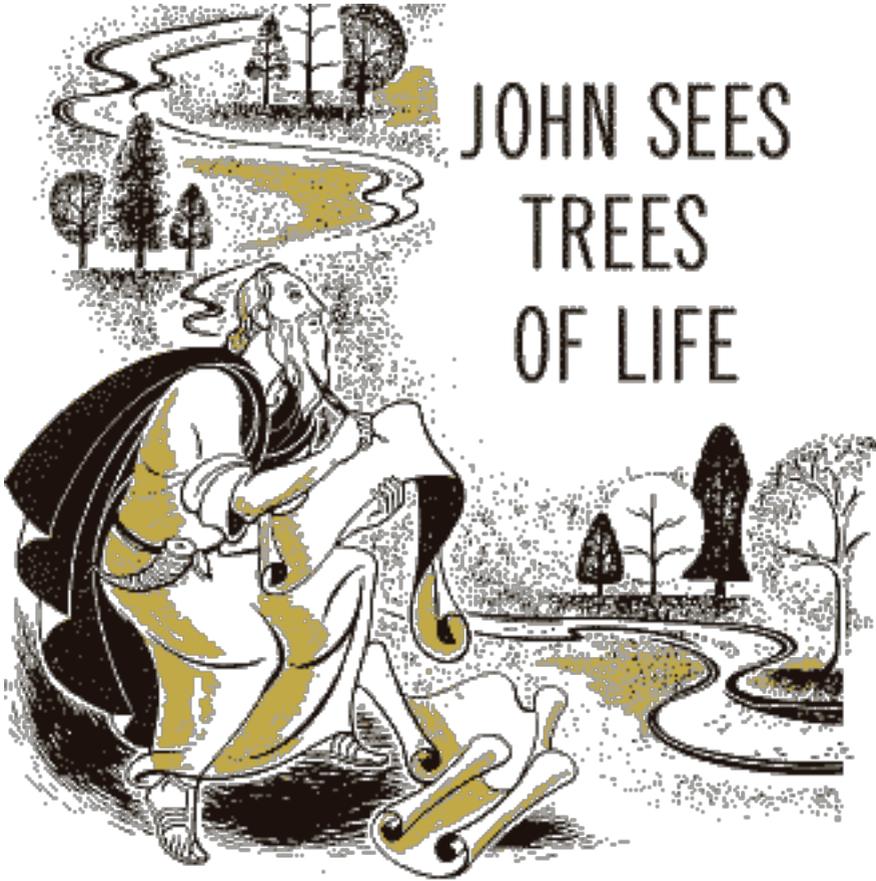


JOHN SEES TREES OF LIFE



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IN THE second story of this book, called “At Home in a Garden,” we learned that Adam and Eve, the first man and woman who ever lived on this earth, did not do what God wanted them to, and because of this they were not allowed to remain in that beautiful Garden of Eden which God had planted for them.

This was very sad indeed because there was everything in that garden necessary to keep Adam and Eve alive forever. Just think how wonderful it would have been to remain in that garden, where they could have kept right on living without growing old or getting sick, or dying!

If you have read that story you will know that God’s enemy, Satan, told a lie to mother Eve, saying that she would not die at all even if

she did what God told her not to do. What a lie that was! And isn't it strange that so many people have believed it! The Bible says that Satan has deceived the people.

To be deceived means to think that something is true when it is not. So it is very important, you see, to make sure that what we believe is really the truth.

In telling you the story about Adam and Eve being sent out of the Garden of Eden because they had done wrong, I said that the time would come when they would be allowed to return to that garden, or to a much larger and better garden. I said that because God has promised it, and we know that God's promises will all come true. We have already learned about many of those promises! And now I want to tell you about more of them, some of which were written down by the Apostle John in the last book of the Bible.

The Apostle John was one of Jesus' very dear friends. Jesus loved all of his disciples—in fact he loved everybody—but he loved John in a very special way. God wants us also to love everybody; but, like Jesus, we too have friends whom we love a great deal more than we love those whom we do not know! Well, Jesus and John knew each other very well, for John always stayed as close as he could to his Master. He wanted to learn all he could from Jesus, and he wanted to be near to help him whenever he needed help; and Jesus appreciated this, and loved John for it.

Many years after Jesus was crucified and made alive again, John, who continued to be his faithful disciple, was sent as a prisoner to a small island called Patmos. While he was a prisoner on this island he had a most wonderful experience. He had what we call a "vision."

A vision is like a dream, only it is not an ordinary dream, but a dream in which God tells his servants what he wants them to know. In a vision, words are heard, and pictures are seen which illustrate the meaning of the words.

Many of God's servants have been given visions, or special dreams, by him. You remember the story, "Peter's Strange Dream," don't

you? But John's vision on the island of Patmos was more wonderful than any of the others.

In this vision John heard the voice of his beloved Master, Jesus, making wonderful promises for his people. Angels also spoke to him and explained the meaning of many of the remarkable things he saw in the vision. Yes, John saw and heard many, many, very odd and very wonderful things in this vision, so many, in fact, that it won't be possible to tell you about all of them.

But I do want to tell you about John's vision of the "trees of life," for this is part of what he saw on the island of Patmos. When the Bible tells us that all the people will by and by return to the Garden of Eden, we must remember that it means the whole earth will be made like the Garden of Eden; for that small garden in which Adam and Eve lived will not be large enough for everybody! We should remember this when we read about John's vision of the trees of life. He tells us that he saw these trees of life growing on both sides of a wonderful river. He calls it the "pure river of water of life." That surely is a wonderful name for a river! He says that the trees which he saw growing by the sides of this river had twelve kinds of fruit, and that it was fruit-picking time each month.—Revelation 22:1,2 So you see, the water of life and the fruit of life were there all the time!

There were trees of life in the Garden of Eden, and the Bible tells us that if Adam and Eve could have eaten the fruit of those trees they would never have died. This means that those who eat the fruit from the trees of life which John saw in his vision will never die. So you see, trees of life are trees which give life.

John tells us that the leaves of these trees were for the healing of the nations. Yes, all the people will be blessed by these trees of life. That is just what God promised to do! And we have learned that all of God's promises will come true.

Of course, John didn't see a real river and real trees. What he saw was like a picture of a river and fruit trees. There couldn't be a real river large enough to have room on its banks for enough trees to supply the fruit of life for all the nations of the earth! So what John

saw was a “picture” which was like another promise of God that by and by he will heal all the sick people in the world, and help them to live without dying, just as Adam and Eve would have lived without dying if they could have remained in the Garden of Eden.

And I want to tell you something more about the picture of this river which John saw. He tells us that the river flowed from underneath the “throne of God and of the Lamb.” Now what do you suppose that could mean? Most rivers flow from the sides of mountains and hills. But the “river of the water of life” is different. It flows from a throne! In America we don’t have kings who sit on thrones, but I am sure most of us have heard about the kings of other countries. And we know that they sometimes sit upon thrones.

Of course, kings do not actually sit on their thrones much of the time. A new king usually sits on his throne while his crown is placed on his head. A throne, you know, is a very fancy chair, and those who sit on thrones are rulers—those who rule the people. So when we read that a king sits upon the throne of a nation, it means that he rules over the people of that nation.

Well, the Bible tells us about God’s throne. It doesn’t mean that God has a fancy chair in which he sits. No, not at all! It means that God is a Ruler, that he has the right to say what everybody in the whole wide world should do, and what they ought not to do.

Now, God had the right to tell Adam and Eve what they should and should not do, but they thought they knew better than God; so they did what he told them not to do. Because of this they were not allowed to remain in the Garden of Eden where they could have eaten from the trees of life and thus could have lived forever.

So now we can understand why John saw the “river of water of life” flowing from underneath the throne of God. This is God’s way of explaining to us that all those who want to live forever will need to know that God has the right to say what they should do and what they should not do. Yes, they will need to obey him because he will be the Ruler.

I am sure you have learned that beautiful prayer which Jesus taught his disciples, in which we pray for God’s kingdom to come and for

his will to be done on the earth as it is in heaven. Doing God's will is doing the things which please him, and when John saw the "throne of God" it was an illustration to show that God's will is to be done, and because of this the river of life and the trees of life will keep people alive forever and ever.

But John tells us something else which is also very important to remember. He says that the throne he saw, from which the river of life was flowing, was not only the throne of God, but that it was also the throne of the Lamb.

I wonder if you remember about God's Lamb. We have learned a great deal about that Lamb, haven't we? Abel, one of the first children of Adam and Eve, brought a lamb to God for a sacrifice. God was pleased with Abel's gift, and now we know why. It was because the lamb was a "picture" of Jesus, and the Bible tells us he was the "Lamb of God."

And then God provided a lamb for Abraham to offer in sacrifice in the place of his son Isaac. I am sure you remember that story. Well, that lamb also was a "picture" of Jesus.

Then there was the lamb that was slain at the time the Israelites left the land of Egypt. That was called the "passover" lamb. From the Bible we learn that Jesus is the real Passover Lamb; and because he died, all the world is to be brought out of death—that is, they will be made alive again.

Now, as we have learned, when a lamb was given to God for a sacrifice it was killed; so Jesus, the Lamb of God, was killed as a sacrifice for all the people who have ever lived. The next time you hear anyone say that Jesus died for us, you will know what they mean! It is because Jesus died for us, and for all the world, that everybody is to be made alive again.

The Bible tells us that Jesus will be Ruler over the earth for a thousand years, that he will be the great King, to teach and train people to do the will of God. So that is why the throne which John saw in his vision is called the throne of the Lamb as well as the throne of God. It means that Jesus will be the King at that time, and

that those who want to live forever will have to do what Jesus wants them to do.

It also means that they can have life only because Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died for them.

There was something else John saw in this vision which you should know about. As he watched the river flowing, and the trees of life on its banks bearing an abundance of the fruit of life, he heard a voice saying:

“Come. ... And ... take the water of life freely.”

And who do you think it was that he heard speaking? Why, he tells us it was the “Spirit and the bride.” Now who do you suppose they could be? The Bible tells us about the Spirit of God, which means the power of God. And sometimes the Bible speaks of Jesus as being “that Spirit,” so it means that the power of God speaks through Jesus to invite all to partake of the water of life.

And who is the “bride” who also says, “Come, and help yourself to the water of life”? All the followers of Jesus—those who live and die serving him, those who love him more than anyone else—are to be with him when he is reigning over the people. They, too, will be kings. The Bible tells us this, and we know that the Bible is true. But these will have another name also. Because they will be with Jesus, and live in a heavenly home where he lives, the Bible calls them his “bride.”

And who will these be? Of course, I cannot tell you who all of them will be, but the Bible tells us about some of them. Peter will be one, and Paul, and John—in fact, all the apostles. Maybe when you grow up, if you do your best to follow Jesus and do what he wants you to do, you also can be with him in the kingdom. And all those who are with him, and who work with him to make God’s promises come true, are called his “bride.” And together with him, they will all say to the peoples of the world:

“Come, and partake of the water of life freely.”

Now we can see how it is that all of God’s promises will come true. Think of that wonderful promise God made to Abraham. You remember it, don’t you? God said to him that he would use his

“seed,” or children, to bless all the people of the earth. But, as we know, Abraham died, and in all the long, long time since, people have continued to die without receiving this blessing which God promised.

But God hasn't forgotten that promise!

Instead of forgetting the promise, God has been getting ready for many years to make that promise, and all his other wonderful promises, come true. That's why he sent Jesus into the world as his Lamb, to die for the people. That is why Jesus, doing what God wanted him to do, selected John, and Peter, and Paul, and his other apostles and disciples, to work with him.

The Bible tells us that Jesus, and together with him, all his followers, are the “seed,” or children, which God spoke of in the promise to Abraham. So now we can see how that promise will come true. Jesus and his followers, or his “bride,” will make it come true.—Gal. 3:8,16,27-29

We know, though, that people cannot be blessed while they are dead, so everyone who has died will be made alive again. Then they will hear the invitation:

“Come and partake of the water of life freely.”

Yes, that will be when Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, and Noah, and Abraham—and everybody—will be made alive again.

The followers of Jesus are the first to be made alive. When they are made alive, they will be with Jesus in heaven above. They will not need to drink of the river of life, because they will have heavenly life the same as Jesus. They will have the great joy of helping to give life to all the rest of mankind, who are to be made alive and live here on the earth in peace and happiness forever.

Aren't we glad that God's promises are coming true? In another part of John's vision all the people of the world were happy, so he says that God had wiped the tears from their eyes. Isn't that wonderful! And how will God wipe away the people's tears? He will do that by allowing them to eat of the trees of life, which means that he will help them to live on and on forever and not die. John tells us that he

saw in the vision that a time was coming when there would be no more death.”

Won't it be wonderful when nobody dies? And that's just the way it will be when all of God's promises come true. People will not get sick and die; nor will they grow old and die.

There will be no wars then to kill people, either.

So very many today are worrying about those terrible atomic bombs because they can kill so many people. But when God's promises come true he will not allow bombs of any kind to kill people.

And we know that God will be able to do all that he has promised to do. It was God who made this earth; and he also made the sun, and moon, and stars. We can't understand how God was able to do such wonderful things; but we know that he did. And because God was able to make the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and stars, we know that he will surely be able to do all that he has promised to do.

Let us, then, trust God, and do the things which will please him.

And let us tell our friends about him and about the wonderful time of peace and joy there will be all over the earth when God's promises come true!

QUESTIONS

- What is a vision, and where was John when God gave him a wonderful vision?
- What are the trees of life, and the river of life?
- What is the throne of God and of the Lamb?
- When will all of God's promises come true?