

## The Tree of Life

Revelation 2:1-7: Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4. Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

### 1) Analysis

- a) [***Finish this epistle today***]
- b) The concluding promise: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”
  - i) Ephesian Angel had much to overcome:
    - (1) Work is hard—carries a temptation to falter
    - (2) His own sin—cooling of heart
      - (a) Must repent
    - (3) Facing the Nicolaitans

ii) Threat should he fail—removal of the candlestick

iii) Promise to the overcome: grant to eat of the tree of life...

(1) ...in the midst of the Paradise of God

iv) Threat and promise intensely motivating

(1) In order to understand the promise, we must answer a question...

2) Excursus: What is the Tree of Life?

a) [*Comprehensive Bible training*]

b) Genesis 2 and 3

i) Gen. 2:7-9: And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. 8.

And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

(1) Creation of man

(2) Placement in the garden

(3) Provision of *food* trees

(a) Particular mention of two

(b) Note the verbal similarity with Rev. 2:7, “tree of life *in the midst* of the garden”

(i) Perfect agreement with the Septuagint: “in the midst of the paradise”

ii) Gen. 2:15-17: And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

(1) Covenant between God and man—*Covenant of Works*

(a) Children's definition of cov.: agreement between two or more persons

(b) Analysis:

(i) Parties

(ii) Mutual obligations

(iii) Sanctions

(2) Question: Is there a *covenant* here?

(a) But before taking on this question...

(3) Question: What is present already by nature, apart from covenant?

(a) Parties: God and man

(b) Obligation: Man under a *natural* obligation to obey the Creator

(i) Covenant not necessary for that

(ii) Man completely dependent upon God

1. His being

2. His activities

(iii) Man is completely indebted to God for both

1. God has a claim upon the fruit of activity

(c) Sanction: perhaps Adam could derive it from God's justice

(4) Return to question: Is there a *covenant* here?

(a) Parties: God and Adam (and all represented)

(b) Obligations:

(i) Man obligated to obey (with all that he is, all of the time)

1. Already true by nature

2. Sum of obedience tested in the Tree of the Knowledge, etc.

a. Love of God—submission to His gov't

i. Man put in dominion

ii. But God still Lord—positive command limiting man's  
gov't

iii. Will man submit himself?

iv. Easy test—all other trees granted

b. Love of man—all his descendants

3. Symbolic nature of the tree: proof

a. Eating of its fruit...

i. ...does not communicate knowledge *ex opera operato*

b. Adam already upright

i. Created in the image of God: knowledge, righteousness,  
holiness (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24; Eccl. 7:29)

ii. Adam had a *theoretical* knowledge of G and E...

iii. ...and contrary absurd...

- iv. ...command coming with no *moral* force
- c. *Experimental* knowledge of G and E
  - i. Enlarge his experience of good...
  - ii. ...or, Introduce the experience of evil
  - iii. Confirmed *by the event*
- 4. Important lesson about tree of life: symbolic/sacramental
  - a. Not magic fruit communicating life
  - b. Partaking of fruit symbolic of life
- 5. Sum: man obligated to obey
  - a. Obligation summed up in the tree of K of G and E

(ii) Question: Does God have any obligation? Come back to this

(c) Sanction: death

(i) Comprehensive death

(d) God's covenanted obligation: consummate life and blessedness

*(i) If we can prove this, we prove covenantal structure*

- 1. Not owed by nature
- 2. Adam's obedience required...
  - a. ...but God under no obligation to reward
- 3. God not bound by nature to reward...
  - a. ...but binds Himself by covenant
  - b. WCF 7:1: The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience

unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

- i. Everything present by nature...
- ii. ...except the promise of reward...
- iii. ...which is certainly not required by nature/justice

(ii) Did God covenant to grant life?

1. Interesting that tree of life mention in conjunction...
  - a. ...with the tree of the K of G and E in 2:9...
  - b. ...but not in 2:15-17
  - c. Question: Why mention it, if it is of no significance?
2. Arguments demonstrating its significance here
  - a. #1: the mention in verse 9
    - i. Tree of life is in the garden
    - ii. Tree of life has symbolic significance...
    - iii. ...its presence highly suggestive
  - b. #2: barred from access to the tree of life: 3:22-24: And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23. Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of

Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

- i. Adam was aware of the tree
  - ii. Adam aware of its significance...
  - iii. ...inasmuch as he would try to partake
  - iv. Significance of the tree: eternal life, immortality...
  - v. ... "live forever"
  - vi. Not fitting for the one condemned to death...
  - vii. ...to partake of the sacrament of life
  - viii. Promise of life to the obedient
- c. #3: declaration under Mosaic covenant
- i. Rom. 10:1-5: Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. 5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,

That the man which doeth those things shall live by them  
*(Lev. 18:5; promise of life to the obedient)*.

- ii. If promise of life is published to fallen man upon obedience...
- iii. ...who actually cannot improve the promise...
- iv. ...but only reap the curse...
- v. ...and driven to Christ by the curse...
- vi. ...how much more so Adam...
- vii. ...who could improve it

(e) Sum:

(i) Covenant of works/life

(ii) Tree of life: symbolic sacrament of eternal life

c) Application

i) Promise of restoration to tree of life (symbol of eternal life) to the overcomer

(1) Lost by Adam

ii) Facing trials

(1) Our warfare is not in vain

(2) What was lost by Adam...

(a) ...has been regained by Christ

(3) The end: eternal life with Christ in Paradise