

The two trees of Genesis 2

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I want to try and show you briefly, without being too doctrinal, the significance of those two trees that God placed in the Garden of Eden.

The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

It has often been pointed out from others who have studied the scriptures that there are many things in the book of Genesis that reappear and are mentioned in the book of the Revelation.

It's also been suggested that in the book of Genesis, its very name suggests it, that we have the seed plot of the ways of God relative to man and his pleasure in man.

Now one of the things that you will find in the book of Genesis that you will not find [00:01:02] in the book of Revelation is one of the things that makes our present subject very interesting. We've read of the tree of life in Genesis.

We've read of the tree of life in the Revelation. We've read of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Genesis. There is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Revelation. Why? Why? I'll try and show you from scripture this afternoon.

These two trees, very simply, dear brethren, speak of two things relative to God.

They speak on the one hand, the tree of life, of that which God has available for men on the basis of pure, sovereign grace, whereas the tree of the knowledge of evil, knowledge [00:02:04] of good and evil, speaks of man on the earth in responsibility to God.

I'll leave you just to digest that for a moment.

The tree of life speaks of the sovereign grace of God. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil speaks of man in responsibility before God. You will notice in the book of the Revelation that prior to the incoming of sin into the world there was no prohibition from God to eat of the tree of life. Have you noticed that?

God did not say at the beginning that of the tree of life ye shall not eat of it. That was said of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was not until after that sin had come in that God barred the way

of man to the tree [00:03:07] of life.

I want to suggest to you, beloved brethren, the reason for that is that in the purpose of God, in his great plan of blessing for men, it has ever been before him that man should be before him in the reality of life, drawing from himself the giver and sustainer of it.

But in the infinite ways of God in his wisdom, he saw fit to put man in the garden of Eden in this world in responsibility.

And on that line of things, first of all, we must realise that the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world from God, a divine person, the Son, and took up manhood.

[00:04:03] And he took up that responsibility that you and I are in as men before God.

He came into that condition of things, of responsible manhood before God, and because of sin it involved his death.

But in so doing, he himself has become available as the source of life to the believer.

I just want to go through the scriptures that we have read this afternoon to show to you how that the Lord Jesus has given complete answer to God in what is involved in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in such a way that he has glorified God in the doing of it, and answered to God in everything that Adam could not, but also that in his [00:05:08] cross he is closed up forever, that order of manhood.

And that is why, beloved brethren, you do not find the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the book of Revelation.

Now the Old Testament is full of types of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the law, and the prophets, and the Psalms, we will find again and again and again the Spirit of Christ speaking, directing hearts to the coming into this world of Christ in manhood and his death.

You will not find in the Old Testament any reference to Christ coming as the giver of [00:06:04] life. The reason being the Old Testament largely, if not completely, takes up the question of man in responsibility before God.

That is why it's called the law, because that is the basis that man is placed on before God, and in that is involved the words, this do and thou shalt live.

But how abundantly we see from the Scriptures, and how perfectly it was made clear, even in that first chapter that we read, that when sin came in, and man in his responsibility toward God disobeyed, and brought death not only upon himself, but upon all his progeny, [00:07:07] that whole order of manhood became, under the condemnation of sin and death, consequently God in righteousness bars the way to the tree of life.

I don't know whether you've ever noticed it, that the way that the Scripture forms those verses that we read in Genesis chapter 3, those of you who may have studied the original language will know that

the end of verse 22 of Genesis chapter 3, and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever, it's an incomplete statement.

[00:08:02] It seems as almost as if God in his holiness is withdrawing from the terrible possibilities of man eating of the tree of life and living eternally under the condemnation of sin and death.

Satan had invaded that which God pronounced as being good, and had brought upon God's fair creation, and its head, sin and death, a terrible calamity morally, and God moves at the end of this chapter and he bars the way to the tree of life.

How thankful we are that the way is not barred to the tree of life now.

[00:09:09] In view of what one has just said in regard to man's terrible condition and responsibility before God because of sin, death reigning, man dominated by the power of sin and Satan, how wonderful it is to turn to a chapter like John 10 and hear one say, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it, more abundantly shouldn't be there, but they might have life in abundance, and that isn't the life that Adam had, because he lost it. The life that Adam had he possessed in responsibility, but the life that the Lord Jesus Christ the son of God speaks of in John chapter 10, when he says I am come that they might have life [00:10:03] in abundance, is a life that can never again be invaded by sin. It's not a life that is dependent upon man in responsibility, it's a life that is dependent upon the Son, a divine person, and that's a vastly different consideration for our souls.

Here is the center of eternal life, here is the very thing itself that John speaks of in his epistle, when he speaks of that life that was from with the Father, a life of another world, a life from another sphere. I know some doesn't like that word, but you tell me a better one. That life that was from with the Father, it speaks of a life from another sphere, from with the Father. He came into this world, the Son, and he brought it with him. [00:11:03] And John says we've seen it, it was manifest in this world, our hands handled it, we contemplated it, the word of life. What and who was he speaking of? Jesus, Jesus. He was the one who in his person brought into this world that which was never there before, an order of manhood, grace and truth embodied in his person because of who he was. I may offend some brethren this afternoon, beloved brethren, but if you think carefully of what I am saying, you may grasp the importance of eternal sonship. He brought into this world because of who he was, the Son, a life that this world had never [00:12:07] known before, a life that was characteristically from with the Father. And he took a divine person to bring it into this world, a person in whom inherently life is, in him is life. That's because of who he is, a divine person. That was never true of Adam. Life was never inherent in Adam, he lost it. He had life on the basis of responsibility, but he lost it. The Son of God had life inherent in himself and he brought it into this world and because of his death and resurrection he has made that life available today to faith. Well, I must hurry on. I read to you the 22nd [00:13:07] chapter of Genesis, or part of it, in order that you might perceive that right in the first book of the Bible, God has before him the coming into this world of his Son. Do you know, if you study scripture carefully, and I commend this to you, especially the young brethren, one of the important things to learn in studying the scriptures is the typology of scripture, that is the symbols that it uses. And one of the frequent symbols that scripture uses is the idea of wood and trees.

We've already spoken of this this afternoon. I take it that you will just accept what I say [00:14:03] this afternoon and go away and check it out, but at the moment just accept that trees in scripture speak of manhood, and in a similar way so does wood. Now I want you to notice that in the early verses of

Genesis chapter 22, that every time that Isaac is mentioned, he is mentioned in connection with the wood. Just let's point those two things out. Verse 3 of Genesis 22, And Isaac, two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and claimed the wood for the burnt offering. Verse 6, And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son. Verse 9, And Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son. [00:15:02] You notice it, there are three references to Isaac his son and in connection with him, the wood. I want to suggest to you beloved brethren that there in the book of Genesis is one of the earliest intimations of the coming into this world of the Son of God taking up manhood. It's been before pointed out of course that Genesis 22 is the first mention of love in the scriptures. Now there may be some here that think that the subject that I've embarked upon is rather doctrinal. Some of you may think it's rather theoretical. But beloved brethren, unless we understand the doctrines of scripture, unless we are prepared to addict our minds to the study of scripture, [00:16:05] we are in that position where we are likely to lose out on some of the choicest blessings that God has available for you and I in the scriptures in the power of the Spirit of God. Because beloved brethren, if we think of the coming into this world in manhood of such a person as the Son of God, we must see that behind that stupendous thing it was, the moment when God stepped into this world in the person of his Son and God was seen in this world as a man. Stupendous consideration for our souls, without question the mystery of piety, God manifest in the flesh. But beloved brethren, behind all that is all the wealth and riches and glory of the heart of God that has [00:17:10] moved out to you and I in infinite love. It's infinite love, the love of the heart of God, what he is in his nature, that has been expressed in this world in the person of his beloved Son. And it is that, we've read the verse have we not, John 3 and 16, that unfolds to us, that great channel that floods down from that infinite source of the love of God that sent into this world the Lord Jesus his Son, to the end that man might have everlasting life. You see it's life and the incarnation of the Son and the manhood of Jesus and the love of God is a subject that's all bound up together. It's that which God has in his heart for his own eternal pleasure and [00:18:05] glory and for the exaltation of his Son and for the eternal blessing of every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ today. That's what's involved in the incoming into this world of God the Son and that beloved brethren is what's involved in the death of Jesus. Take now thy Son, thine only Son. How often beloved brethren have you read those words? How often do we read those words, John 3, 16? How often do we read those words in John chapter 1, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten? Now let me stop a moment there. I feel I must explain the scriptural word, the meaning of only begotten. Five times John uses it and only John in the New Testament. [00:19:04] Once the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews uses it and that's the one that tells us the secret. Mind you, you'll find a corresponding word in the Old Testament used repeatedly in the Septuagint. It's in Psalm 22, deliver my darling from the dog. If you look that word up, in the Greek Old Testament you'll find that's the same word is used as only begotten. It's also the word that is used here concerning Isaac. Let me ask you a question, beloved brethren. Was Isaac Abraham's only son? No, he wasn't. He wasn't even Abraham's first son. So the word [00:20:11] doesn't refer to birth, or begetting, or being born. No, it doesn't. It doesn't mean that at all. The word is used by the Spirit of God to speak of one who is unique in the affection of his father. It speaks of the position of that one relative to his father. Not by birth, but by affection. Take now thy dearly beloved son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, who stands alone, unique in your affections, Abraham. And take him to a mountain that I will show thee of, and offer him there as a burnt [00:21:02] sacrifice. Isaac was Abraham's unique son. And you know, dear brethren, the French have got it a bit better than us in John 3 and 16. Excuse my French, I'm not very good at it. Il donne son fils unique. You see, they use the very word in French in John 3, 16. They don't say only begotten, they may not have a word for it. I hope there's no French here. But they do use that word which is so near to our English. Unique. And that's it. Because the Lord Jesus Christ, when he came into this world, he wasn't that by birth, beloved brethren. He was there in that position of uniqueness in regard to the affections of his

father. He was the father's dearly beloved son. [00:22:04] And he was that eternally. And he brought with him into this world, all that is involved in the sweetness of that intimacy of love and relationship that existed eternally between those divine persons, the father and the son. And beloved brethren, he's brought me into it as well. Do you realize, beloved brethren, that behind the incoming into this world of the son was this momentous thing, that God would impart to you the life that existed in that scene before him, in order that you and I might share in all of that life involved. And that life involved the intimacy of divine affections that reciprocated between divine persons eternally, but have now [00:23:07] been made available to the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. What a subject. It's the center of Christianity. Don't lose it, brethren. Don't lose it. Well, you can see easily that the wood was laid on Isaac. He carried it to the place of suffering, to the place of sacrifice. You notice that? The wood was laid on Isaac, and Isaac carried the wood to the place of sacrifice. Scripture's perfect. The only begotten of the Father stepped into manhood, and he took that order of manhood to the cross. And there, all that that order of manhood involved, its condemnation and its death, [00:24:05] was laid upon him. I know there was a substitute for Isaac. There was a substitute for Isaac. Thank God there was a substitute for you and I. On that basis, if there had been no substitute for you and I, dear friend, today, that standing before God in responsibility, the only thing that would have been available for you and I eternally was death, condemnation, and eternal judgment. But there was found a substitute for Isaac. There was found a substitute for me. There was no substitute for Jesus. There was no substitute for Jesus. Well, I've not exactly gone through the scriptures in [00:25:04] the order that I intended, but I see the time is running on. I'll just turn over to John's Gospel. You can well understand, therefore, that the Old Testament doesn't speak of life in the way of it being given to men, because life could not be made available to men until the Son had come. In Him is life. Think of the scriptures that bear on this subject. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life. So life is connected with the person of the Son. I've already touched on the beginning of John's Gospel. The law was given by Moses. You'll often find these two trees put together in scripture, and here's one of the verses. The law was given by Moses. That's [00:26:08] the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, isn't it? The law, that which Moses was given, took up man on the basis of his responsibility to God, the law and obedience. And if we read Romans chapter 7, we hear one saying, the law revived and sin slew me. And that whole order of things ended in condemnation and death. But the rest of that verse says grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. That's the tree of life. That's the source of grace. That's not man in responsibility. That's sovereign grace flowing into this world from the heart of God. Do you know, this word grace and truth came, that word came, should be subsists. And what that means is, it was never here before. It had never [00:27:03] been seen before. But when that blessed person came into this world, and John beheld him, he took account of grace and truth that flooded into this world from with the Father. Seen in his blessed person, how beautiful he stands in his manhood in Luke, his kindness, his compassion, his charm, his gentleness, his understanding, his holiness. But with all grace and truth, what a person. The heart of God, God was in Christ. Do you know, some of us a little while ago posed in a gospel meeting the question, what is God like? What is God really like? What sort of person is he? God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. If you want to know, my dear friend, if there's a [00:28:06] person in this world that doesn't know God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to know what God is like, look at the person of Jesus. Read in Luke's gospel of his kindness, his love, and his compassion. And there, you will see what God is like. Because God was there. God was there.

And repentant men and women found a refuge at his blessed feet. Have you? Have you? Do you know, I'm only middle-aged, but I can remember the moment in my life at around about 11 or 12 years of age, when I found the load of sin removed at the feet of Jesus, my Saviour. And I say to anybody [00:29:04] who has not yet had that happy experience, cannot look back at the moment in

their lives when the load of sin was removed. And the love of God in the person of Jesus came into the soul in a mighty flood. If you've never had that experience yet, my dear friend, have it today, because it's the most wonderful moment in your life. And it works. It works. And it will end in the glory of God.

Why? Because it's dependent upon a divine person, and not you and I. Grace and truth subsist by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time. There it is. God had never before been seen thus. The only begotten, he has revealed him. God has been revealed. Well, I read to you John chapter 3, [00:30:03] where the Lord Jesus refers to a significant incident in the Old Testament, the brazen serpent. The last, almost, type of the death of Christ in the wilderness. The crossing of Jordan isn't exactly in the wilderness, is it? Notice where the brazen serpent comes. It's at the end of the wilderness. It's immediately before the going into Canaan. Canaan speaks of the inheritance of God, the blessing of God. If we were to put that in New Testament language, we would say Canaan speaks of life. The brazen serpent ended that generation that came out of Egypt with whom God was not pleased, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Aaron also died just there.

[00:31:16] The children of Israel had a new leader, so did Moses, did he not? They had a new leader, they had a new high priest, and they went over the Jordan. Do you know why they went over Jordan? Do you know why they were able to go over Jordan, which speaks of death? They went over Jordan, dear beloved brethren, because they had a new life. And where did they get that life? They got that life from an uplifted brazen serpent. It was a life that was not the same as those that died in the wilderness, which was the life of responsibility. It was life that they had received by faith from one uplifted on a cross. You see immediately the infinite wisdom why the Lord Jesus refers to the brazen serpent in John [00:32:10] chapter three. Has Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? In like manner, in the similar fashion, must the Son of Man be lifted up. To what end? That whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. Eternal life. One lifted up on a tree, able to give life to faith. There it is. And so that whole generation with whom God was not pleased, characterized by unbelief, they came to an end at the brazen serpent. Beloved brethren, that's what happens at the cross. I'll read to you from Romans chapter [00:33:01] eight. You needn't turn to it, and I'm not going to go into it because the time is running on. But you do not have to go outside of scripture to find an explanation doctrinally of the brazen serpent. Scripture gives it to us. It's in Romans chapter eight. I'll read it to you. Verse two. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. Will you stop there for a moment? There you see, beloved brethren, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There you see the course of man in responsibility. The law of sin and death. That was what Adam brought in because of sin, because of disobedience. And that was what marked his virginity. And Christ came into that condition of things to which sin and death attached itself in you and I. It didn't attach itself to his person. I didn't say that. I said he came into [00:34:01] that condition of things in which sin and death attached itself to you and I. He came into responsible manhood to take up the matter of man's responsibility before God. And in that condition of things he did this. For what the law could not do, that means to say it's absolutely impossible for it to do, on account of that it was weak through the flesh. Now listen. Now listen. God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the likeness, in the likeness, he came into that condition of things. And for sin, that means for a sacrifice for sin or on account of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. That's the brazen serpent. That's the end of that order of manhood that had written over it, sin and death. Responsibility. To what end? That the righteous requirement that God had before him in giving the [00:35:05] law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. There you have life coming into the believer. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus that gives him the ability to live according to God. That's it. Not according to the law. That isn't a high enough standard

that gives him the ability to answer to what God had before him when he gave the law. The righteous requirement of the law which goes beyond the law is what God had before him for man. The spirit of life in Christ Jesus, in the power of the spirit, the power of risen life in the believer enables him now not to walk according to the law as a means of life but to fulfill the law for the glory of God. And so the cross of Christ brought to an end that order of things. Let me just [00:36:07] read to you again those words that bring that home very much to our affections. Dearly beloved brethren, I don't want you to go away from this meeting this afternoon with your head buzzing with a lot of doctrinal mysteries. That is not the way to treat of the truth of God. But these truths concern a glorious person. A person who in infinite love to you and I went to the cross of Calvary. We may not understand the doctrine. We may not understand completely what there is in the heart of God for us. But we can understand, beloved brethren, a love that gave itself at Calvary. [00:37:02] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. And we read, did we not, in John 19 where Pilate brings him forth.

Then came Jesus forth wearing the crown of thorns. Why? Have you ever thought about it? You ever thought why they placed a crown of thorns on his head? They didn't know what they were doing, did they? Thorns, dear brethren, were that which came forth from the ground as a result of what Adam had done. By the sweat of thy face shalt thou live. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth. And in the garden of Gethsemane we read of the Lord Jesus Christ that he sweat. [00:38:04] Do you know there's only three mentions of sweat in scripture? I've quoted two of you. There's one in the book of Ezekiel. But the first mention of sweat is on the face of Adam as the enormity of what he had done was felt in his soul and could be seen as sweat toil upon his face. That's the first mention of sweat in scripture. Do you know the last mention of sweat? It's on the face of the Son of God. As he anticipatively thought of the cross and of what it involved, the taking up of that whole matter of what Adam had brought in, in his disobedience, he in perfect obedience took it up and carried it to the cross. But he felt it in his soul and it says his sweat was as [00:39:06] it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly. He was truly God but he was truly vain.

Who can explain it? He was truly God because as God he knew what that cup involved and as a divine person he could weigh that cup and see all that it involved, unmitigated fury and wrath from a holy God. But as a man he took it and in perfect obedience drank it but he felt it, he felt it.

His soul as a man shrunk from it but in the power of his devotion he said not my will but thine be done. And so when Pilate brings him forth we see him decked with the crown of thorn, the curse [00:40:08] placed upon his holy brow but not only so garbed with a purple robe. Oh my dear beloved brethren, what a sight that is. What does it tell the soul that loves him? It tells me this beloved brethren, that the man who bore the cross and the curse is the man that will bear imperial majesty and glory in the kingdom. The man that can take up the supremacy of the world and be its ruler and its lord in the kingdom, that's what the purple robe speaks of, though put upon him in mockery but how fittingly it garbed him. The supreme ruler of the universe, the day will declare it, the kingdom will usher it in [00:41:04] but the man who then in the kingdom will be supreme will be the man who bore the crown of thorns. That which was involved in the crown of thorns is as great a matter as is involved in the glory of the kingdom and there's only one person that is fit for the one and the other and it's the person of Jesus. And so we read in chapter 17 and he bearing his cross, his cross. You'll get that his cross. You'll get that expression again in verse 25, now that stood by the cross of Jesus, the cross of Jesus. There it is, the wood laid on Isaac, there is the brazen serpent lifted up, there is Jesus my saviour dying for me, bearing all my sins himself upon the tree, but not only that, closing up forever that order [00:42:07] of responsibility to what end that men might have everlasting life. I just love to

finish. I read to you in John chapter 17 where he speaks to his father about being glorified as though has given him authority over all flesh. Adam had that, hadn't he? Adam had that. Adam was placed in the garden, its lord, its head supreme, lord of all he surveyed, but he fell and he brought down upon all that was his condemnation. Condemnation. Now just remember that otherwise you will never understand the significance of why it says in John chapter 17 as though has given him authority over all flesh, [00:43:03] because it's speaking of the lord Jesus in glory as head, but head of a new creation. Just as Adam was head of a creation and because Adam brought in death, so he brought death in all that was under him, under all that he had dominion over. But when the lord Jesus Christ, the son of God rose from the dead and went back to glory, there he is given head over all things, over every man, to the church. To what end? That he might give eternal life. You see the connection? Adam's head brought in death and he brought it on all his progeny. Christ in resurrection brings in life and he makes it available to all his progeny. It's as simple as that. As though has given him authority over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many [00:44:05] as thou has given him. John chapter, John's epistle chapter one, I've already referred to it. That life that was from another world, not connected with things down here. I know we've got eternal life today, beloved brethren, but we only have it in him and we touch but its fringe, but we have it. How wonderful it will be when lifted up out of this scene into heaven with him. Then we will know life and life eternal without a cloud. We will know the presence of the father. We will enjoy relationship with him and we will know the son and we will be with him and we will be like him. Grace, oh grace supreme. And we will then [00:45:05] know that life that was seen in his person when he walked here. That which John speaks about, that which John reports to others in order that they might have fellowship with the apostles. And then he says, and our fellowship is with the father and with his son, Jesus Christ. And that's why he ends his epistle. He says, we know the son of God has come. A stupendous statement. We know the son of God has come. Yes, he came from another world. And we have an understanding. We know him that is true. We are in him that is true. This is the true God and eternal life. Beloved brethren, we have it in his blessed person. And that is why when you get to the end of the Bible, we have a tree of life and a river [00:46:07] and a river and no tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We're no longer on the basis of responsibility and obedience. We stand eternally in the presence of God on the basis of what Jesus has done. Thank God.