christ's) flesh (Heb. 10:19-20).

As a result of Christ's sacrifice, he made it possible for many to inherit everlasting life. Therefore, he is instrumental in the process of producing more fruits, which the apostle Paul referred to as spiritual "sons",

For it was fitting for Him (God our Father) for whom are all things and by whom are all things (created and in existence), in bringing many sons to glory (everlasting life), to make the author of their salvation (Jesus Christ) perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Adam was in close proximity to the tree of life prior to his sin and could eat (figuratively) from it. In other words, he could imbibe important lessons and truths (Jn. 14:6) while in fellowship with the spirit-being represented by this tree. Because we are flesh and blood beings, we cannot experience this form of fellowship. However, Jesus Christ explained during his earthly ministry that human beings can eat from him, symbolically speaking. Most who heard him did not grasp what he was saying because they did not understand the symbolic language he was using. It is no different today. Most of Christianity is confused regarding when to take aspects of God's word literally and when to take it metaphorically,

Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.⁵⁴ Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (at Christ's return).⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food indeed, and my blood is true drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him (Jn. 6:53-55; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

From that time many of his disciples went away and walked with him no more (Jn. 6:66).

Christ was using symbolic language to show that his followers could imbibe of him when they take the symbols of the New Covenant Passover each year. The unleavened bread pictures his broken body for our spiritual healing and restoration, while the wine pictures his shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins (Heb. 9:22). Partaking of these symbols, along with foot washing, is essential for anyone wishing to continue to eat from the tree of life. Christ made it very plain during the last Passover season, before his death, that his followers had to observe the symbols of the New Covenant Passover in order to continue in fellowship with him (Jn. 13:1-8),

Peter said to him (Christ), 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with me (Jn. 13:8; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

If I (Christ) then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet (a command for the New Covenant Passover) (Jn. 13:14; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In ancient Israel, anyone failing to keep the Passover correctly was to be cut off from the nation. This same principle applies to our relationship/fellowship with the head of the church, Jesus Christ, whose nation is a spiritual household,

For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses. Since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be *cut off* from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land (Ex. 12:19).

So although we cannot see the tree of life as Adam did, we can still learn and imbibe God's truth through the guidance and direction of God's Holy Spirit,

But the comforter, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, it will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you (Jn. 14:26).

But when the comforter comes, which I shall send to you from the Father, the spirit of truth which proceeds from the Father, it will testify of me (Jn. 15:26).

This is the same spirit of truth that was pictured by the river of living water in both the Genesis and Revelation accounts, and Christ stated that as a result of his death and resurrection, he would ask the Father to send this same spirit to those who wanted to follow and obey his Father's law,

He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him (Jn. 14:21),

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away (be sacrificed and resurrected); for if I do not go away, the comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send it to you (Jn. 16:7; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

In the resurrection from the dead, God's people will see both the tree of life as Adam did in God's Holy City as well as God our Father,

They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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