Man and the Two Trees

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LIVING STREAM MINISTRY

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God's eternal plan, His economy, is revealed to us throughout the sixty-six books of the Scriptures. At the very beginning of the Scriptures, God is seen creating man as the center of the whole creation for the purpose of expressing Himself. In His economy God intended that man should express Himself as the center of His whole universe.

MAN NEUTRAL BETWEEN THE TWO TREES

At the beginning of the Word of God, we are shown two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2). In order to understand God's plan in Scripture, we must be thoroughly clear about these two trees and what they represent. After God created man, He placed him before these two trees, and man's whole life and walk was pictured as a matter of feasting upon one tree or the other. God instructed man to be very careful about partaking of these two trees. If man dealt with them in a proper way, he would have life; otherwise, he would have death. It was a matter of life or death. How man would live and walk after his creation depended entirely upon how he dealt with these two trees. God instructed man clearly: if he partook of the second tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would have death; but if he partook of the first tree, the tree of life, he would have life.

What do these two trees signify? According to the revelation of the whole Scripture, the tree of life signifies God Himself in Christ as our life. The tree of life stands as a symbol of the life of God in Christ. The Old and New Testament present the Lord Jesus many times as either a "tree" or a "branch" of a tree. The Lord has the special title of "Branch" in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and

Zechariah. Many trees are also in Scripture to signify that Christ is our portion and our enjoyment. For instance, the Lord Jesus, in the second chapter of the Song of Solomon, is likened to an apple tree: "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow [the apple tree] with great delight." We can sit under Him as the shade—under His covering and shadow—and enjoy all His riches, the fruit of the tree. Another example of Christ as a tree is the vine-tree in John 15: "I am the vine, you are the branches..."

What is the significance of the second tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? This tree represents nothing else than Satan, the source of death. The second tree brings death, because it is the very source of death. The first tree is the source of life, and the second tree is the source of death. In the whole universe only God Himself is the source of life, and only Satan is the source of death. A verse showing that God Himself is the very source of life is Psalm 36:9: "For with thee is the fountain of life"; and a verse showing that Satan is the source of death is Hebrews 2:14: "him who has the might of death." The power of death is in the hand of Satan. Thus, from the very beginning of time, these two trees represent two sources—one, the source of life, and the other, the source of death.

In the beginning, there were three parties—God, man, and Satan. Man in innocence, created by God, was neutral to life and death. Since it was possible for man to have either life or death, he was standing on neutral ground. But God was standing on the ground of life, and Satan on the ground of death. Man was created neutral to God and Satan. It was God's intention for this neutral, innocent man to take God into himself, that God and man, man and God, would be mingled together as one. Man would then contain God as his life and express God as everything. Created man, as the center of the universe, would then fulfill the purpose of fully expressing God. Another possibility, however, was that man would be induced to take the second tree, the source of death. As a consequence, man would then be mingled with the second tree. Oh, that our eyes might be opened to see that in the whole universe it is not a matter of ethics and of doing good, but a matter of either receiving God as life or Satan as death. We must be delivered from the ethical and moral understanding. It is not a matter of doing good or evil, but of receiving God as life or Satan as death. It is important that we clearly see these three parties! God, standing on one side, is the source of life, as represented by the tree of life; Satan, standing on the other side, is the source of death, as represented

by the tree of knowledge; and Adam, standing in the middle, is neutral with two receiving hands. He can either take God at his right hand or Satan at his left.

MAN CORRUPTED BY THE TREE OF DEATH

But, as we know, Adam was induced to take the second source, the tree of knowledge, into himself. This was not a matter of merely doing something wrong. No! It was much more serious than transgressing God's law and regulation. The significance of Adam taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge was that he received Satan into himself. Adam did not take the branch of that tree, he took the fruit of the tree. The fruit contains the reproducing power of life. For example, when the fruit of a peach tree is planted in the earth, soon another little peach tree will sprout up. Adam was the "earth." When he took the fruit of the tree of knowledge into himself as the earth, he received Satan, who then grew in him. Oh, this is not a small matter! Not many Christians have realized the fall of Adam in such a way. The fruit of Satan was sown in Adam as a seed in the soil; thus, Satan grew in Adam and became a part of him.

Now we need to discover into what part of Adam Satan was taken. Satan not only came into Adam when he fell in the garden, but he still remains in the human race. Where is he located in the human race? We are a tripartite being: spirit, soul, and body. Look at the picture. When Adam took the fruit of the tree, into what part of his being did it come? Of course, it came into his body, because he ate it. Although this is logical and reasonable, we need scriptural ground to confirm that something of Satan is in our body. Read Romans 7:23: "But I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." The word "another," in the King James Version, is not a good translation. It should be "a different law"—i.e., a law of a different category. You may have three laws of the same category, e.g., the first, and "another" two. But the Greek here means a law of a contrasting category. "But I see a different law in my members [the members are the parts of the body], warring against the law of my mind, and making me a captive in the law of sin which is in my members," that is, the parts of the body.

What is the law of sin? Paul said, "...no longer I...but sin that dwells in me" (Rom. 7:20), and, "...no longer I...but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Here we have the contrast between "no longer I...but sin," and "no longer I...but

Christ." Christ is the embodiment of God, but sin is the embodiment of Satan. The word "sin" in Romans 7 should be capitalized, for it is personified. It is like a person, for Sin can dwell in us and force us to do things against our will (Rom. 7:17, 20). It is even stronger than us. Romans 6:14 says: "For sin shall not have dominion over you." It is better to translate it: "For Sin shall not have the lordship over you," or, "for Sin shall not be lord over you." Sin can be lord over us; hence, Sin must be the evil one, Satan. Through the fall, Satan came into man as Sin, and is ruling, damaging, corrupting and mastering him. In what part? Satan is in the members of man's body.

Man's body as originally created by God was something very good, but it has now become the flesh. The body was pure, since it was created good, but when the body was corrupted by Satan, it became flesh. Paul said, "...in me, that is in my flesh, nothing good dwells" (Rom. 7:18). By the fall, Satan came to dwell in our body, causing our body to become flesh—i.e., a damaged, ruined body.

The book of Romans uses two terms, "the body of sin" (6:6) and "the body of this death" (7:24). The body is called "the body of sin" because Sin is in the body. The body simply became the residence of Sin, which is the embodiment of Satan. What, then, is "the body of this death"? The source and power of death is Satan. Sin is the embodiment of Satan and death is the issue or effect of Satan. This corrupted, transmuted body is called the "body of sin," and the "body of this death," because this body became the very residence of Satan. Both sin and death are related to Satan. "The body of sin" means that the body is sinful, corrupted and enslaved by Sin; "the body of this death" means that the body is weakened and full of death. The body is something satanic and devilish, because Satan dwells in this body. All the lusts are in this corrupted body which is called the flesh. The Word reveals that the lust is "the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). The flesh is the corrupted body full of lusts, indwelt by Satan. Now you see that the fall of man was not just a matter of man committing something against God, but of man receiving Satan into his body. Satan, from the time of the fall, dwells in man. This is what happened when man partook of the second tree.

Since Satan and man became one through the second tree, Satan is no longer outside of man, but in man. The prince of the air, Satan himself, is working in the disobedient people (Eph. 2:2). Satan was joyful, boasting that he had succeeded in taking over man. But God, who was still outside of man,

seemed to say: "I will also become incarnated. If Satan wrought himself into man, then let Me enter man and put man upon Myself." Do you see the complicated situation? God put on this man—Satan being in him—through incarnation. When God became incarnated as a man, the kind of man He put on was a man corrupted by Satan. Man, at the time of His incarnation, was no longer a pure man, but a man ruined, corrupted by Satan. Let us read Romans 8:3: "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin"—not "sinful flesh," as in the King James Version, but "the flesh of sin." When the Lord Jesus incarnated Himself in flesh, He was "in the likeness of the flesh of sin." There was no sin within Him, but there was "the likeness of the flesh of sin." Sin was within the corrupted man, but there was no sin within the Lord Jesus; there was only the likeness of the flesh of sin. The Old Testament illustrates this in the type of the brass serpent on the pole. That serpent, made of brass, was a type of Christ (John 3:14). When Christ was on the cross, He was a man in "the likeness" of the serpent. The serpent is Satan, the devil, the enemy of God, but when Christ was incarnated as a man, He had even the likeness of the sinful flesh, which is the likeness of Satan. It is rather difficult for anyone to understand this easily. It is really quite complicated. Let me repeat. Man was made pure, but one day Satan came into man to possess him. Satan was joyful, thinking he had succeeded in taking over man. Then God put upon Himself the man with Satan within him.

MAN RELEASED FROM THE TREE OF DEATH

After God became a man and put that man with Satan within him upon Himself, He brought that man to the cross. Satan thought he had succeeded, but he only gave the Lord an easy way to put him to death. For example, if a mouse is loose in a house, it is rather difficult for the owner to catch it. But if he sets a trap with a little bait, the mouse will then be tempted to catch the bait. The mouse at first will think he has succeeded in getting the bait, but will not realize that he has been trapped until it is too late. Then, since he is trapped, it is so easy for the owner of the house to come and put him to death. Similarly, Adam became a trap to catch Satan. Satan was the "naughty" mouse running loose in the universe. When Satan came to possess man, he thought he was so successful, but did not realize that he fell into a trap. Satan thought man was his home, but did not know that man was a trap. He thought man was his food, but man was only the bait. By taking man, he was caught and imprisoned in man. Subsequently, the Lord came and put man upon Himself to bring him to the cross, that "through death He might destroy him who has

the might of death" (Heb. 2:14). Man was the trap, and the devil was trapped within him. Through incarnation God put the corrupted man upon Himself and brought this man to death on the cross. At the same time, Satan within this fallen man was put to death also. Thus, it is by this death on the cross that Christ destroyed the devil. This is why Satan is afraid of the cross, and this is why the Lord told us to take up the cross. The cross is the only weapon for us to overcome Satan.

Where is Satan? Satan is in me—in my flesh. But where is my flesh now? Look at Galatians 5:24: "...crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts." My flesh, with Satan in it, is on the cross; thus, Satan is put to death on the cross. Praise the Lord! But is this the end? No, burial follows death. But even the grave is not the end! After the burial, there was the resurrection. Israel went into the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his army, but they were resurrected from the death-water without Pharaoh and his army. Pharaoh and his army were buried in the death-water. Christ brought man with Satan into death and the grave and brought man without Satan out of death and the grave. He left Satan buried in the grave. Now this resurrected man is one with Christ.

MAN RESURRECTED BY THE TREE OF LIFE

Let me ask you, When was it that you were regenerated? In 1958? That's too late! You were regenerated by the resurrection of Christ (1 Pet. 1:3). When Christ was resurrected, we too, those who believe in Him, were also resurrected. This can be proven by Ephesians 2:5-6: God has "...made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up together." At the time of Christ's resurrection, we also were resurrected with Him. Oh, we must be impressed! Man was ruined by Satan when Satan came into him. But God, by incarnation, put this man with Satan within him upon Himself, brought this man to the cross, put this man including Satan to death, and buried this man in the grave. He then brought man into resurrection, and through this resurrection man with God became one. Now God is in man's spirit.

We have to be joyful—but not overly joyful. Why? Because we must always bear the cross daily. Whenever our flesh is away from the cross, we will find that Satan is alive again. We have to say "Hallelujah," because the Lord Jesus is in our spirit; but we must also be on the alert, for we are still in the flesh. When the flesh gets off the cross, the devil will be alive again. This is why we must live in the spirit all the time and apply the cross to the flesh. Though

Satan by the fall got into man, he was dealt with by the Lord, and now by the resurrection the Lord is within us. From now on our responsibility and business is not to try to do anything good. Good will only deceive and blind us. We must simply follow the Lord in the spirit and apply the cross to the flesh. This will spontaneously put Satan to death. Learn to practice this one thing with these two aspects. Follow the Lord in the spirit, and put the flesh, including Satan, to death on the cross.

Then what will be the ultimate issue? Simply this—on the one hand, there will be the New Jerusalem, and on the other, the Lake of Fire. The New Jerusalem is the Triune God mingled together with the resurrected man, and the Lake of Fire is Satan's ultimate destruction. The Lake of Fire is the place for Satan. All which is not related to the Triune God and the resurrected man will be put into the Lake of Fire with Satan. There will be only one tree in the New Jerusalem—the tree of life. The other tree will be in the Lake of Fire. This is the ultimate conclusion of the whole Scripture. The Scripture began with three parties, but the ultimate consummation will be the New Jerusalem with only the first tree at the center of the city and the resurrected man as the expression of the Triune God. The second tree will be cast into the Lake of Fire. All things and all people related to the second tree will have the same destiny as Satan—in that Lake of Fire.

In conclusion, the meaning of this picture to us today is that the normal Christian life does not consist in doing good. The normal Christian life is simply taking Christ and living by Christ and putting the flesh with Satan to death all the time. It is to follow Christ in our spirit and to put our flesh to death. Then the day will come when the Triune God and the resurrected man will be one expression—the New Jerusalem with the tree of life as its center.