

# The Tree of Life

*From Genesis to Revelation*



By Roy Knight

*It is written in Genesis 2:9, "And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden...". God provided the tree of life to Adam and Eve for food and that they might not die.*

It is important to note that from the beginning, God designed mankind not to die. This is seen in Genesis 3:22 which says, *"Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'".* But because of the sins of Adam and Eve they forfeited that right to the tree of life as well as the rest of humanity. The end result is death of our physical bodies. God said in Genesis 3:19, *"For dust you are, and to dust you shall return."* To ensure that mankind would never supersede God's prohibition, *"He placed cherubim 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."*

Another important point for us to understand from the opening chapters of Genesis is that God does not lie. God had warned Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, *"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."* When Adam and Eve sinned, God did not back-track on His word. What He warned would happen happened and Adam and Eve in time died. In light of this, we too must learn to respect God's commands.

Even more disturbing than losing one's access to the tree of life, Adam and Eve lost their full fellowship to God Himself. Before the fall, the three could walk together in harmony in the Garden. Following their sin, their relationship with God changed. Isaiah 59:2, *"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you..."*. Yet, instead of leaving them to their physical and spiritual doom, God's grace and mercy sought to hold them close to Him through the means of priesthood and sacrifice. Showing the devastating nature of sin, God directed the offering up of a blood sacrifice, usually a lamb, to atone for their sins. Such sacrifices are seen in the lives of Abel, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God set aside the children of Israel to be His own special people and developed them into a nation following their exodus from Egypt. He also provided for them a more formal means of worship. Their worship, however, still centered around the offering of a sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people.

Animal sacrifices continued for hundreds of years until God's Perfect Sacrifice was introduced to humanity. His name is Jesus. John the baptizer once remarked of Him, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). The Hebrew writer wrote saying, *"Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me — To do Your will, O God" (10:5-7). He closes the thought by saying, "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10)."*

Knowing that our sins are atoned through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we can look forward to our renewed spiritual state with God. But what about our bodies? Paul writing to his fellow Christians said, *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven..."* (2 Corinthians 5:1-2). In Paul's previous letter, he addressed their concerns by saying

*"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. <sup>51</sup> Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"*  
(1 Corinthians 15:50-57).

God gives the Christian victory over death by granting to us immortality through His Son Jesus Christ.

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John pulls back the curtain so that we might get to peer into heaven itself. In that picture stands again the tree of life. In chapter 22 verses 1-2, it reads, *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 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. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The word "nations" represents the people of the world. Figuratively, we see that the tree that was once lost is now regained.

Yet, how are the blessings of the tree of life now accessed by humanity? The answer is found in verse 14 of the same chapter which says, "*Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.*"

How can one have access to the tree of life and to immortality? It is only through obeying the commands of Jesus Christ. Jesus in John 14:15 said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" Again, in John 6:63, Jesus said, "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*" Life, true life, comes through obeying the words of Jesus. It is through His words that we can have access to the tree of life one day.