

Eden, The Garden, And The Two Trees (Part Three)

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Given 28-Sep-21; Sermon #FT07-08-AM

In the previous sermon, we began to see that when God began His spiritual creation in earnest, He called Abraham out of Babylon and guided him into what became known as the Promised Land. It was there in the land of Moriah that Abraham, in a figure, sacrificed Isaac. The land of Moriah included Mount Moriah, the Mount of Olives, and Mount Zion, all of which later then became a part of the city of Jerusalem. Roughly 700 years later Mount Moriah became the site on which the Temple was erected. And then, about another 800 years or so later, following His resurrection, it was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus left, and it is to the Mount of Olives He will return. You can begin to see all this action is taking place in a small area of this earth.

We discovered that the Temple and the Tabernacle had three altars, not two, and the third was named the *Miphkad* altar, and it was located on the southern peak of the Mount of Olives. It is also called the altar of the Red Heifer. Never forget that the Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, and the Temple were all considered to be the house of God on earth, and each was patterned after God's dwelling place in heaven. It was called Bethel—house of God.

Now what items were located in the Holy of Holies—God's personal room? I think we all know it contained the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat atop it, but what other significant objects did it contain, and why are they significant?

You will find a listing of these items that were in the Holy of Holies in Hebrews 9:1-5, but we are going to begin with Aaron's rod that budded. Why was it there? In addition to the Ark and the Mercy Seat, Aaron's rod that budded was also there.

As an overall comment regarding this sermon, I want you to be aware that this sermon contains a great deal of symbolism. Biblical symbolism is very important to our understanding, and it is essential really that we understand as much about it as we possibly can, because it is very helpful to opening things up to us so that we grasp the full significance of things.

Numbers 16:1-3 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: and they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men

of renown: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

This was a two-pronged assault. One was against Moses directly, and the other was against Aaron directly. The people who were constituting the opposition actually got themselves together and they formed this conspiracy to overthrow Moses and Aaron. Korah was a Levite, and his complaint was against Moses directly. The other men, who were all sons of Reuben, had in their mind that they should be leaders because Reuben was the eldest son of Jacob. They felt they were unfairly dealt with, and that Moses did not have a right to govern the body. God took care of both of them, but our concentration is going to be on the one that was made by Korah.

Numbers 16:31-34 And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground [split] asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.

They were dramatically taken care of, and I am sure it was as frightening as a thing could be.

Now we are going to go to Numbers 17. God was not done yet with what this revolution had stirred up.

Numbers 17:1-5 And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write you every man's name upon his rod. And you shall write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their

fathers. And you shall lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

Numbers 17:8-10 And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and you shall quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

That is the last time Aaron had that rod in his possession because God claimed it. What God did here was confirm before all the Israelites that Aaron and his descendants were chosen of Him and were to represent Him before the people in religious matters. Paul's writing in Hebrews 9 confirms that the almond rod was still there.

Hebrews 9:3-4 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;

The Hebrew word rod, underlying the English translation, has several applications appearing fairly often in Scripture. It is also translated as "staff" when walking is indicated, as "lance" when fighting, as "scepter" when ruling is indicated, or "rod" as in chastening or giving direction. This particular rod of Aaron's has quite a history. We are going to turn to Exodus 7 just to give a couple of scriptures.

Exodus 7:9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Show a miracle for you: then you shall say unto Aaron, Take your rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.

Exodus 7:19 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take your rod, and stretch out your hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

I will not go any further, but you can keep on going in that scenario there, and whenever plagues came upon Egypt, Aaron's rod was right in the midst of it, and precipitated it. It was like the signal that set off the display of God's power.

I think you can begin to get the symbolism that is involved here. That particular almond rod represented the authority and power of God. That is why it was put in the Ark in the Holy of Holies. It represented, it symbolized, God's authority and power presented before all Israel's eyes. Just tuck into your mind that it was an almond rod.

We are now going to go to Exodus 25. Now they are making some of the furniture for the Tabernacle.

Exodus 25:31-34 And you shall make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knobs, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knob and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knob and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlesticks shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knobs and their flowers.

Exodus 25:40 And look that you make them after their pattern, which was showed you in the mount.

Remember, the pattern came from heaven. This is the fabled lamp stand, the Menorah; however, it was a great deal more decorative than just a mere candelabra. It was constructed not of multiple parts, but of one single solid unit, with seven bowls featuring the design of an almond tree in full bloom.

The surface symbolism is probably this: that the almond was the earliest bloomer of the fruit trees in the Jerusalem area, and thus was a symbol of new life each spring. However, the symbolism goes much deeper and far more significant than that.

A man by the name of Leon Yardin, who had no connection to the church of God, did a great deal of research and authored a book titled, *The Tree of Light*. Yardin's research led him to conclude that the 7-bowled Menorah with its almond-tree design symbolized the Tree of Life. Thus we have two very significant pieces with almond-tree association *within* the Tabernacle and Temple. First, the lamp stand, with its almond-tree motif, giving light in the Holy Place (the first room), and second, Aaron's almond-tree rod that miraculously budded and produced fruit overnight, within the Ark of the Covenant itself, representing of course God's authority and power.

At this point I am going to make what might at first appear to you to be a digression into something that has no connection whatever with what we have just been looking at, but I assure you it has a very penetrating application. It will connect together with a number of things previously gone into.

We are turning away from the Holy of Holies and what was in it, and we are going to go to the New Testament.

John 19:17 And he [Jesus] bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

Mark 15:21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

On my recent trip to the Pomona, California group, I was convinced by a sermonette given by John Bulharowski that there is no way that Jesus could have carried His entire cross unless He was Superman. John did this in the way an engineer would by illustrating how much the cross would weigh. These verses provide biblical proof that Jesus could not bear it alone, especially considering His physical condition following the scourging. Unless that upright piece was of very flimsy material, even a healthy man could not have borne it but for a very short distance; thus, at best, only the cross-piece was bearable.

We are going to turn to Hebrews 13. This series of verses is very important in regard to this sermon.

Hebrews 13:10-13 We [Christians] have an altar, whereof they [meaning the Jews] have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle [the Levites and priests]. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Paul is referring to Jesus' crucifixion taking place *outside* the camp. Now what is meant by "outside the camp" and "outside the gate"? Those two terms are describing the same general area of Jerusalem.

I think it necessary at this point to describe the term "camp of Israel" which you will see any number of times in the Old Testament. The term arises from its Old Testament usage from the fact that as the Israelites proceeded on their journey to the Promised Land, every time they stopped and encamped for a period of time, they were arranged in a very strict, consistently-followed order.

They were arranged in a loose circle with the Tabernacle at its center. That circle had a radius of 2,000 cubits. Two-thousand cubits equals about 3,000 feet, or 1,000 yards, if you care to use that measurement. Therefore the diameter all the way across this circle was about 2,000 yards. This is not the entire encampment, only what is referred to as "the camp" or "the camp of Israel."

(If you have your little map, you will see on the one side in the drawing regarding the Temple itself, there is a dot right in the middle of the Holy Place. You are probably wondering what that dot meant. That is where the 2,000 feet was measured from—halfway between the Menorah and the Showbread.)

You might wonder where the 2,000 cubits come from. It is mentioned for the very first time in Joshua 3. As they were crossing the Jordan River to enter into the land, the Ark of the Covenant had to go out into the river, which was flooding at the time. As they stepped into the water, the water began to recede, so like at the Red Sea, they went across the Jordan on dry land, but the Ark went before them.

Joshua 3:3-4 And they commanded the people, saying, When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that you may know the way by which you must go: for you have not passed this way heretofore.

That is the first mention of the two thousand cubits. From this came the Sabbath day's journey principle which has no authority in the Bible whatever, but it is there, and it became a tradition.

Jewish rabbis report that when camped, no Israelite (except for a very small number of exceptions) was to be closer than 1,000 yards to the Ark and the Tabernacle. God's dwelling place was at the center of everything, but the ordinary Israelite could not draw near. Are you beginning to see something in your mind's eye?

The Levites, however, because they served the Tabernacle, camped immediately adjacent to it, but their three families camped in an arranged order: Kohathites on its south side; Gershonites on its west side; Meorites on its north side; and Moses, Aaron, and the priests on its east side—the side with the door. Each tribe also was arranged in specific location, but those assigned sites were, at the very least, 2,000 cubits away.

To the south of the Tabernacle were Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, with Reuben assigned as its leader, and the other two tribes flanking each side.

On the west were the three blood-brothers—Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin—all sons of Jacob with the same mother. They were at the back of the Tabernacle. Ephraim was assigned as the leader in the center position of those three.

To the north were Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, with Dan assigned as the leader in the center position, and the other two flanking Dan.

To the east, out in front of the door of the Tabernacle and behind Moses, Aaron, and the priests, were Judah (the scepter tribe) as the leader, flanked by Issachur and Zebulun.

Whenever Israel was on the move, Judah always was arranged first in order of the tribes. So there was one literal door to the Tabernacle, but no literal doors or gates to the camps. Each assembly had a standard, or an ensign, a flag, to mark their location. Those standards not only marked the location of the tribe, but also the outer perimeter of the imaginary circle—the 2,000 cubit-distance from the Tabernacle—God's dwelling place.

I went through this partly to show you Israel was not a confused mob dashing through the wilderness. That whole thing was conducted like a military operation. So the Hebrews 13:10-13 reference to the Tabernacle and the Temple then meant that Jesus' crucifixion took place beyond the Holy of Holies, beyond the Holy Place, and beyond the edge of the circle, because He had to be crucified outside the camp.

In reference to Eden and the Garden, the term "camp" would include the area to the east beyond the Garden entrance to just outside the eastern border of the land of Eden. Remember, God said to Cain about putting the offering at the altar, that it would have been outside the camp because of the sin that was involved.

What this leads to is this: the camp had its own dimensions. Jerusalem was a very small city by American standards. The boundaries of the camp of Israel went considerably beyond the stone walls of Jerusalem. Notice that Paul said there was an altar there on which sin offerings were burned and from which Christians have a right to eat that the Jews of his day did not have. Paul is referring to the general area in which the Miphkad altar was located. You might understand now that the Miphkad altar was outside that circle too.

Now back to John Bulharowski's sermonette, because this in turn opens the gate to another question regarding Christ's crucifixion: Where was Christ crucified, and on what was He nailed? The story is told to the public at large and tells the people that Christ was crucified on a cross, while some say it was on an upright stake. If either one of them is so, then why does the Bible say so many times that Jesus was nailed to a tree? Think about this.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a tree.

The word "tree" there is the Greek word, transliterated into English *xulon*; also transliterated into English *xylon*. The difference would be in the pronunciation, as "zoolon" or "zylon." It is #3586 in *Strong's Concordance*.

Let us go to the next scripture. Peter is speaking.

Acts 10:39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree. [Same word—*xulon*, *xylon*]

Acts 13:29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree.

Are they having a problem?

I Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.

Every time it has been the word *xylon*.

Let us go to Galatians 3 and get Paul in the act here.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree. [Same word again.]

Let us go to the Old Testament where the same word is not used. Instead of a Greek word, we have got a Hebrew word.

Deuteronomy 21:21-22 And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shall you put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear. And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and you hang him on a tree:

Now I ask you, since God is such a stickler for doing things after the pattern He has established, does it not seem like there is a possibility that Jesus was indeed nailed to a tree? I think there is a very distinct possibility.

The word *xylon* or *xulon* is capable of being translated from the Greek into English as "tree" or "wood," or even as "pole." As we go on looking at how *xylon* or *xulon* is used, I think that you will see that it is highly likely that the *King James Version* is correct in translating it as "tree."

Luke 23:28-31 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, fall on us; and to the hills, cover us. For if they do these

things in a **green tree** , what shall be done in the dry? (emphasis ours)

Jesus used the word *xylon*, and in this case He meant a *living* tree.

Revelation 2:7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the **tree** [*xylon*] of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

That word is used for the Tree of Life.

Revelation 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree [*xylon*] of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [*xylon*] were for the healing of the nations.

Surely the Tree of Life is a living tree. So *xylon* is translated ten times in the New Testament as "tree." In all ten times, without exception, it is either a living tree, the crucifixion, or the Tree of Life. There is no deviation from that. Other Greek words are also translated as "tree," but only *xylon* is used for the crucifixion and the Tree of Life.

Now concerning the Greek word *stauros*, which is certainly used in the Bible, it can be used to indicate an upright wooden spike or pole; however, it can also be applied to the timber that forms the cross-piece of a crucifixion.

The cross-piece of a Roman crucifixion was called the *patibulum*. They used the Latin language, and *patibulum* was their word for the cross-piece. The Greeks would have simply used *stauros*—their equivalent of the word "patibulum," meaning a pole or a cross-piece. Now get this. A *patibulum* typically weighed 100 pounds, so it is no wonder Jesus had problems carrying it, especially considering His scourged state.

Colossians 2:13-14 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him,

having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

Now who was nailed to the cross? Jesus was. When He became sin, then sin was also nailed to the cross. So here is the picture then that begins to emerge. It was that cross-piece that was first nailed to a tree somewhere outside the city, and then Jesus, who became sin in our stead, was nailed to it.

In order to clear up what seems to be a contradiction, is it not possible that rather than being nailed to an upright pole, a *living tree* was used in place of the pole, and then the cross piece nailed to the tree, and thus the tree served as the stake?

I will give you a little bit more later on from secular history, because secular Roman histories record that using a tree was the common Roman practice. They did not go around chopping down trees, digging a hole, and putting the post in the ground. They used the tree that was right there and put the cross-piece on it.

There is a peculiarity here that I do not know the answer to. In John 19 you will find there that the word *bodies* in that sentence is plural, but the word *cross* is singular.

John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Is John implying that all three—Jesus and the two bandits—were nailed to the same cross-piece, to the same tree? I do not know, but even a scholar as noted as Bullinger remarked on this, and he came to the conclusion that all three were nailed to one piece because he saw that "cross" is singular and that "bodies" is plural. If John, who wrote that, did not make any mistakes because God inspired him, well, I do not know. I do not know the answer to that.

There is a lot more here.

John 3:13-15 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Do you remember this wilderness story? It is in Numbers 21. I will rehearse it for you just a bit.

As usual, the Israelites were rebelling for one reason or another, and then following Israel's sin, God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and stick it on top of a pole. He sent all kinds of serpents throughout the camp of Israel, and when anybody was bit by one of those serpents he died. The serpents were venomous. However, because of that pole and the bronze serpent on top of it, and the belief system in those who were bitten, if they rushed and went and looked at the bronze serpent at the top of the pole, they were immediately healed, and the bite they received did not kill them.

Numbers 21:5-9 And the people spoke against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looks upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Jesus is mentioning this in these two verses in John 3.

I think we can then reach a conclusion. When Jesus was crucified on that tree, that tree became the symbol of the Tree of Life, even as that pole with the bronze serpent on top of it gave life, as it were, to those who, in faith, looked upon it. Why was the bronze serpent placed on the top of the pole in the wilderness? Because, when Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, He became the very embodiment of sin, just as Satan the serpent is continuously. When anyone looks upon Jesus' sacrificial act as being crucified "in faith," and with repentance, they are justified and have taken the first great and most important step toward eternal life.

Let us stop for just a second and consider: The 7-branched Menorah, formed according to the pattern of an almond tree, gave light in the Holy Place and symbolized the Tree of Life. In addition, Aaron's almond rod that budded was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, right in the Holy of Holies. Both of these symbolize salvation by grace, and new life—indeed, eternal life—by and through the Messiah and His sacrifice for sin. Is God showing us, in a symbolic way, that the *literal* Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden was an almond tree?

This is certainly in no way necessary for salvation, and is entirely a speculation. I do not think though that it is one that is just off the wall, because of God's insistence to Moses and David that they hold fast to the patterns.

Why pick out an almond tree? It has meaning. It was not a peach tree or an apple tree, like the story goes about them eating the apple. The apple does not even figure into this thing at all. I shall show you that too in a little bit. But the almond tree is significant. There is absolutely no doubt whatever there.

There is more than that in the Ark of the Covenant, and we are going to go back to the book of Exodus once again. To me, this one is very interesting, and you will see it right away.

Exodus 16:3-5 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for

you have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread [food] from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them [test them], whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

Exodus 16:15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.

Exodus 16:33-34 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations. As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

This miraculous food from heaven kept Israel alive and energized them physically their forty years in the wilderness, and it did not cease falling each morning until they came into the land. Its stop is recorded in Joshua 5:10-12. No significant occasion other than what we have just read caused God to order manna being put before the Testimony.

You will notice that the word "testimony" in verse 34 is capitalized, so it is something that is fairly significant. This word "testimony" means "something spoken of again and again." It is pointing to something of great importance within the Holy of Holies, but I am not going to tell you what it is until a little bit later when a further explanation will be more meaningful and it will fit better. Every Passover we go over this, and maybe you will appreciate its importance a little bit more the next time we do this.

John 6:30-35 They said therefore unto him, What sign show you then, that we may see, and believe you? What do thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my

Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall never hunger; and he that believes on me shall never thirst.

John 6:47-50 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on me has everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

One of the things that has always impressed me about the manna, and maybe some of you have thought of this as well, is that they were told to gather what their need would be for the day, and not to leave any of it till morning, or it would stink and have worms in it. They were then told to gather twice as much manna on the sixth day, as the seventh day would be the Sabbath of the Lord. They would have enough manna for two days (for the sixth day and for the seventh, Sabbath day), and it would not stink or have worms in it. They were told they were not to go out on the Sabbath to gather any manna because none would be there, because it was the Sabbath of the Lord.

Exodus 16 gives us the account of the manna incident.

Exodus 16:17-25 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating. And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD has said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which you will bake to day, and seethe that you will seethe; and that which remains over lay up

for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day you shall not find it in the field.

Aaron was told to put an omer of manna in a golden pot and to put it inside the Ark. He put it in the Ark and it never stank once for a thousand years. Was somebody watching over that? You had better believe somebody was watching over it that it did not turn into worms, because it represented Jesus and the life He could give to us. He never wears out. He never de-energizes. He is the bread we are to eat.

Manna strengthened the Israelites so that they could do things in God's behalf and get into the Promised Land. The living Jesus Christ is our High Priest, our Sustainer, and our Strength if we eat of Him. He requires that. He said, "You have to eat of Me." Of course we understand that He is the living Word of God. The Bible is the living Word of God in writing, and we are sustained spiritually by the spiritual food that is taken into us day by day, giving us spiritual strength. The fact that the golden pot of this miraculous food was set aside and placed within the Holy of Holies, signifies that Jesus Himself occupies a rightful position in the great throne room of God Almighty.

That makes three items in the Holy of Holies: the Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat, signifying the throne of God, thus His presence; the golden pot of manna, signifying Jesus Christ, our Savior and our High Priest, at His right hand; and then there is Aaron's almond rod that miraculously budded, signifying the Tree of Life, God's power and authority.

We are going to go to Deuteronomy 10. There is yet another thing there in the Ark.

Deuteronomy 10:3-5 And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in my hand. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spoke unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. And I

turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me.

You might notice that the tables of stone were placed inside the Ark, showing that God judges. Remember that the Ark contains the Mercy Seat, and that is from there where God judges. His law then is directly represented as there, near to Him. You might say He is sitting on it. You cannot get much closer than that, symbolically. In fact, because it is directly under Him, it is ready and waiting there for Him to judge at all times. However, it is important that you, at this moment, might be surprised at what these stone tables also signify.

What object in the midst of the Garden have we not yet mentioned? It is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Remember that Genesis 2:9 and Genesis 3:2 clearly show that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was in the midst of the Garden, and I speculated that perhaps it was side by side with the Tree of Life, so that God presented them with a very clear choice to make.

Since God symbolically sits on His law judging, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil figures significantly in *our* judgment. Now does the fact that the tablets of stone—the law—represent the forbidden tree somehow convey to you the concept that the law is somehow bad since the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil appears to have been bad? Does that mean that God's law was bad or evil?

I think the way the world's theology goes is that a person would be inclined to think that way. They tell you that you do not have to keep the law, that it is like something that is abhorrent to us. Was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil abhorrent to Adam and Eve?

I want you to think back on Genesis 1:31. It said that everything God had made was *very* good, and that included the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We can transfer that right to the law. Is the law evil? No. It is very good, even as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was very good. What was forbidden by God was that they not eat of it. The tree itself was inherently good, but to eat of its fruit would kill them. In fact, Eve added that

they were not even supposed to touch it, to get near enough to touch it. That was like playing with fire. She added that, which shows she understood the implications of the danger of the fruit of that tree.

Now, was it really the fruit of the tree that was bad? No, not at all. That fruit was okay. Did not Eve say that she looked at the tree, and she saw that the fruit was *good* ? It was the fact that they disobeyed that was bad. There was nothing really inherently bad about the fruit or the tree.

Let us go to Genesis 26. It says something there regarding our father Abraham.

Genesis 26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

So Abraham, the father of the faithful, who is the pattern for all of his spiritual children, obeyed God's command, and he is complimented for doing that.

Let us go back to the book of Romans. We are going to be bouncing about in the book of Romans for awhile.

Romans 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Paul affirms that there is nothing wrong with God's law. However, as a contrast, II Thessalonians 2:3-7 reports there that the anti-Christ—Christ's great foe at the time of the end—will bring lawlessness to its greatest depths just preceding Christ's return. If the law is to be viewed as symbolized by the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the Bible clearly states that both the law and the tree were good; indeed *very* good.

Now despite the tree being very good, both the Serpent and Adam and Eve were in agreement that God said they were forbidden to eat of it. So this establishes that the spiritual fruit of eating of the tree was inherently poisonous or evil. The fruit itself was okay physically, but it was the spiritual sin of breaking God's command that killed them.

Genesis 3:22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil:

I just want to report this to you that Satan's story—his sales tactic in getting them to sin—just skimmed along the edge of truth and lie, because indeed God agrees that what Satan told them came to pass. It would make them like God, just in a peculiar, bad way, really, in this sense, because they did not have the wherewithal to control it.

Genesis 3:22 . . . and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Because of what Adam and Eve did, they had come to know good and evil in a way that they never before had.

Let us think about the name of that tree—the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—and go back again to the book of Romans.

Romans 7:6-7 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, You shall not covet.

So here is Paul's testimony regarding the law, put into one phrase: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." And here Paul further states:

I Corinthians 15:56 . . . the strength of sin is the law.

In Paul's statement in Romans 7:7, in one very brief, simple sentence is shown that the very purpose of the law is intended to *reveal* sin. So Paul makes it clear that, except for the law, he would not have known good and evil. The tree is named the Knowledge of Good *and* Evil.

I do not know how the link between the symbol (the tree) and the reality (the law) could be made any clearer.

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that what things so ever the law says, it says to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Adam and Eve came to know sin by eating the forbidden fruit. Now where do you go to learn what is right and wrong from God's perspective? If it is not the law, then something is greatly amiss. God in no way withheld access to the Tree of Life from Adam and Eve. God's purpose for mankind is the same as it was at the beginning. That purpose is shown very clearly in the book of Deuteronomy. It comes right down to our day.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live: That you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey his voice, and that you may cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the LORD SWORE unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

This is the very crux of what God set before Adam and Eve in the Garden. The forbidden tree, representing the law, was never designed to produce eternal life. In like manner, despite what some so-called Christian organizations teach that Old Testament people were saved by the keeping of the law, no one ever has been. The new life we are given is for the purpose of walking in obedience to God's law in sharp contrast to what we did prior to our calling. How then should we look at God's law?

Psalms 19:7-8 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Remember what Paul said in Romans 7:12, that the law is good. It is holy.

Psalm 119:16 I will delight myself in your statutes: I will not forget your word.

Psalm 119:24 Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.

Psalm 119:47 And I will delight myself in your commandments, which I have loved.

Psalm 119 goes on and on and on, telling us what our attitude needs to be toward the law. Thus, the tree was good for food, and its food indeed was to be desired; but the eating of it was forbidden. So what went wrong? It is very simple. Adam and Eve did not believe what God said. There is nothing complicated about this, and because they did not believe they made the wrong choice, and through them the knowledge of sin was passed on to man, and so was death. They made their choice on the basis of the combination of the deception of Satan, that was appealing, and their appetite, rather than trusting God's Word.

What kind of tree was it? I think we have an inkling of an idea. Turn with me to Mark 11, and you will see, that if this speculation is correct, it was indeed a tree that was good for food. I will give you the answer in the first sentence in verse 13.

Mark 11:13-14 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it [as if the tree was talking to Him], No man eat fruit of you hereafter for ever.

Now He meant just that one tree, but **when** He did this was really significant. This happened just a few days before He was crucified, just before He was about to take on Him the sins of the world that began very possibly with the taking of a fig from a beautiful tree in the midst of the Garden.

So there are two possibilities there: the fig tree—the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the almond tree—the Tree of Life. Both of them are good to

eat. God does not forbid either one. They are good for food, so do not let that sway you in any way. I have a fig tree in my yard, and believe it or not, it is putting out its second round of fruit for this year. I am not going to curse it, but neither am I going to eat from it, because God says not to eat of it until it is a certain age; so I will not. I appreciate the gift though.

If Adam and Eve had based what they did on God's counsel, they would not have taken of that tree. Is it not interesting that they apparently used what was handy to cover themselves; to cover up their shame and embarrassment of doing something God said not to do. You cannot cover a sin with something that was not made to cover sin. It does not work.

Now what is the Testimony? I said I would give you the answer. The Testimony is the whole Holy of Holies. It includes the Mercy Seat. It includes the Ark upon which the Mercy Seat sits, and it includes all of those things contained within the Ark, and with it the knowledge that this room represented the house, the dwelling place of God. These are things the word Testimony means—things that are spoken of over and over. In some form, almost every sermon touches on what is in that Holy of Holies, symbolically representing some of the most important things in our life.

Let us get back to the Miphkad altar. I want to review this because it is a very important place in the unfolding of events from Eden to Christ. Recall that the Temple at Christ's time was patterned after the Tabernacle before it, and the Tabernacle was patterned after the Garden of Eden. The whole lot of these things on earth was patterned after things in heaven, as Paul reports in the book of Hebrews.

There were three altars associated with the Tabernacle and the Temple: the Incense Altar, located before the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies; the Brazen Altar just outside the only door—the east door; and then there was the Miphkad Altar located about 3,000 feet (about 6/10th of a mile) from the central part of the Holy Place. This altar was located outside the camp, and outside the gate. Hebrews 13:10-13 tells us that.

The camp referred to an imaginary circle measured from the Holy Place and having a radius of 2,000 cubits, so it was also outside the gate, meaning the city gate. In this case it was the eastern gate. Remember, "Miphkad" means

"numbering," with an implication of judgment; thus adding things up with evidence.

Have you ever noticed that in the Old Testament judgments were made at the city gate? That was a very common practice. We are going to have the big judgment here just outside the city gate, not within it though. It was outside the city gate, and that set it apart.

This Miphkad altar was just beyond Jerusalem's east gate, and it was this altar that was reached by a bridge spanning the Kidron Valley in Christ's day. The priests would carry certain sin offerings following the slaying of an animal across that bridge to the Miphkad altar on which these offerings would be burned until nothing remained but ashes. Most notable of these offerings was the offering of the Red Heifer and the Day of Atonement offerings.

The Red Heifer was completely burned until nothing remained except ashes. Certain sin offerings were offered there as well. Remember that Ezekiel mentions this place twice. He called it "the outward sanctuary," in Ezekiel 43:21 and Ezekiel 44:1. This area was also known as "the clean place." It was also known as the place where the ashes were poured out, so if you see that as you are reading, understand what they are talking about. The ashes resulting from the burning of the Red Heifer were mixed with water, cedar, hyssop, and scarlet to produce the waters of purification used in purifying one from sin.

Now, unlike other altars, this altar was not elevated in any way. It was right on the ground, and by comparison to the other altars, it was humble almost to an extreme. This location placed the Miphkad altar just outside the city right near the southern peak of the Mount of Olives, and so the question is: Where was Jesus crucified? You are going to see that the information is right in the Book. Once you get the background, you know that His crucifixion place is not hidden any longer.

John 19:20 This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

Numbers 15:35-36 And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without [outside] the camp. And all the congregation brought him without [outside] the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Nobody was ever executed any closer to the Temple nor the Tabernacle than 2,000 cubits. That was outside the camp. It could be ten miles outside, and that would be fine, but not within that imaginary circle measured from that dot between the Menorah and the Showbread. Jesus was crucified *near* the city, but Paul in Hebrews 13 said it was *outside* the gate, meaning the eastern gate. It was outside the camp. It was outside of that circle because He was a "transgressor" and He had to be crucified outside the camp. From that vicinity it was very near to the top of the Mount of Olives, and therefore was in clear sight of the Temple.

That one in Numbers 15 involved a Sabbath breaker, so God ordered the person to be put to death outside the camp. Recall that is only 6/10th of a mile.

Luke 23:44-49 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion [a Roman witness] saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

All those people saw the curtain rent, so we have more than two witnesses by far. You might wonder, was it the curtain that was between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies? The answer is no. In the front of the Temple was a huge curtain, 70 or 80 feet high and very thick. That was the curtain that was rent. The whole Temple was opened up before mankind. Nobody could have

seen into the Holy of Holies, but that huge curtain everybody saw. It was in clear view. It probably tore with a tremendous ripping sound as some angel tore it in pieces.

The only place near to the city, outside the camp, and having a straight-line vision of the Temple was from the Mount of Olives, directly east of the Temple. But there is other strong evidence. The sacrifices of Leviticus 16:27 on the Day of Atonement, which the Jews considered the holiest day of the year, had to be burned on the Miphkad altar outside the camp. Now remember what was burned there represented Jesus Christ. He was the goat that was chosen to die, and that offering for sin did not go on the brazen altar. It bypassed the brazen altar and was taken straight out to the Miphkad altar because that goat represented Christ dying as our atonement and means of reconciliation. He was the sin offering.

In Numbers 5:16 there is an incident there that concerns an adulteress, and in that context God gave this sentence. She had to be brought before the Lord for judgment. Any person in Moses' day and in Jesus' day would have understood what that meant. It would have meant that they were to be brought to the east side of the Tabernacle in line of sight of the Holy of Holies, because God judges from His seat there; thus Jesus, who was guilty, according to the Jews, of blasphemy—a far more serious charge than that sin in Numbers 5:16—would have been brought exactly to this place.

You begin to get all these pieces together: near to the city, able to have a direct-line vision with the east side of the Temple so that the tearing of the curtain would easily be seen by anybody who was there. All of these are references: "before the Lord," "outside the camp," "2,000 cubits away."

Psalms 96:9, 12-13, and Psalm 98:8-9 are confirmations of the spot from which God judges. Poetically, symbolically, He judges from the Holy of Holies. These psalms are showing, in a Millennial setting, that people are going to come before Him, and He is symbolically sitting in the Temple judging all of mankind.

Psalm 96:9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

Psalm 96:12-13 Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD: for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Psalm 98:8-9 Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the LORD; for he comes to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Another one is in Matthew 21. I will explain this to you. This was the occasion of Jesus' triumphant march into the city where He was proclaimed by the people as King of the Jews. He rode in on a donkey. Where do you think that began? From the Mount of Olives. That was the starting point. Then He entered Jerusalem and the people strewed the palms before Him. It was just after this that He cursed the fig tree. All these events begin to line up.

Matthew 21:1-11 And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell you the daughter of Sion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Roman law, or Roman practice, had arranged in order the priority of where a person was to be crucified. The Roman method, from their own history, says that the place of execution for capital crimes, in order to produce the maximum effect on the public, was this: (1) It was done at the scene of the crime. If they could do it right there, good. Bang them up against a tree, and that is the end. (2) If they could not do that, then it was at the place where the person was arrested. There is a lot of practical order to this. I think justice was pretty swift in Rome. (3) It was to be on an area of high ground or at a busy place. Incidentally, it also remarks that they frequently used a tree.

This is where His triumphal march into Jerusalem begins to become a part. Where did He start? He started on the Mount of Olives. That was the starting place of the crimes that the Jews held against Him. He went in and claimed Himself King, and the people said, "Yes. He is King of the Jews." The Romans (Pilate) could have charged Him with sedition, of overthrowing the Roman government. That is why the question: "Are you a king?" Pilate chose to ignore it, but the Jews did not. They said, "We have no king but Caesar."

Where does the action proceed from there? It went back to the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane was on the side of the Mount of Olives. What happened at Gethsemane? That is where He was arrested. Are you beginning to see? The scene of the crime was the Mount of Olives. Where He was arrested was on the Mount of Olives, and it was a high place where everybody could see what was going on. The Mount of Olives fits every requirement of a Roman crucifixion: (1) the scene of the crime, (2) the place where He was arrested, and (3) a high place where everybody could see what was done.

Now we are going to go to John 19 as we draw this to a close.

John 19:16-17 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

This is one of the most egregious misunderstandings of all. People have translated this word "Golgotha" as "skull" and therefore they have looked for

a site around Jerusalem that looks like a skull. The word really has very little to do with a skull. It can be translated as a skull, but anyone using the Bible as his source will be able to see right through this in just a moment.

Numbers 1:2 Take you the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls.

That word "polls" is translated from the Hebrew word *golgolet*. It is the root of the word "Golgotha." *Golgolet* is used when one is counting. In verse 2 he is saying "polling." Golgotha was the city of Jerusalem's polling place. That is where they counted heads. It did not look like a skull. That is where they took the census.

Let us connect to this Miphkad. What does Miphkad mean? It means "counting." It was the counting gate. It was the gate that went to the area where they took the census. And where was it? On the top of the Mount of Olives, at Golgotha, the counting place. Not the skull, the counting place.

The place where Jesus was crucified is just absolutely nailed down. It was in the vicinity of the Miphkad altar.

Genesis 22:14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD ***it shall be seen.*** (emphasis ours)

What is "it"? *It* is the ***real*** sacrifice—the One who substitutes for our death. Isaac was a type. Isaac was in a figure sacrificed by Abraham on the same general spot where Jesus, the true sacrifice, was crucified. It was on the Mount of Olives, looking across at Mount Moriah, which later became the home of the Temple. Does God keep His word, or what! So "**it**" stands revealed.

Let us summarize.

- 1) Eden was the general area of the Promised Land.

- 2) The Garden of Eden was on Mount Moriah in the east of Eden.
- 3) Mount Moriah was also called the Temple Mount.
- 4) God's house was in the midst of the Garden, then in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle, and then in the Holy of Holies of the Temple.
- 5) The Miphkad altar, where the Red Heifer was burned, was on the southern peak of the Mount of Olives. It was directly in view of God's place of judgment from the Mercy Seat.
- 6) It was there near the Miphkad altar that sin was judged and defeated, and thus the means of forgiveness and reconciliation made available unto all who believe.
- 7) Jesus was *our* Red Heifer, and by this means we are purified of sin.

It is my hope that by these sermons your faith in God's Word, as well as His personal operations, will be confirmed and strengthened. I hope that you can see that there is one mind drawing an immense purpose and plan to a grand conclusion, and that His operations, though universal, have focused on one precise area: the Promised Land, Eden with its Garden and inhabitants. And though universal, it comes through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and will ultimately include all who have ever lived and repented of their sins against the government of God.