

Message Five

The Tree of Life

Scripture Reading: Gen. 2:7-9; Rev. 2:4-5, 7; 22:2, 14; 2 Cor. 4:5; 5:14-15

I. Christ as life is the reality of the tree of life, which is the center of the universe; life is the goal of God's creation (Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7-9) and the goal of God's complete salvation (John 19:34; Rom. 5:10; Rev. 22:1-2, 14, 19):

- A. In the Bible the tree of life always signifies Christ as the embodiment of all the riches of God for our food; God's placing man in front of the tree of life indicates that God wanted man to receive Him as man's life by eating Him organically and by assimilating Him metabolically, that God might become the very constituent of man's being—Col. 2:9; Gen. 2:9; John 1:4; 10:10; 14:6; 15:1; 6:35, 57, 63; 1 Cor. 15:45b.
- B. In Revelation 2:7 the tree of life signifies the crucified (implied in the tree as a piece of wood—1 Pet. 2:24) and resurrected (implied in the life of God—John 11:25) Christ, who today is in the church, the consummation of which is the New Jerusalem, in which the crucified and resurrected Christ will be the tree of life for the nourishment of all God's redeemed people for eternity (Rev. 22:2, 14).

II. We need to see the obstacles that God's life encounters in man:

- A. The first problem that God's life encounters in us is that we do not realize the darkness of our human concepts:
 - 1. We need to see that the only thing that matters in the Christian life is how we take care of the living Christ in us—Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 1:19-21; Eph. 4:13; 2 Cor. 3:18.
 - 2. Being a Christian means not taking anything other than Christ as our aim; many people have difficulty in their spiritual life after they are saved because they do not know the pathway of life, and they do not take Christ as their life.
- B. The second problem that life encounters in us is hypocrisy—Matt. 6:2, 5; 7:5; 23:13-29:
 - 1. A person's spirituality is not determined by outward appearance but by how he takes care of the indwelling Christ.
 - 2. Our natural goodness is false spirituality and is actually a great hindrance to life; the expression of life involves the rejection of our natural disposition and preference, and simply allowing Christ to operate in us and break us.
 - 3. If we always do things according to our disposition and natural being, the outcome will always be hypocrisy.
- C. The third problem that life encounters in us is rebellion:
 - 1. Christ operates and moves in us in order to make us clear about His will and requirements for us and about His leading and dealing with us.
 - 2. However, if we do not obey but go against the feeling within, not accepting His leading or paying the price, this unwillingness and opposition are rebellion.
 - 3. The sin that we commit the most frequently and most severely is not outward and visible; rather, it is the sin of disobeying the sense of Christ in us; Christ is living in us, and He is constantly giving us an inward sense of life—Rom. 8:6; 1 John 2:27.
- D. The fourth problem that life encounters in us is our natural capability:
 - 1. Many brothers and sisters truly love the Lord, are zealous for the Lord, and are very godly; nevertheless, their greatest problem is the strength and greatness of their capabilities and abilities; consequently, Christ has no ground or way in them.
 - 2. We may be capable and talented, but we do not consider these things as sin or filthiness; instead of despising our natural capabilities, we treasure them; if they remain unbroken in us, they will become a problem to Christ's life.

- E. There is one solution to all these obstacles in us—we must pass through the cross and let the cross break us; if we want Christ’s life to be unhindered in us, we must experience the breaking of the cross and allow these obstacles to be dealt with and removed—Matt. 16:24-25.

III. In order for us to eat Christ as the tree of life, we must give Him the first place in all things, which is to love Him with the first love, being constrained by His love to regard and take Him as everything in our life—Rev. 2:4-5; Col. 1:18b; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Mark 12:30; Psa. 73:25-26; 80:17-19:

- A. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to eat Him as the tree of life; eating Christ as the tree of life, that is, enjoying Christ as our life supply, should be the primary matter in the church life—Rev. 2:7; John 6:57, 63.
- B. The content of the church life depends on the enjoyment of Christ; the more we enjoy Him, the richer the content will be; but to eat Christ as the tree of life, to enjoy Him as our life supply, requires us to love Him with the first love—Rev. 2:4-5.
- C. On the one hand, strictly speaking, to eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God in Revelation 2:7 refers to the particular enjoyment of Christ as our life supply in the New Jerusalem in the coming millennial kingdom.
- D. On the other hand, we are enjoying the crucified and resurrected Christ as the tree of life, the food supply in our spirit, as a foretaste today in the church; every local church is a paradise of God, where Christ is the tree of life for us to enjoy.
- E. When we give the Lord the first place in everything and maintain our eating of the crucified and resurrected Christ as the tree of life throughout the day, the church, no matter what its condition may be, becomes paradise to us; thus, our feeling and our attitude toward the church depend upon our situation.
- F. “If we do not enjoy Christ as the tree of life in the church life today, surely we will not participate in the tree of life in the kingdom age. According to my experience, today the church in Anaheim is a paradise to me”—*The Collected Works of Witness Lee, 1994–1997*, vol. 5, “The Vital Groups,” p. 157.
- G. The intrinsic reason for the desolation and degradation of the church is that Christ is not exalted by God’s people; they do not give Him the preeminence, the first place, in everything; whenever God’s people exalt Christ, giving Him the preeminence in every aspect of their living, there is restoration and revival—Psa. 80:17-19.
- H. Christ must have the first place not only in our living but also in all our messages; “we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake”—2 Cor. 4:5; cf. Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2; Psa. 80:1, 17-19; 110:1-7:
1. In our work we should continually draw people back to the center and let them see that “Christ is Lord”; we must give the Lord Jesus His place on the throne—cf. S. S. 1:1-4; Isa. 6:1, 3; John 12:41.
 2. In order to give such a message, we ourselves must be broken by God and allow Christ to have the first place in us; our message is just our person—2 Cor. 4:10-13; John 12:24-26; cf. Luke 12:49-50.
 3. The Lord’s “well done” surpasses all the praises of the world; the smiling face of heaven surpasses all the angry faces of the earth; the comfort of heaven surpasses all the tears of the earth—Matt. 25:21, 23; Jer. 1:7-9, 18-19; Dan. 4:26.
- I. In order to give Christ the first place in all things, we must have an affectionate love for Him as our King; then our tongue will be the pen of a ready writer, ready to write our love for Him and our praise to Him with our experience and enjoyment of Him according to all that He is—Psa. 45:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:3, 6.

- J. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to take Him as our centrality—our holding center—and our universality—our everything; we need to take Him as the center, content, and circumference of our personal universe—Col. 1:17b, 18b.
- K. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to behold His beauty and to ask for the counsel of Jehovah in every detail of our Christian life and work—Psa. 27:4; Josh. 9:14; Phil. 4:6-7.
- L. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to be dominated, governed, directed, led, and moved by our mingled spirit, caring for the rest in our spirit by being His captives and by praying, “Lord, conquer me. Make me Your captive. Never let me win. Defeat me all the time”—2 Cor. 2:13-14.
- M. To love the Lord with the first love, to give Him the first place in all things, is to have a clear sky like awesome crystal with God’s sapphire throne above it; this means that there is nothing between us and the Lord and that we are filled with the heavenly atmosphere, condition, and situation of His ruling presence—taking Him as our King and allowing Him to rule and reign within us—Ezek. 1:22, 26.
- N. Only Christ the King reigning on the earth with the overcomers as His helpers in the kingship can solve the problems of today’s world (Isa. 42:1-4); Christ’s name will be remembered in all generations and praised by the nations through His overcoming and co-reigning saints (Psa. 45:16-17; Rev. 2:26).
- O. The overcomers, who are typified by Zion, are the beachhead through which the Lord will return to possess the whole earth—Psa. 48:2; Dan. 2:34-35.
- P. “Lift up your heads, O gates; / And be lifted up, O long enduring doors; / And the King of glory will come in. / Who is the King of glory? / Jehovah strong and mighty! / Jehovah mighty in battle!... / Who is this King of glory? / Jehovah of hosts— / He is the King of glory!”—Psa. 24:7-8, 10:
1. The gates are of the cities of the nations; the doors are of the houses of the people, and Christ is the Desire of all the nations (Hag. 2:7); all the nations, in a general way, are expecting Christ to come, but Christ will not come quickly according to our human concept (2 Pet. 3:8-9); thus, we need to lift up our heads and await and expect His coming with long endurance.
 2. The King of glory is Jehovah of hosts (that is, of armies), the consummated Triune God embodied in the victorious and overcoming Christ (Luke 21:27; Matt. 25:31); Jehovah is Jesus, and Jesus is the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Triune God, who is strong in fighting and is victorious (1:21; Rev. 5:5).
 3. He is the One who will come back in resurrection with His overcomers to possess the entire earth as His kingdom—Dan. 2:34-35; 7:13-14; Joel 3:11; Rev. 11:15; 19:13-14.
- Q. Christ as the One on the throne of God has the appearance of sardius (its red color signifying redemption) and jasper (its dark green color signifying life in its richness); thus, when we submit ourselves to Christ’s headship and are under His throne, we are the beneficiaries of all that He is in His judicial redemption and His organic salvation so that we may bear the same appearance of the God of glory in His rich life—4:3; 21:10-11a; Rom. 5:10.
- R. Those who wash their robes in the redeeming blood of Christ have the right to enjoy the tree of life as their eternal portion in the holy city, the Paradise of God, in eternity—Rev. 22:14; 2:7.