

Various Scripture

We recently completed Chapter Fifteen of First Corinthians—a chapter that is all about resurrection, and what that resurrection means for the believer.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

Now, we understand that the immediate context for those verses is the promise that because Christ was raised to life from the dead, so too will everyone who has placed his or her trust in Him be raised to life. But for just a few moments I would like to trace that promise through God's word—a promise that was made *first* in Bethlehem.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1:1-4)

"In Him was life." As with most things in God's word, that bold statement is multidimensional. When God speaks of "life," it is not a simple one-dimensional concept, nor is it just a two-dimensional object; it is a fully realized, multidimensional truth that can be traced throughout Scripture from the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the very last chapter of Revelation. There were two prominent trees that God planted in the center of that garden.

Question: What were they? [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life]

Adam and Eve were created with life—a life, in whatever form it was, superior to the sort of life enjoyed by their fallen offspring. When they rebelled against God to obey the serpent, they lost that superior life and were cast out of the Garden. In Genesis 3 we learn *why*.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"— therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24)

Yes, Adam and Eve were thrown out of their paradise as punishment for their sin, but that was not the most important reason. If they had remained there they surely would have moved on to the other prominent tree in the Garden—the tree of life—and eaten of *its* fruit. The Lord God Himself declared that if they had, they would “live forever.” They would have become—even in their rebellion against a holy God—immortal, living forever. If they had eaten from that tree, they would have had the same life promised to believers in Christ—not just eternal life, but access to the fruit from the tree of life, as Jesus tells John to write to the church at Ephesus:

'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.' (Revelation 2:7)

The last chapter of God’s word is suffused with “life,” as it describes both the “river of the water of life” and the “tree of life” in the Holy City, the new Jerusalem.

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Revelation 22:1-2)

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. (v14)

In the gospels Jesus refers to Himself as “the *bread* of life,” as “the *light* of life,” and “*the resurrection* and the life” (John 6:35, 8:12, 11:25), and in the glorious statement of John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

Every human being ever born considers himself to have life: we breathe, we speak, we are self-aware. But according to the apostle Paul in Romans, the life born into these mortal bodies is a mere, feint shadow of what *true* life is in Christ.

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. (Romans 8:11)

Even the life believers enjoy because of faith in Christ and His indwelling Spirit, is a mere shadow of the life He promises for us in eternity with Him. The “life” spoken of so often in God’s word is something unknowable, incomprehensible to those still in flesh. And *none* of it—either in the here and now or in eternity future—would be possible without Bethlehem. God in Christ had to come to earth and be born like human beings so as to die as the sacrificial, atoning Lamb, so that we could have life—*His* life, *real* life.