

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 250

THE HOLY CITY (continued)

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life..." (Rev. 22:2).

You will observe that there is but *one street*. One street in a city fifteen hundred miles square! The literalist would have trouble here. A literal city fifteen hundred miles square and fifteen hundred miles high with but one street would hardly provide for traffic, and especially for the *hosts* of the redeemed. Whatever this street symbolizes must be pure as gold and clear as crystal! That which is symbolized must be perfectly transparent. It must endure the fire test of the Holy Ghost fire of God. There must be nothing counterfeit, false, or impure about it!

Let us see now and take note that in reality there *is no street!* We would think there would be a great number of streets in so vast a city with twelve gates of entrance. Yet here there is only one! However, there may indeed be many streets in the city, but that is not what John is showing us here. It is not in the midst of the "street" that the tree of life grows. How to translate

the Greek word rendered in the King James Bible as “street” is really not difficult. “Street” is not a correct translation. The Greek word used here is found *only* in the book of Revelation. The word is *plateia* meaning “plaza,” “square,” or “broad space.” Simply looking at the Greek word should reveal the close resemblance to our English word “plaza.” In Greek cities it was the “square,” the market place where all the business was done. This is an arrangement much adopted in many parts of the world. We have all seen the “square” of a town, the center of the town, not only the geographic center but also the *center* of commerce and the *seat* of government. Often one finds the most central part of the business district as well as the County Court House and other government offices on the city square. To this central location all the other streets would lead. In the “center” or “square” of New Jerusalem also is the seat of divine government — the *throne* of God and of the Lamb!

There are many wonderful truths to embrace, abundant revelation to inspire and thrill our hearts in the scene John presents to us, but one of the most blessed is the great truth that the street or plaza of the city is pure gold, as it were *transparent* glass (Rev. 21:21). The Greek word is *diaphanes* meaning “to shine through.” It means that the glory of God is to shine through our *walk!* The glory of God is to shine through all that we do and all that we are! Someone says, “I don’t believe that’s what it means — I believe we are going to literally walk on a street of pure gold, transparent like glass.” Well, my friend, if you would rather walk around on a transparent gold street than to have the beauty and glory of the Lord God Almighty to shine through your spiritual walk, go right ahead. As for me and my house, we prefer the glory of God to SHINE THROUGH US! I see that transparency coming in God’s sons today, a people so transparent that you can’t see them, you only see HIM SHINING THROUGH. Oh, yes! I see the light and the beauty of the nature of the Lamb of God shining through and how I rejoice to see this Day!

THE TREE OF LIFE

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there *the tree of life*, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month...” (Rev. 22:2).

Up to this chapter the new Jerusalem seems to be all mineral and no vegetable. Its appearance is as the dazzling display of a famous jewelry store, but there is no soft grass to sit upon, no green trees to enjoy, and no water to drink or food to eat. However, here introduced are the elements which add a rich softness and personal refreshment and sustenance to this city of elaborate beauty. First, get the picture! In this broad open space and on either side of the river of life is the tree of life. The literal meaning of this word “tree” is wood, timber, or forest, for it is a collective noun just like the words “city,” or “church,” — the idea is not that there is just one single tree. No, there is an entire park; whole rows of trees alongside the river and the plaza. The plaza is literally *filled* with trees! And this forest, or if you please, this forest of men, is on either side of the river. Trees throughout scripture signify *men*. Of the righteous man the Psalmist said, “And he shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Ps. 1:3). The prophet Isaiah adds this testimony, “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord*, that He might be glorified” (Isa. 61:3). This forest of trees (men) brought forth fruit in each month, or continually, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations.

In the first Paradise there was one singular tree of life (Christ) and that tree had a two-fold significance. First of all that tree and its fruit had the power of giving incorruptible and perpetual life to man. But the significance of the tree of life did

not lie merely in the perpetuation of Adam's earthly existence. It was a sign of that higher aspect of Adam's life, life in the spirit, which consisted in his oneness with God. The tree of life was more than a mere physical means for the extension of man's physical existence. It was the tree of *life* — TRUE LIFE, SPIRITUAL LIFE, DIVINE LIFE. Although Adam had an earthly aspect of his life, nevertheless life for Adam implied something greater and higher than his earthly consciousness. Eating of the tree of life would mean sustaining within him the constant and unwavering consciousness and power of the *divine spiritual life* within.

In my meditations upon the holy city in the Revelation, I often return to the book of Genesis. And there, at the very beginning of the mystery of God and man we discover remarkable truths. It is significant to note that when God first spoke and caused the light to shine out of darkness the record then states simply, "*And God saw the light, that it was good.*" And then with each successive creative work He continues to reaffirm it:

God saw that it was good.
God saw that it was good.

It is repeated six times for each of the six days. And then, the resounding conclusion on the seventh day, the seven of perfection, when the creation was complete — a creation which *included* man... "God saw that it was *very good!*" Let those words flow over and into you...*very good...very good!* Ah, yes, there was within man a quality of human goodness — but man needed to walk in a higher consciousness than mere goodness, he needed to walk in the **POWER OF LIFE!** So there were two trees, that is, two experiences of life, two realms of consciousness, two states of being available to this "good" man

and woman — evil mixed with good — or *life*. So you see, God had already pronounced man good; therefore, when he partook of the tree of the knowledge of good *and* evil, he added evil to his goodness, thereby introducing him to a realm of duality, an admixture. Now there were two sides of man! The tree ministered to man a *knowledge of good* as truly as it ministered to him a *knowledge of evil*. The fallen, natural man is both good and evil! Many natural men do choose the good rather than the evil. The world is full of unregenerated *good* people! It is for this reason that the philosophers and psychologists have discovered that within man are some “illustrious virtues” and “innate goodness” and have reached the mistaken conclusion that the nature of man is good. They have merely discovered that within man there is still the principle of good which naturally causes us to want to do good. The knowledge of good and evil concerns itself only with *external behavior*, judging all things on the basis of whether they are “good” or “evil.” Man, as long as he walks in the consciousness of this tree can understand and judge only within this framework: Is a thing good or is it evil? He then presumes that if a thing is “good” it must be acceptable and be godly. Nothing could be farther from the truth! If “good” was acceptable to God then man could surely be justified by “the works of the law.” The law is *good*, Paul tells us. But the good of man is the good of the creature — not the good of the Creator! It is the good of the *soul*, but not the good of the *spirit*! It is the good of man, but not the *righteousness of God*! Millions hope to be “good” enough to make it into heaven, not realizing that heaven is not about “goodness” — it’s about LIFE!

The problem is that when man came into the knowledge of good and evil he did not come into a better condition. He was able to distinguish between good and evil but he didn’t come to KNOW GOD! He partook of a tree that gave him a power of soulish discernment in the natural world, but in so doing he forfeited THE LIFE AND GLORY AVAILABLE IN THE OTHER TREE — THE TREE OF LIFE! He chose good and

evil — but missed **Life!** In the garden of Eden we have two revelations from two kinds of trees. First, *life* is the nature of God, whereas *good* is the nature of man. Second, life contains good, but good is not life! The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil show us that *life* and *good* are definitely different. Good is not the same as life. Life is not good, neither is life evil. *Life, good, and evil ARE THREE DIFFERENT AND INDEPENDENT THINGS!* The good of God can only be experienced through participation in the life of God. Therefore, even before man fell, all of his good, of itself, could not give him *life*. If man had been eating from the tree of life he could not have fallen. Can we not see by this that “good” and “life” are things that pertain to two different worlds! Therefore all the “good works” of man’s self-effort and religious excitement really have nothing to do with *divine, incorruptible life!*

Let us consider with care the great truth that good was not the same as life. Life was something better, greater, and higher than goodness! And, thank God, in the new Jerusalem city of God there is only one kind of tree — the *tree of life!* There is no tree of the knowledge of either evil *or* good, there is only the consciousness, power, and reality of LIFE! Aren’t you glad!

The truth of this is powerfully presented in the following vision given to Pablo Manzewitch. He writes:

In November, 1986, I was in the little town of Paraiso, Argentina. It was our usual weekly service there and I was trying to encourage the people to open their hearts to the Holy Spirit so that the life of God would be able to flow out to them. I noticed that the congregation was separated into two groups, one completely different from the other. One group — most of them very new in the Lord — were very simple and without very much instruction in doctrine. They immediately began to open their hearts without any fear or resistance, and the Lord began to reach out to them in a beautiful way. While this group of mostly

new believers reached out to Him, rejoicing in God, the other group of people — most of them more knowledgeable in doctrines because of more years in the church — were still standing there with their hearts closed to God. They tried to say their usual pious prayers, but their faces reflected the dryness and hardness of their hearts. I invited the congregation to join in a time of prayer, so all began praying. In my heart I asked the Lord, “Why is this? Why do these who have more doctrinal knowledge and more years in the way of the Lord lag behind instead of advancing? Instead of being the first to open their hearts to the Lord, they are judgmental and their hearts are so hard and dry. The others — in their simplicity — are going on ahead and they open so easily when God draws near to them.”

Then God opened the eyes of my spirit and a voice from within said, “I will show you why.” Suddenly I saw a beautiful leafy tree with many different fruits of diverse colors and sizes. I saw this group of people who were not flowing in the service: they were sitting under the shade of this strange tree avidly eating of its fruit. One thing drew my attention: those who were eating of those fruits tried very hard to share them with others. They persistently tried to convince those around them to eat of them, telling them that it would make them possessors of great gain. I drew near to observe more closely this unusual tree which was before me and somehow I understood the significance of the difference in the color and size of its fruits. I observed and understood that one of them signified “good doctrine”. Another was “decency and order in the service”. Still another — and the most outstanding of the fruits — I understood was “knowing how to do things right” or “how to avoid ridicule”. Each one of these fruits looked so lovely and was so attractive and desirable.

The voice within me again spoke and said, “This tree is called the *Knowledge of Good and Evil*. He that eats of it shall die, because he puts himself in the place of God, judging by his own criterion what seems to be right or wrong.” Then he said to

me, "Look what will happen to them." I saw that this tree produced monsters. As these people ate of the different fruits of the tree, a terrible transformation occurred in their beings. Their bodies disappeared and I could only see their heads and their hearts. In the beginning, their size and aspect were normal, but as they partook of those different fruits from that strange tree, their heads began to grow in an exaggerated manner and their hearts noticeably shrank. They became more and more hardened until they were changed into beings with enormous heads and hearts that were minuscule and hard.

Immediately after that, I saw a narrow path that became more and more narrow as one advanced upon it. All of these people were walking upon this lane and each step they took caused it to become more narrow. Because of the great multitude of people in this condition who were walking on this path, they began to experience some real difficulties. With their huge heads they began to bump against each other very violently. This gave them terrible headaches. At the end of this path I saw a very large cross about seven feet tall by about three feet wide. Behind the cross flowed a beautiful river with cool and clear waters. He who would have access to this river would have to go by way of the cross. I saw that the cross had a very small door which was quite narrow. He who wanted to get to the other side and enter this place of refreshing was forced to pass through that narrow little door through the cross; there was no other entrance except through there.

I saw all these people draw near to that little door of the cross because all of them wanted to pass through to the other side to the place where the river was. But the problem was that their heads were so large and hardened there was no way that they could get through the little door. I saw these people persistently pounding on that door with their heads, but they could not pass through. They wept much because they couldn't enter. Some even wanted to break their heads to pieces to be able to go through the door, but the effect of eating the fruit had

hardened their heads too much and they only hurt themselves. They were filled with great bitterness and resentment and all of them were terribly injured. Of all the multitudes I saw, none of them were able to pass through to the other side. They all remained on this side of the cross. What a terrible scene it was of many creatures with monstrous heads, and hearts that were very little and hard!

Suddenly the scene changed and I saw another tree. At first sight it didn't seem nearly as attractive as the first and I had to look very closely to be able to appreciate it. This second tree had lots of fruit, but it seemed to be of only one kind which was very large. A voice told me, "This is the tree of Life." Then I saw this other group of people who were simple, without much instruction in doctrine and without pretensions. They were under the shadow of this second tree and all were eating of its fruit. Soon I was able to observe a transformation taking place in them, also. But it was totally contrary to that which had happened to those I had seen before. While they were eating the fruit, their heads — which had been of normal size before — began to shrink. At the same time that their heads became smaller, their hearts began to grow until they were as large as the heads of the first group had been. These, too, were walking on that narrow path which led to the narrow little door of the cross. Moreover, their hearts bumped against each other in the same way that the heads had bumped in the former group, but these people did not hurt themselves. On the contrary, they seemed quite comfortable. Then I thought in my spirit, "What a problem! These won't be able to go through the door of the cross either because of their huge hearts. What will these people do to be able to enter?"

As these drew near to the cross, they could very easily get their heads through the narrow door. And when their hearts merely touched the cross, they immediately melted and became as water. In reality, this water was their melted hearts which simply flowed into the river which ran on the other side of the

cross. Every heart which touched the cross and melted caused the river to increase in its flow and it became bigger and bigger. These creatures with small heads got to the other side with no difficulty at all. Their hearts were completely mixed and made one with the waters of that river which flowed ever more abundantly on the other side of the cross.

Again when I looked within my spirit, I saw those beings with their huge heads and little, hard hearts. It seemed to me that I could still hear them praying and crying on this side of the cross. Their prayers went something like this: “God! We are your servants and we want to work for You in Your vineyard.” Then I heard, as it were, someone speaking to them: “But the only thing you are able to do is to plow the ground. The rest of your lives you will have to wallow in earthly things until you change your attitude and repent of having eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because now you believe that you can judge between what is right and wrong (choosing the *good*, of course!), you will never have access to the tree of Life...unless you will repent of having disobeyed God. Instead of OBEYING HIM, you have chosen to UNDERSTAND HIM.”

Finally, I saw those monsters in a very large field, working the soil and sowing their seed, but the field was dry and sterile. The only thing that would grow and that they could harvest were thorns, thistles, and foul-smelling weeds. I saw that they were very tired, bathed with sweat, and filthy from the dust of the earth, but they still insisted on plowing the field. They were content because they were doing it for God, but the only thing they reaped was pain and bitterness of spirit — end quote.

From the garden of Eden where our Lord called, “Adam, where art thou?” to the new Jerusalem where “the Spirit and the bride say, Come,” our blessed Lord has ever been yearning to bring man back into union with His life. The wonderful river of life that flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the kingdom of our Father flows right through the river-bed of the

soul and body of every son and daughter of God. As water has always been essential for the growth of vegetation, so also the river of life is related to the tree of life. In a desert land, where there is limited rainfall, the flow of a river through the land can easily be discerned by the green vegetation growing along its banks. In lands where the rainfall is normal, the vegetation is far more copious along the banks of the river. So also in this city: where the river of life flows, there grows the tree of life on both sides of the river! This life-giving tree represents the Living Word of God which proceeds out from the Spirit of God. When one speaks *by* the Spirit, and in the *power* of the Spirit, his words are fruit of which men can eat and receive life. And the wonderful tree of life, the whole forest of trees of life, only grows and bears its fruit by the banks of the river. The tree grows out of the river, signifying that the life of the *tree* of life is derived from the life of the *river* of life! All who would be trees of life must first access the river of life!

Can we not see by this that the “fruit” of the tree of life is just what Paul calls the “fruit of the spirit.” These trees which stand in the midst of the plaza and on either side of the river not only bear the fruit of righteousness, that is, righteous acts, but their fruit is the fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. That is fruit that tastes good to anyone! And it is fruit which will sooth the hearts of those who are under a cloud of condemnation and oppression; it will gladden the hearts of those who are sad and sorrowful; it will calm the spirit of those who are agitated and fearful; it will encourage and strengthen those who think their battle will never end; it will quiet and silence those who are offensive and hostile; it will bless those who are in desperate need; it will inspire, lift, and bring victory to those who are weak and captives to sin, sickness, limitation, and want; and will serve as an example to all who are proud, haughty, and lacking in self-control. The fruit of the spirit! What a help it is to people to come in touch with the trees of life who are producing the fruit of love! How good it is for them to come in touch with such a

tree and such a fruit when they have had such a long, weary, and difficult journey!

There are times when we are in the midst of trouble and turmoil and the adversary would make us feel we are defeated, but the Lord would make us to be such strong, vibrant trees and bear such wonderful fruit that no matter what comes we will always have fruit. In every situation and circumstance He is able to make all grace abound toward us in such measure that we will always have all the good fruits of the spirit. Not that men might admire our tree and say, “My, isn’t that a beautiful tree,” but that they may partake of its fruit and be quickened thereby. I have observed in my walk with God through the years that some people have been believers for many years and begin to be puffed up with pride. They think that for so many years they have served God and been faithful and therefore they deserve recognition and God’s favor because of what they are. They become trees to look at, and when you come into touch with their lives they can’t give you a morsel of anything, and when it comes to the leaves on the tree the medicinal properties have evaporated, there is no healing balm, no remedial, restoring power — they are barren. They are just trees to look at.

What a street, what a plaza, what a square is this! “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life.” What would you expect to find in the midst of the plaza? Multitudes of people, the hurrying of eager feet! In the plazas of great cities a thousand interests concentrate themselves. Men of all stations of life meet and pass. There the joys and sorrows of the human experience jostle each other unsuspectingly. Innocence walks by the side of guilt. The deadliest of sins and the holiest of souls tread their way through in close proximity. Every human passion, ambition, hypocrisy, and need might be seen any day in the midst of the street by one who could read beneath the lines upon the faces. What better place could there be than the middle of the plaza to grow flourishing trees of life!

Why do men not see the city? Why do they not eat of the fruit of this tree of life? Is it because they are so far away? Someone says, "But there are no sinning, sorrowful, needy people in the city of God!" Indeed? Nothing can enter into this city, that is, *become a part of the city*, that defiles, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: only those whose natures are written in the Lamb's book of life. But we must distinguish between those who *are* the city and those who *come* to the city. If none who are vile and bound and needy can *come* to the city, then why would the call go forth, "And the Spirit, and the bride say, *Come*. And let him that heareth say, *Come*. And let him that is *athirst come*. And *whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*." Nor would it be said, "...and the kings of the *earth* (soulical realm) shall bring their glory and honor *into it*. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

This city, remember, is not in the far-away heavens; it is a city that comes down from God out of heaven. The heavenlies descend into the earthlies! Call it, if you like, a dream city; but it is a dream of God's provision for men in this world, not in the skies. For note, there are nations to be healed! There is a great work yet to be done for the nations are sick; the mind and the heart are not sound; darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people; sickness, pain, confusion, lies, murders, violence, addictions, perversions, crime, hatred, bigotry, and a thousand more woes plague the world of mankind. They need healing! And they find it in the leaves of the tree in the midst of the plaza of the city of God! The city speaks of a great crowd, hence it suggests needs, desires, demand. And the plaza, the garden in the city reveals the abundant supply! In that long ago beginning man was driven out of the garden. Ever since that day the city, as it were, has been crying for the garden; the garden for the city. Finally, here, in New Jerusalem the garden is found inside the city! So it seems that the vision that enraptured the heart of the seer of Patmos was that of some heavenly city in this world. There radiates upon this city a wondrous light, such as never has

been seen upon any city built by human hands. Yet, it is a city established in the earth, inhabited not by spirits, but by redeemed, glorified men, with the living God among them.

I *know* that I shall never see
A Poem lovely as *this* Tree.
This tree that now I know to be
The life of Christ that's within me.
All other trees may come and go,
But this Christ Tree — I love Him so!

This tree in me is shining bright
Because its fruits are love and light.
This fruit of love that transforms all
Removes all trace of Adam's fall.
O Tree of Life, I climb thy boughs,
And there we make our wedding vows.

From vows, conception brings to birth
The sons of God upon this earth!
Those sons for whom creation groans
Shall rule and reign from out His throne
Till all mankind is free from strife
And all become a tree of life.

—Audrey Schaffer

TWELVE FRUITS OF THE TREE

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, *which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month...*” (Rev. 22:2).

We have already learned that the river of life is not a literal river, and since we don't have a literal river, we cannot have a literal tree of life with physical fruits — be they apples, or oranges, or apricots, or something else that give life when they

are eaten. The vision is not talking about physical life or existence, but divine, incorruptible, spiritual life. The vision tells us that the trees bear twelve manner of fruits. Surely we know that when the scripture uses the term “fruits” it is not talking about physical things but spiritual things, for we read of the fruits of the spirit, which are not peaches or strawberries, but love, joy, peace, etc. — not physical fruits but spiritual fruits. The tree of life signifies the Living Word of God, and since twelve is the number of absolute fullness, and also of divine government, the twelve fruits from the tree of life bespeak man taking into himself the full power and life of the incorruptible word of His kingdom within us. It also represents to us all the blessings and benefits of the kingdom of God that come to us by His word working mightily in us — perfect health, perfect peace, perfect victory, perfect provision, perfect understanding, perfect power, perfect love, perfect joy, perfect faith — perfect everything! That is why the vision employs the ultimate number twelve to designate these fruits to us. It is the blessing of God that comes to us by coming to that spiritual attainment where we truly *live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God!*

As to the fruits of the tree, the King James Bible refers to them as “twelve manner of fruits.” Similarly, the Revised Standard Version says “twelve kinds of fruit.” Actually, the word “manner” is not in the Greek text and should not be used. The Greek text simply speaks of the tree as “bearing twelve fruits.” The idea conveyed is that the tree bears twelve months in the year so that there are twelve fruit-harvests or twelve fruit-crops. It is not like most trees that bear but once a year, or in one season only, or in rare instances twice or three times is the extreme limit, but it *constantly* bears fruit — there is no time of the year when there is no fruit on the tree. The thought is that of *abundance*, not *variety*. The supply never fails! The fruit does not have to be frozen or canned; the tree is never barren. How great the superiority of this tree above any on earth!

The plaza of the city speaks of its movement and activity; the river speaks of the Spirit of God as the blessed current of its life, pure in crystal brightness; but in the midst of both the plaza and the river is the tree of life! Every movement in that city centers in Christ; He gives impulse to everything there. And He is in the midst of the river too, the very power of all that quickens, of all the Spirit's flow. And He is not only "in the midst," but "on this side and on that side." Whichever way you look you see the tree of life there, and it yields its fruit perennially. But now we meet a strange arrangement. God's life is for ALL! Yet the scripture declares with absolute certainty that the tree of life is accessible only to the *overcomer*. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, and the river flows out from the throne of God and of the Lamb, bringing life whithersoever it goes, but the fruit of the tree is "to him that overcometh" (Rev. 2:7). "Whosoever will" may take of the *water of life* freely" (Rev. 22:17). But only he that "overcometh" may eat of the *tree*! And now, all of a sudden we feel as Tantalus must have felt in his beautiful garden, when each time he stretched forth his hand to reach the luscious fruit with which the trees of that garden were laden, a blast of wind blew the branch away, and Tantalus was left desolate — hungry as before. In a similar way we sometimes feel that the power of the incorruptible life and the glory of the kingdom dominion has been withdrawn from our reach. But it is not withdrawn, we have only to finish our journey into His fullness. You see, my beloved, everything God has is for EVERYONE! But there is a progression in our apprehending of it. And every man must come the same way! The first step is to experience the healing leaves. Oh, we must be healed! Our blind eyes must be opened, our deaf ears must be unstopped, our lame legs must be strengthened, our leprosy of sin must be cleansed! Once healed, we are then enabled to walk in the light of the city, and in that light we are led to come to the river. What a further cleansing! What refreshing! What an uprising of life and victory! It is there, in the flowing of the river, that we are empowered to *become* the *overcomer*. And now, at last, we have access to the

fruit of the tree — our complete and eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God and of the Lamb! Isn't it wonderful!

THE LEAVES OF THE TREES

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and *the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*” (Rev. 22:2).

The emphasis in recent decades on the use of herbs for healing and health may seem new to many, but it is not. It is rather a renewal of the ancient medicinal methods of healing that stretch back to the very beginning of the human race. Herbs were the first “drugs” that mankind had at their disposal. The world over, nearly all tribes and cultures had some knowledge of the plants that can relieve pain and restore wholeness. In most cases what ancient civilizations learned about treating illnesses with herbs has been proven correct by modern researchers. The first herbal “drugstore,” then, encompassed all of nature, with its amazing array of medicinal plants. There are many herbs that will work equally as well on one particular disease; some work better for one person than another, but there are many alternatives given. Various parts of the plant may be used — the root, bark, flowers, berries, leaves, and sometimes the whole plant. Leaves are used for many, many different conditions, and that brings us to the exciting symbolisms of the tree of life in the city of God, for John informs us that the spiritual leaves of this spiritual tree are “for the healing of the nations.” Besides water and food (the river and the fruit) sick people need healing and restoration to health!

There has never been anything given to mankind for the healing of the nations, healing of the dread sickness of sin and death under which all are cursed. There has been no medicine, no philosophy, no governmental arrangement, no social order, no set of laws, no religious system — nothing that has healed or

can heal. Healing comes only through the regenerating power of the Living Word of God! So the leaves of the tree are that *word of God* which is “living and powerful” that enters into us by the Spirit of God, which is the river of life, by which we partake of the tree of life, and of its leaves which are the truth and power of God’s Word, which truth and power alone can bring healing to the nations. We have said that the tree of life *is* the Living Word of God. Therefore, both the fruits and the leaves of the tree are different *administrations* or *operations* of that Divine Word. We know that Jesus by His word *taught* the multitudes the principles of the kingdom of God. We know that by His word He also *healed* the sick, *raised* the dead, *calmed* the storm, *cast out* devils, and brought *judgment* into men’s lives. So there are indeed various functions and operations of the Living Word of God! The leaves signify the Word of God in its power of healing, deliverance, regeneration, restoration, and transformation. The healing of the nations! What a prospect that is! Now, let me make this as plain as possible. The river is the Spirit — the tree is the Word. The Spirit and the Word! The tree grows out of the river, for it is out of the Spirit of God that the Word of God issues in its power. The Spirit is life, Jesus said. The Word is an incorruptible seed which sprouts out of the river. We are born again of the Spirit, and we are also born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever. “Whose leaf also shall not wither” (Ps. 1:3). We drink of the Spirit, whereas we eat of the Word. When the ministry of the Spirit in the Lord’s matured and perfected body brings forth the Word of life in all its authority and power — the nations will be healed! That is the mystery.

In that mingled beauty of city and garden, the pure river running through the plaza, the forest on either side of it, our eyes are attracted to the healing leaves of those trees of life. It has been thought to be one of the incongruities of John’s picture that there should be provision for healing in a city where all is pure, vibrant life and perfection! But as we have shown previously, there is no inconsistency at all, for the provision is made for all

who have *newly arrived* from the sins, bondages, hurts, and cruelties of human life, who come with wounds long open, with griefs that nothing on earth could soothe, with terminal disease of long standing, that need assuaging and healing so that *new life in Christ* can begin. Healing for all, John says — for all comers! Mighty cherubim with a flaming sword kept (guarded) the way to the tree of life in Eden, and man was prevented from entering again. But now, thank God! through the work of the Christ of Calvary, the cherubim have been removed, the flaming sword has been sheathed, the wall has been broken down, the handwriting of ordinances that was against us has been taken out of the way, the gates have been swung open wide never to be closed again, the pathway has been bathed in brilliant light, and upon entering the city there is no longer a “tree,” but “trees,” — a whole vast forest of them — super-abundant, complete and perfect reconciliation, healing, and wholeness for all who come, no matter what gate! Oh, the wonder of it!

The Christ, who is the Living Word of God, is the tree of life and His *words of life* are the *leaves*. He says that His spirit and life are in His words. People are often compared in the Bible to trees. How like leaves falling from a tree are the words that drop from our lips! The life of the tree goes into the leaves as our life goes into our words. Many people are unaware that Jesus was a Teacher of teachers. They think of Him when He showed His power by great healings, miracles, signs, and wonders — but fail to realize that He was a Master Teacher. He taught a certain way, He taught certain things, and He went about doing this teaching through His entire ministry. And the things He taught have, century after century, transformed the lives and society of His redeemed people!

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mk. 1:14). Jesus taught the gospel, the GOOD NEWS of the KINGDOM OF GOD. But think about it — when you listen to the preachers today the kingdom of God is BAD NEWS for just

about everybody except a handful of elect saints! The kingdom of God can hardly be mentioned without prefacing it with dire warnings about judgment, plagues, the antichrist, world war, death, destruction, and billions consigned to eternal torture in hell-fire. But the fact is, the gospel of the kingdom is not *bad news* for anybody, it is *good news* for EVERYBODY! “Peace on earth, *goodwill towards men*,” the angelic hosts proclaimed. Jesus was a teacher of the kingdom and it was good news for all men everywhere. “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe *the good news!*” (Mk. 1:14-15). As old as these words are, they are as fresh today as the dew-laden lily. It’s just as though Jesus walked into the place where you, dear one, read these lines right now and said to you, “The kingdom of God is at hand: *change your mind, and believe the good news!*” It is my conviction that the sons of God and the bride of Christ, which are the holy city of God, will not only be mighty miracle workers, but will also be the great teachers of the kingdom of God unto all the tribes, tongues, kindreds, and nations of earth, and the gracious and powerful words that fall from their lips will be *leaves of healing* for the sick and sin-weary multitudes of the whole world. Oh, yes! THE NATIONS SHALL BE HEALED!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY

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