

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

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 36

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS

(continued)

"To him that overcometh will I give to *eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*" (Rev. 2:7).

Of all the dreams the heart of man has ever entertained, none has been more desirable, precious, and worthy of attainment, regardless of the cost, than the dream of immortality. Let's be honest; if there was an elixir that was invented guaranteed to give immortality to our physical bodies, we would all buy it and drink it! Kings and emperors who have conquered the world would gladly have exchanged all they had gained for immortality. But all the wealth of all the nations that lay prostrate before their victorious swords, even combined with all the riches amassed in their vast treasure houses, could not buy them so much as one single second's extension of time.

There *is* a tree of Life! This tree of life is in the *paradise of God*! Our English word "paradise" comes to us from ancient Persian by way of the Greek language. Paradise is the transliteration of the Greek word *paradeisos* which, in turn transliterates the old Persian term *paridazea*. This *paridazea* denoted an enclosed park, beautifully landscaped with floral and fruit trees planted along a spring-fed stream, belonging to the king and his nobles. It is described in some of the ancient historical writings which tell of the idyllic beauty of the orchards of the king's forests, grazed by sheep, and guarded at the entrance by two soldiers whose task it was to see that intruders and spoilers were kept out. Only those who were friends of the monarch were given the pleasant privilege of passing peacefully through its gates to enjoy the sweet waters of the stream and the delicious fruit of the trees.

It is generally supposed by most professed Christians that the words "paradise" and "heaven" are essentially synonymous and that in the Bible they are both used to describe a literal park-like place on a far-away planet which is the "eternal home" of the "saved." There is an old tradition, moreover, one of the many "doctrines of the Pharisees" taught by the Rabbis in the time of Christ, that there was a realm of the world of the dead, called *Sheol* in Hebrew and *Hades* in Greek, located deep in the heart of the earth. Out of the discussions and theories of the Rabbis, there grew a popular belief that Sheol or Hades was divided into two compartments, the lower and the upper, Gehenna comprising the lower, the region of the damned with its flames and torments; the upper being Paradise, the intermediate place of bliss and rest into which, at the time of death, the spirits of the righteous entered to await the resurrection day at "the end of the world."

The earnest prayer within my heart is that God's apprehended ones may turn away from all such carnal-minded traditions, myths, folklore, and fables! Jesus warned His disciples, "Take heed and beware of the leaven (teaching) of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees...then understood they how He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the **doctrine** of the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (Mat. 16:6,12). Paul also admonished, "Not giving heed to *Jewish fables*, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Tit. 1:14). There is only ONE PARADISE to be found in all the pages of God's blessed Book, and that is the glorious Paradise in Eden from which Adam was banished — now opened once more to every son of Adam's race by the redemption of Jesus Christ. And the Lord's promise to His elect is: "To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the *tree of life*, which is in the midst of the *paradise of God*." This paradise is not, nor has it ever been, in the heart of the earth! Such ideas are mere inventions of carnal-minded men!

All the important revelations of the book of Revelation are taught by symbols. The symbols used in the Revelation, and, in fact, throughout the entire Bible, are things and circumstances concerning which we, as humans, have at least some knowledge; otherwise the symbolic language of the Bible would have no meaning to us. There are things we know about the sun, the moon, the stars, about sheep and goats, wheat and tares, rivers and trees, storms and earthquakes. So when the Bible uses these as *symbols*, certain *spiritual* lessons are conveyed to us.

In chapters two and three of the Revelation, seven wonderful promises are made to the Lord's called out people, the overcomers of this present age. All these promises are illustrated by things with which we have at least some acquaintance. Thus we read, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a *crown of life*" (Rev. 2:10). No child of God possessing a spiritual mind supposes that he will be wearing a literal crown in some far-off heaven someday! A crown signifies rulership, and the overcomers are destined to share in the highest form of life in the universe, the divine and incorruptible life of God. To receive a "crown of life" means to rule and reign in the power and nature of the *divine life*!

And then we find, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the *hidden manna*, and I will give him a *white stone*, and in the stone a *new name* written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). The expression "hidden manna" takes us back to the tabernacle in the wilderness. In the Most Holy Place of this tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant. In this was placed a golden bowl of manna. While the manna collected daily by the Israelites corrupted, bred worms, and stank, that which they placed in this golden bowl was preserved by the power of divine life. This, then, reveals the wonderful truth of *incorruptibility*— the inward nature or state of being *beyond the possibility* of being debased, perverted, adulterated, polluted, warped, contaminated or prostituted. No spiritually enlightened person supposes that the overcomers will one day go to heaven and eat literal manna from a literal golden bowl! But all who are apprehended to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus are given to eat and eat and eat of the incorruptible bread of HIS INCORRUPTIBLE LIFE until all the death of the carnal mind and the corruption of the flesh in them has been swallowed up of His life and the day comes when in the totality of being, spirit, soul, and body, there is nothing that can be corrupted! How much more glorious this is!

As we overcome the doctrines of men and the traditions of men, we are then able to begin to eat of the hidden manna. The tree of life gives us life within, our spirit quickened by His Spirit, but the hidden manna brings us to an *incorruptible state of being*. Religious systems, dead doctrines, static creeds, empty rituals, powerless ceremonies, vain traditions, and soulish worship have all ministered death to the Lord's people and kept them in a corruptible condition. Only as we have turned from all these have we even really begun to eat of the hidden manna of truth and reality. There is a place of attainment in life where we no longer experience the ups and downs of success followed by defeat in our walk. As we are being processed, tried, and tested, we are subject to "falls" along the way. We catch a vision of high and holy realms in God and, in moments of exceptional anointing, enter for a little while into those blessed experiences, only to have the anointing lift and the vision fade. We walk in victory over the flesh and the carnal mind in certain problem areas of our lives, only to succumb to some other weakness in an unguarded moment. Ah, there is a promise, bright and blessed, that in due time the processing will be completed, the testing will be finished, the secret inworkings consummated, the victory secured once and for all, and those who overcome will live by the hidden manna of His unchangeable and incorruptible life. And there is also a place of attainment in life where we don't have to die, leave our body, and have our corpse buried in a grave. Oh, my beloved! There is the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God! There is hidden manna in the transforming presence of God in the Holiest of all!

The promise is also given, "To him that overcometh will I make a *pillar* in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12). No overcomer will be transformed into a literal pillar in a literal temple in heaven. This is a symbol of a sure and fixed position in which God's elect become not only victorious in their own lives, but put on the strength and might necessary to become a *support* to the whole economy of God! Pillars are for support. They hold up the whole structure. After experiencing His overcoming power in our own lives we then become a buttress to bear up, hold up, and maintain the kingdom purpose of God through His holy temple which will be the meeting place between God and men in the ages yet to come!

Beloved, so should we understand the blessed promise given of eating of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. This does not mean that the overcoming sons of God will live in an earthly paradise, any more than the other promises mean that they will wear literal crowns, eat manna from a golden bowl, or be turned into marble columns in a temple in the sky. This paradise is something far more than a piece of real estate in the Middle East! No such place has ever been found, neither the cherubim with the flaming sword to keep men out. The paradise of God is not a physical place located on this or any other planet. It is a *realm in the heavens of God's Spirit*! It is a *state of being*! It is a higher existence for man than this cursed state we find ourselves in by physical birth. It is the realm and the state of being man was in when first he was brought forth from the creative hand of God and placed in splendor here upon earth. It is man in the garden of Eden, man living in the presence of God, man eating of the incorruptible life of God, man living above sin, sickness, fear, limitation, pain and death, man as master and lord over all things! Blessed realities one and all! In one sense man *was* the Garden. And yet, man was *in* the Garden. It was a garden within a garden, man both in a state of being and in an environment — the two corresponding. It is in THIS PARADISE that the overcomer eats of the tree of Life!

The following testimony by Sharon Dibenedetto is a remarkable witness to this beautiful truth. She writes, "On July 28th, 2002, I was in bed and was talking to the Lord. I had been praying that He would teach me how I could walk in the Paradisical realm and how I could walk in a higher realm *all the time*. The, I fell asleep. Around 3 a.m. I woke up and began to pray that the Lord would release me from all the bondages of the flesh so that I could walk with Him.

"The first thing that happened was that I saw this beautiful golden light. It was so powerful! I knew I couldn't look directly into the light because it was so bright, but I could surely *feel* it. I cannot describe in words this glorious light! Then the light came very close to me and I heard a voice say, '**Come up higher.**' I felt as though my spirit was being lifted up in the light and now I could see Jesus. The light had carried me over to where Jesus was standing. I felt so overwhelmed at seeing my Lord that, at first, I couldn't even talk to Him. I just stood there for some time. I know I was praising and singing and could also hear and see a heavenly host, singing in perfect harmony, '*Holy, holy, most holy, Hosannah.*'

"The light was becoming brighter and brighter. Then I saw Jesus standing on the bank of this beautiful river. It was crystal clear, clean and pure. I exclaimed, 'Lord, I have never seen a river like this on earth!' He answered, '**There is none like this on earth. It is the same substance that is within my people. Put thy hand in the water.**' I did so and was amazed to see that this river flowed in four directions. After dipping my hand in the river, I could feel something very different. Jesus asked me, '**What does it feel like?**' I said, 'The water feels like pure energy and power.' I had never felt anything like this before! Then the Lord said, '**Go deeper into the water.**' As I could feel the power going from my feet up my body, He said, '**Now, go down and cover thy head and come back up again.**' As I came up out of the water I felt a sudden change and asked the Lord, 'What is happening?' Jesus answered, '**You are being transformed. Whatever touches this water shall be made alive. This is your new body.**' Then the golden light became brighter. '**This is your celestial body. You are in the paradisical realm and I will teach you to walk here.**'

"I cried, 'O Lord, I want more! I want all of my full inheritance.' He spoke to me again, '**One step at a time, daughter. As you grow higher I will bring you higher — one step at a time.**' I was praising the Lord while I was still standing in the river. I felt wave after wave of energy going through every fiber of my being. Then I felt the Holy Spirit upon me and I knew I was being baptized with fire. The light was all around me and Jesus said, '**Walk in this light. All must come to me and each will experience what you just had. You are full of light and soon it will shine forth for the whole world to see. And I will teach you how to speak life to the world! I am training my sons and my daughters in this day, as well as my warriors.**'

"The light became brighter. At this time I awoke. I could still feel this golden light all around me. Even though I was awake, I was hardly aware of anything but this glorious light. It was about 4 a.m. I asked the Lord, 'Was I really in Paradise with you?' He said, '**Yes.**' I went back to sleep. Again this golden light came closer and closer to me. I was so full of joy that I was just praising the Lord. I heard a voice say, '**You can now walk in Paradise at will. Practise walking here day and night without ceasing, and you will walk victoriously.**' I asked the Lord, 'May I ask you to teach me how to walk in this Garden?' Standing in the light He spoke to me again, '**For you to walk in my Garden you must go deep within.**'

“I said, ‘Lord, *how?*’ As the light shone brighter, I found myself at the edge of a beautiful Garden. In this Garden was the River of Life and the Tree of Life. Jesus said, ‘**Take off thy shoes and follow me. You are now walking on holy ground.**’ I cried, ‘O Lord, I never want to leave this Garden!’ He reassured me, ‘**You can be here in this Garden and work from this realm while your feet are still upon the earth. There is much work to be done and there are so few willing to do my work.**’ I could feel myself going in and out of the Garden many times. Then this voice spoke to me, ‘**Now you can go from this realm and into the other realm at will. You can be in Paradise and still have your feet walking and doing my will upon the earth.**’

“Again, I was awake with tears of joy running down my face. I felt *so* different! I know I’ll never be the same again. By now it was 4:15 a.m. and the sun was just beginning to rise. I knew I had been with the Lord and felt so blessed. I knew that all I had to do was to **look within and walk**. My spirit was in Paradise while my flesh was still here on earth. I also had heard the Lord call out the names: Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Isaiah, and Joseph — like a roll-call. I was there too and felt like they all were a part of me” — end quote.

We must remember that this is not merely a tale that leaves us more or less uninvolved. Adam is *mankind*. Adam is *humanity*. Adam is *you* and *me* and every other man who has ever lived or shall live. What happened to him in that long ago, happened to us. As he was when banished from paradise, so we are as we come into this world. His origin is our origin. His beginning is our beginning. His experience is our experience. His destiny is our destiny. May the gracious spirit of wisdom and revelation from God give enlightenment to the spiritual eyes of all who read these lines that all may see and know of a truth that what was happening to Adam in the Garden speaks of **spiritual realities** even in the beginning of history, before history, beyond history, and yet in history; it is *we ourselves* of whom the Garden speaks; it is *we ourselves* who are intended, addressed, confronted, accused, expelled, redeemed, and restored. It is *our* history, truly our own! It is the beginning, destiny, guilt, redemption, restoration and perfection of every son of God! What happened to Adam there is what is happening to us here — but in reverse!

The tree of life — we are here at once taken back to the garden in Eden. There we behold the tree of life in the midst of that first paradise. Man, because of his sin, was banished from that lovely paradise and shut away from the blessings accruing from that tree. We have not seen or heard of it since the third chapter of the Bible. But here in the book of Revelation is the promise of it! In the last chapter we see mankind actually participating in this blessed reality. But it is remarkable that after reading of the tree of life in the third of the 1,189 chapters of the Bible we do not hear of it again until here. It is mentioned three times in Genesis and three times in the Revelation. So you see the Bible ends as it began — with a perfect, Edenic condition and state of being. The book of Revelation is the only book that could, logically, close the canon of the Bible. All the tangled threads of prophecy, prose, poetry, history, type, shadow, and promise find their fulfillment and consummation in the last book of the Bible — “The Revelation.”

Let us *understand* the paradise of God with the tree of life in its midst! The tree of life is mentioned very simply in the opening chapters of Genesis. It was IN THE MIDDLE — that is all that is said about it! The life that comes forth from God is in the middle. This means that God, the source of life, is in the middle. In the middle of the realm in which Adam lived and the world over which he was given dominion was not Adam himself, but the wonderful tree of God’s very own

eternal and incorruptible life. Adam's life was to come from the middle which was not Adam himself, but God in him. This means, simply, that with **God as his center** man would have Life! Man was created with the capacity of *living in the Spirit* or of *walking after the flesh*. He was free to eat of the tree of life, or to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. One of man's inherent potentials was to know God in the Spirit as the center and source of his life!

But — like the tree of life — the other tree *also* STANDS IN THE MIDDLE! In the middle. Death! Within! In man's very nature. One of man's inherent potentials was to know Self as the center and source of his life. But Self would not bring life, it would mean death. Man could make the world, the outer physical realm, his bodily senses and appetites, his center. Death dwelt in that center! How do we know that sin is "in the middle" just as life is "in the middle"? Jesus understood it! He explained it! "There is *nothing* from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which *come out of him*, those are they that defile the man. For *from within, out of the heart* of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evils *come from within*, and defile the man" (Mk. 7:15,21-23). These inspired words carry us right back to the garden of Eden! There were two trees in the middle. Life and death were **in the middle!** Two trees in the midst of the garden of man's experience and being. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be **carnally minded is death**; but to be **spiritually minded is life...**" (Rom. 8:5-6). Two minds — in the middle!

In the two trees of life and death in man's middle the Holy Spirit points out man's LIMIT. In these two trees is contained the BOUNDARY set by God upon man from the beginning. This LIMIT declared **how low** a man could fall and **how high** a man could rise. Man could fall as low as the tree of death, the carnal mind, the realm of the flesh could carry him — unto the whole dreadful realm of darkness and death in which is contained every sorrow, tragedy, pain, trouble, sickness, hatred, strife, heartache, ignorance, fear, and torment known to man; or, he could rise as high as the spiritual mind, the realm of the spirit could carry him — unto the eternal and incorruptible life of God in which is contained all the joy, peace, righteousness, love, faith, wisdom, glory, and power of GOD HIMSELF!

What fathomless bounds are contained in this LIMIT! Man, by walking in the Spirit, can rise as high as God in the realm of His life, or, by walking in the flesh can sink as low as the devil in the world of darkness and death. What a LIMIT! And man was destined to fall as low as he could fall and rise as high as he could rise. The totality of man's experience is to be found within this limit established by God for man. All that both death and life are would ultimately be experienced, known, and demonstrated by man. This is his limit. This is his territory. This is his destiny. Both realities are **in the middle!** Within man. One or the other is every man's center, the sphere of his existence. But mark it well — *both* cannot be the center of any man's life! He who eats of the tree of life will find that the death realm has no more dominion over him. And he who eats of the tree of death will discover that he becomes alienated from the tree of life. Thus, both trees, both realities are **in the center** of man's life, but both cannot **be the center** of his life! "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). "This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

The tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God was truly “in the world” but not “of the world.” The life of this tree was right within man, the life of God in his spirit, and man’s spirit was not of this world, not formed of the dust of the ground, but breathed into his nostrils by the Father of spirits. “God breathed into his nostrils the *spirit* (Heb.) of life.” The glorious life of Christ on earth is the essence and reality of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. This tree of life within man had absolutely nothing to do with the realm of earthiness of man’s soul and body, for it was heaven’s own divine life breathed into man. In the tree of life God invited man to find Him as the source and center of life.

As George Hawtin once pointed out, by the tree of life man would be full of light, abounding in heavenly wisdom and knowledge, fearful in power and dominion, ethereal as a spirit and shining in the image of God. The fruit of this wonderful tree would indeed make man radiant with the resplendent glory of God as was Jesus, the second man and the last Adam, at the transfiguration, whose face shone as the sun and his raiment was as the light. In this tree of life the effulgent perfumes of the heavenly realm would be fragrance and life to man’s nostrils. He would taste spiritual realities and touch heavenly things. The wisdom and power of God Himself would be wide open to him and he would walk in the presence and glory of celestial realms. The gates of *that realm* would never be shut by day or by night. Man would need to eat of no other tree nor drink of any of the waters of earth. Man would have “meat to eat” that no other creature in heaven or earth knew of and “water to drink” that none other had ever tasted. The heavens would be opened over his head and he would walk in the glory of the presence of God the Almighty.

This was the glory of the tree of life in Eden! And what was that glorious tree? “*In the beginning* was **the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...in HIM WAS LIFE; and THE LIFE was the light of men” (Jn. 1:1,4). This life-giving tree, the **living word of God**, even Christ, was from the beginning the life and the light of man. When Eden’s gates clanged shut behind our banished foreparents, man was shut up in the realm of the flesh and that blessed tree of divine life was never again seen by the wondering eyes of mortal men until the day in which Jesus stood in the earth and declared, “**I am the LIVING BREAD** which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is *my flesh*, which I will give for the LIFE OF THE WORLD” (Jn. 6:51). The reason Jesus came forth as the visible expression (His flesh) of the Father, the tree of life re-planted, was that there might be a focusing, a manifestation which would become a **meeting place** for us to come to know God, and become one with Him, as it was in the beginning. It is in Christ Jesus that God and creation meet, come together, and are made one! Christ who *is our life* has come and been planted in the garden of the kingdom of heaven on earth, that all may come and eat and drink and have Life!

There is an even deeper mystery to this tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They appear as two trees; yet in reality there was only one tree, with two sides, two aspects, or two dimensions. It is stated so simply in these words, “The tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). There was one tree, and yet two trees. The tree of life is Christ — the **living word of God**. The profound truth is that in Eden there were **two words** — a living word, and a word of death! Christ is the living word! But there is *another word*, and this word is *also from God*, but it is a word of death. Who planted the tree of death in Eden? Why, bless your heart, God did! “And out of the ground made *the Lord*

God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight...the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, *and* the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9).

Paul makes these two trees, these two words, very plain when he writes, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of *the letter*, but of *the spirit*: for the *letter killeth*, but the *spirit giveth life*. But if the *ministration of death*, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance...how shall not the *ministration of the spirit* be rather glorious? For if the ministration of *condemnation* be glory, much more doth the *ministration of righteousness* exceed in glory” (II Cor. 3:6-9). Here we have two ministrations, two testaments, two **words** — the one is “the letter that killeth” and the other is “the spirit that quickeneth.” But both of these words are the word of the Lord! It was GOD who gave the *law* to Moses, and it was GOD who gave us the *living word* in Christ! There are two words, and yet they are but **two sides of the same word** — **the WORD OF GOD!**

I firmly believe that the Bible is the word of God; however, when we know it only as *the letter*, it kills. Laws, rules, regulations, doctrines, creeds, outward ordinances, forms, ceremonies, facts, literalistic interpretations of man, natural concepts, carnal understanding of the written word — there is no life in any of these! There is only death. The dead letter of the word produces *dead sermons, dead churches, dead meetings*, and *spiritually dead believers*. The “letter of the word” is *still the word of God!* And yet there’s no life. Moses preached the law, the law was from God, the law was the *ministration of death written and engraven in stones*, and everybody that received the law *died*. It was the ministration of *condemnation*. It had the power to condemn men, to judge them, to punish them, to tell them what they ought to do — but it possessed no power to give them life! It was a word of God, but it was the letter of the word. It was a word without life. It was a word void of reality. It was merely a type, a shadow, a symbol of reality.

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL IS THE LAW! By the law, Paul says, we know sin. The knowledge of good and evil is by the letter of the word! All the preachers who are out there telling men what great sinners they are, and how they need to *stop sinning*, are feeding their hearers from the tree of the *knowledge of good and evil*. This letter of the word killeth, but it’s still a word of the Lord! It’s the word of the Lord on a lower level, stripped of its life and power. But the other side of this tree, this word, is the **Word of Life!** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*in Him was life*, and the life was the light of men” (Jn. 1:1,4). **THE TREE OF LIFE IS CHRIST, THE LIVING WORD!** There are two words, yet they are the very *same word* on different levels. There are two trees, yet they are but *two sides of the same tree!* Adam’s sin and fall consisted in his choosing to live a *carnal life* on the *earthy plane*, subject to the restraint and regulation of the external law of a carnal commandment, instead of living the *spiritual life* on the *heavenly plane* by the Living Word of God!

No words could be more solemn or arresting than the statement of Jesus wherein He said, “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, **dwelleth in me**...as the Father hath sent me, and **I live by the Father**: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (Jn. 6:56-57). As the natural man must have sustenance from his physical environment to live, so the spiritual man must have sustenance from his spiritual environment to live. After he has gotten life you must give him

food. What food shall you give him? Shall you feed him with knowledge, or with beauty, or with prosperity, or with blessings, or with religious exercises, or with creeds, or with commandments, or with gifts, or with power, or with programs, or with experiences? No! There is a rarer luxury than all these — so rare, in fact, that few have ever more than tasted it; so rich, that they who have will never live on any other fare again. It is this: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*” (Mat. 4:4).

Nothing can satisfy the appetite of a son of God but this — he hungers for the bread that cometh down from heaven! Nothing else will fill him. Nothing else will satisfy him. Everyone knows the world is hungry. But the hungry world is starving. They are eating of the wrong tree! The world has many meats and many drinks, but there is no nourishment in them. They are but sugar-water. It has pleasures, and amusements, and excitement, and works; but there is no nutrition there for the immortal craving of the *spirit*. It has worldly society, and worldly books, and worldly events, and worldly knowledge, and worldly lusts. But these things merely intoxicate!

The church world is hungry, too. Starving, in fact. Oh, it has many meats and many drinks, but there is no nourishment for the spirit in them. It has impressive rituals, and stirring programs, and moving ceremonies, and splendid ordinances, and pomp, and show, and candles, and incense, and temples, and cathedrals, and priests, and preachers, and creeds, and organization, and out-reaches, and abundance of activity. Its people get all involved “in the work,” and committed “to the work,” and are faithful in “giving to the work.” They do and do but in all this something other than CHRIST has become the **center**. The center becomes the movement, or the message, or the organization, or the program, or the ministry, or the experience, or the method, or the personality, or some other thing. But I declare to you that all these religious things and activities merely intoxicate and millions of Christians are drunk with them and in their inebriated hilarity think they know the living Christ.

There is no **substance** in them! The divine ingredients of the celestial atmosphere of the kingdom of heaven are missing. Sons of God cannot live on that depleted food. So our spirit turns its eye from them all with unutterable loathing. “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God which is proceeding from the mouth of God.” No possibility of suffering malnutrition or starving on this fare! It is eternal food for the sons of God to live upon. And notice — sons live on every word that *is proceeding* out of the mouth of God. That is how the Greek expresses it.

Is it not dreadfully true that the vast majority of Christians are living on words that *have proceeded* out of the mouth of God? They live on a by-gone revelation, a word sent to another people at another time, a historical creed, that which God spoke through St. Augustine, through Luther, through Calvin, through Spurgeon, through Whitfield, through Finney, through the Pentecostal pioneers, or through the Latter Rain prophets! It is stale bread, spoiled meat, stagnant water, and a dead word. It is a word that God *spoke*, but not the word the Spirit *is speaking*. It is a word that in some ancient day *proceeded* out of the mouth of God, but not the word that now *is proceeding* out of His mouth. It is yesterday’s manna, and it has bred worms and stinks. It is truth, but not *present truth*. But the word which *is proceeding* out of the mouth of God is **His Living Word!** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *is saying* unto the churches.” The living bread of the living Christ in His living revelation to His elect sons in *this day* is meat that the world

knows not of, meat that endures unto the life of the ages. In spring-time it is not sown, and in summer drought it cannot fail. In harvest it is not reaped, yet the storehouse is ever full. Oh, what possibilities of life it opens up!

How can we eat of the tree of Life that is in the midst of the paradise of God? Listen! I can tell you because I know! I know! There are many things I do not know. The things that I do know would make a very small library, I am prepared to admit, but a very precious one to me. The things that I do not know — well, there aren't enough books in the world to contain them. But I know how to get to that Tree, I know how to get the fruit of that tree which is life abundant and everlasting, I know how to get the leaves of the tree, and I know how to get the healing that comes from the leaves of the tree, which are for the healing of the nations. That is something worth knowing. Now, I *know*! I do not say that I *think*. I am not guessing. It is by coming to the living Christ and eating of Christ in the Spirit!

The words came to me some time ago — the startling and remarkable words Jesus spoke when He stood in the earth and said, “I am the bread that is come down from heaven, that if a man eat of it he shall never die. I am the living bread. I am the bread that is come down. I am the bread that is become personified in a body of flesh upon this earth. I am the bread that is from heaven.” Immediately the question presented itself to me — Why was Jesus the bread that *came from heaven*? Why did He specify *from heaven*? Why did He not simply say, “I am the bread of life, I am the bread that God has provided on earth,” or some other characterization? At once I was reminded of the manna that fell in the wilderness — the manna that *came from heaven*, the typical bread that God sent *from heaven* to feed the children of Israel. Why was it bread *from heaven*? Why did not God simply create it there on the ground?

Immediately the Spirit began to articulate within me the wonder of this thing! It came to me so clearly and powerfully as an illustration. Come with me for a moment and let us think of a number of astronauts who are soaring away from earth to a strange planet in some distant galaxy. Along their journey through the universe a problem develops with their spaceship. Eventually they are forced to land on an unknown planet in another galaxy. They make a successful landing, but are stranded there on the planet Timur. They don't know this world into which they have descended. As they step from their ship and begin exploration of the planet, it is discovered to have a very hostile environment. In fact, *everything* there is hostile to them! All the vegetation on Timur is toxic to the human body. They cannot eat or drink anything. They cannot breathe its atmosphere, nor can they partake of anything there, for everything in that environment is *death* to them.

The supplies they have with them from earth are finite, and will soon be depleted. So they contact earth, and immediately a rescue expedition is dispatched. As they are staring death in the face the second spacecraft from earth arrives and lands on Timur. The second group of astronauts exit from their craft and say to those who are stranded there, “We are the men who have come *from earth*. We have the bread that is *from earth*! We have that bread which is not adverse to you. We have that which is compatible with who you are, and what you are. We have the food that is biologically adapted to your earthly, human constitution. We have come from *earth*, we have the bread that is *your bread*, it is from *your world*, it is from the place of *your origin*, it is that which *pertains to you*, and if you eat this bread **you will live!** This bread will sustain you, energize

you, nourish you, and give you expression of who you are. We are the bread that is come *from earth!*”

Now you see, the bread from earth was the bread from **home!** Once we understand our origin, where our “home” is in the world of *spirit*, and how we became trapped in this realm of *flesh*, which is made *death* to us, we will grasp the eternal significance of why Jesus *came down from heaven* into our darkness, into our ignorance, into our limitation, into our sin, into our false identity, into our distorted perceptions. He came down to this world of our natural life, of our carnal minds, of our physical and mortal sense of being; and He says to us as He steps, as it were, from His celestial spacecraft, “I am the bread that is *come down from heaven!* If a man eats of *this bread*, he will live and not die! I am the bread that is come from the realm that *you came from!* I am from your true world, the world of the spirit, the world of the Father, the world of divinity, the world of God, the world of eternity. I am from that world and I have come to speak a word into you. The words that I speak to you are *spirit* and they are *life*. The word that I speak is spiritually adapted to your heavenly, spiritual constitution. It is compatible with who you are, and what you are. I am the bread that is come from the heavens of God’s Spirit! When you eat of this bread, of this word, you will live and not die!”

Christ Himself is the tree of Life! It is not only to taste of its fruit, but to eat and be filled with all the fruit that grows upon this divine tree; it is to feed upon Him continually until we are filled with all the fullness of Christ, and Christ in our spirit becomes the only reality. It is to turn from the flesh and the carnal mind and feed upon Christ until we are strong in Him and in the power of His might. Oh, wonderful Tree that dwelt in the bosom of the Father from eternity! Oh, marvelous Tree planted of old in Eden’s fragrant garden! Oh, precious Tree planted among men as the Son of the Father, planted by the power of the eternal Spirit, and whose fruit is ours as we partake of it through faith! Oh, eternal Tree planted in the garden of our hearts, by which He brings many sons to glory and brings them home to the Father’s house! How sweet is the fruit to our taste, how satisfying and life-giving every morsel of which we partake! And we can feed to the full for the fruit is ever growing in the middle of our garden, ever revealed to us, always perfect, and never passes away.

How we rejoice that we have proven there is fruit upon Him; and by feeding upon Him and Him alone, we too bear fruit to His glory. He is our Storehouse, He is the only fruitful Tree, and we can get nothing outside of Him, but we can get everything in Him. The more we feed upon Him, the more we abide in Him. The more He feeds and nourishes us, the more He becomes manifested in our lives to the glory of God. There is none other like Him among the sons of men, neither among the angels in heaven!

The closer we come to the kingdom, the more do those destined sons of God know what it is to be lifted beyond the pale of natural things to behold the glory of the realm where God lives in the Spirit. The mixture is even now being removed from the hearts of a firstfruit company and many are being enabled to SEE HIM in a new and living way! It is beholding Him that changes us from glory to glory, from corruption to incorruption. The new spirit and the new heart are THE TREE OF LIFE, for they are naught but Christ living within. It is the glory of His presence and the power of His life that transforms the ragged garments of our mortality to raiment which is white and glistering.

Fantastic changes lie ahead for all who separate themselves unto God. Tremendous changes will transpire as soul and body come under the dominion of Christ in our spirit, for mortality shall be swallowed up of life. This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Oh glorious victory! The sons of God shall arise into that blessed realm beyond time, and space, and matter, and the carnal mind, and realize and walk in the fullness of God's glory forevermore. Oh glorious and wonderful realm! It is the realm beyond the veil where we may enter and tread the highways and fields of our heavenly citizenship. It is the realm of the Son of God! It is the inheritance of the sons of God! It is the REALM OF THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE PARADISE OF GOD! The sons of God are the "tree of life" kind of men, and these are they who shall become healing for the nations, a government of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of knowledge and fear of the Lord. From the life of those who enter that realm shall flow forth such glory and blessing that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea and nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain!

In the New Jerusalem city of God there is the florescent river of life. Along this river grows the tree of life. The tree of life in Eden, on the one hand, signifies the *partaking* of divine life by man, the dispensing of God into man. The river of life, on the other hand, signifies the *outflowing* of life from man who has received life, the pouring forth of life out of the kingdom of heaven unto the barrenness of the earth realm. All life was to be found in Eden, just as it is in the New Jerusalem — the kingdom of heaven on earth. Eden was constituted debtor to the whole earth to send forth the life-giving streams. To the overcomer is given to enter into the paradise of God and partake of the tree of life; but the river of life out of Eden is the profound expression of God's purpose to not only enter into the lives of His elect, transforming them into the tree of life kind of people, but to then cause them to become a RIVER OF LIFE COMPANY, a people out of whom the life would flow! "Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." Ah, beloved, God is bringing forth His elect who live by the tree of life but shall then be a river of life, for the spirit of life within them is an ever-flowing wellspring of life and glory! Wherever God flows out by the Spirit, there He is found as life and eternal reality!

What a picture of the life of the Holy City do we find in these words — "In the midst of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, in each month yielding its fruit!" The street 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 street 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. Each month — twelve kinds of fruit! Twelve is the number of divine government. It means that His life within us is the *power* in which we rule and reign in the kingdom! As it is written, "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall **reign in life** by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Oh, the mystery of it!

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, but the fruit of the tree is "to him that overcometh." *Victory* is the condition on which depends the fulfillment of that promise! "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 of the tree away, and Tantalus was left desolate — hungry as before. In a similar way we sometimes feel that the power of the incorruptible life has been withdrawn from our sight. But, the vision is not for everyone. It is not to all that the tree of life offers its fruit, but only to the overcomer. Only a specific class of people are able to put forth claims on the life symbolized by the fruit of that tree. Don’t give up, saints of God! Press on, for great is your reward!

God is moving in our hearts and preparing us for a great change in which we shall move completely out of the tripartite nature of spirit, soul, and body to live only and forever in THE REALM OF THE SPIRIT. There, beyond limitation and imperfection, we shall see Him as He is and know Him even as we are known of Him. Our vision of heavenly things has been so distorted due to our looking through physical and soulical eyes. You have sometimes seen a window made of fluted glass, and you know that if you look at the street through this window everything will be distorted. The passers-by and the automobiles will appear to be warped and distorted in absurd and ugly ways. Nevertheless, you know that these things are quite alright in themselves, and that the distortion arises from your seeing them wrongly.

The pure eyes of our spirit has had to filter through the fluted shell of our carnal minds and the marvelous things of the realm of God’s Spirit have been distorted into myriads of carnal doctrines, traditions, natural interpretations, childish imaginations, and religious applications of all kinds. This distorted vision of heavenly things is really what we know as “the church.” It is a seeing, but a false seeing. It is a knowing, but a false knowing. The sons of God are arising to pass through the veil, to abide in the Holiest of all, to see all things as they really are in the blazing light of God’s glory. Our Leader and Forerunner opened up this path to God, in which He first walked Himself, and then draws us to follow Him. The veil is the flesh! The veil that has separated man from God is the flesh! Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and dwelt with us here outside the veil. Then within Himself He **rent the veil**! Through the rent veil of His flesh, His will, His senses, His earthly faculties, His human consciousness, yielded up to God in death, He entered beyond the veil into the Holiest. Through the rent veil He rose to the throne of God! And this is the way He has dedicated for us! He is our way. Let us arise and follow HIM!

Elect of the Lord! Seek to know Christ in the power of His resurrection. Let this be the crown of your life in sonship to God. Do not seek immortality for your body first, or only, apart from the knowledge of Christ in all His other aspects. But seek it truly as that unto which they are meant to lead you. Nothing will fit you for immortality but faithfulness in every step of putting on the MIND OF CHRIST. Seek Him as your wisdom and the wisdom will lead you into the mysteries of complete redemption. Seek Him as your righteousness and dwell clothed with Him in that inner sanctuary of the Father’s favor and presence. Seek Him as your sanctification and experience His power to make you holy. Seek Him as your redemption, and live, even now, in the light of that glory. Seek Him as your joy until no earthly sorrow has any more power in you. Seek Him as your peace until you love every enemy and pray for all who spitefully use you and persecute you, and you are disturbed, upset, and frustrated by nothing and no one. And as you seek to experience within yourself to the full, the power of His resurrection life, your heart will be enlarged to see the position man has been destined to occupy in the universe, as having all things

made subject to him, and you shall for your part be fitted to live worthy of that high and heavenly calling!