

"... healing for all the nations" Revelation 22:2



"... the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified" Isaiah 61:3

# The Tree of Life

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"... for the testimony of Jesus"  
Revelation 1:9

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## Are you really ready?

Jason Newman

Joel 2; Revelation 1; 1 Corinthians 3:7-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-11; Matthew 7:13-23

As we start today, I would ask you a question. How many of you are ready for the Lord to come back? Have you thought about your answer? I know that the Lord's return is a beautiful and comforting thing. Yet even so, the coming of the Lord is a terrible thing. Believe it or not, even for the Christian. We think that the Day of the Lord is terrible for the lost and unbelieving. Yet Scripture teaches that Christians should also fear that Day.

There will be great rejoicing. We will see all our loved ones. We will see the Lord. That is exactly my point today. We will see the Lord. Remember what it says in Revelation. The eyes aflame of fire. The golden sash, the feet like unto bronze. Are you really ready to look into those eyes? He is not coming as the gentle, suffering, Lamb. He is coming as the Almighty, Righteous King. We put emphasis on the King part, but He is also a Righteous King and Judge.

As we look to our passage, I want to remind you of what we discussed last time. There was a great locust invasion and then a famine in the land. We talked about that there was no meat or drink offering, no joy in the land. We talked about how sin has stolen our joy in serving the Lord. Now the prophet is going to use that locust invasion as a picture of the great Day of the Lord. As we study this, remember that in an individual person or church there can be a Day of the Lord. That He will allow a period of judgment or sifting in their lives. That is what that first chapter of Joel was about. Leadership falling, financial problems, marriage problems. These sometimes are the Lord bringing judgment to His people. These are to come and lead us to repentance.

As we start in Joel 2:1, it says that we need to blow a trumpet. There is time to gather, and to repent before the Day of the Lord would come. That is where I want to go today. When we see the news and see things getting worse every day, we are ready for the Lord to come. Do you realize what that means? I do not want to get into all the schools of interpretation. Think about it like this. When the author of a play walks on the stage, you know that the play is over. When God comes to settle accounts with men, it is over. In reality, it does not matter about when or how you believe it is going to happen. The Bible is clear about one thing. It is going to happen. Christ is coming back! He is going to judge both the Christian and the lost. For the lost, the judgment is simple. If they have rejected Christ, they have rejected the salvation of God.

As we look at the passage in 2 Corinthians, it teaches us that our judgment will not be about sin. It will be about what we have done after we became Christians. As we start, it talks about the

promises of God. The awesome promise that we will have a new body. The desire that we have for that new body. It is not that we want to die, but we are burdened with an aging, aching body. The great plan of God is that we get a new body. He has given the Spirit as an earnest, a guarantee. Sometimes the Lord heals us; sometimes the Lord gives courage and strength to go on one more day.

But verses nine and ten are the verses I want to concentrate on. Notice what it says very carefully. We will receive judgment for the things that we have done in this body. Think about how Paul wrote so many of his letters. There are the passages on doctrine, then the great passages on how those doctrines have an effect in our lives. As he writes, he leaves nothing out. Our relationships with our husbands, wives, children, parents, our employers, employees. Every facet of a Christian life is influenced by the revealed will of God. It says that to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord. The question then will be, What did you do with your new life? Have you lived by faith? Walked by faith and not sight?

As we pursue this, we find that Paul had already addressed this with the Corinthians. Turn back to 1 Corinthians 3:7. We find Paul writing about Christian growth and maturity. He starts by saying it is not the preacher that is the important one here. He is just a vessel that the Lord is using. God is directing, energizing, and empowering that person. Therefore, God gets the glory. The minister is like a big truck that brings a load of building materials to the work site drops them off and leaves. It is up to the foreman on the site to use them and build the house. The truck driver cannot be held responsible for how the foreman builds.

As the foreman starts to build, he has to use the foundation that has been provided. We are the same way. There is only one foundation. It is Christ Jesus. No other thing can. We build our faith, character, and salvation upon then Christ. Paul now says that the Day is coming when all men will have their work examined. Paul is talking to Christians. Do not be deceived. Words to stop and make us think. Your works will be examined. There will be a test to see the quality of your works. The value of the works. These words are not written to sinners who do not know Christ or have not known the Mind of Christ. Christ said that He was the Way, the Truth, the Life.

Paul writes and says that there are two categories of quality. One is of precious things, the other of non-precious. What separates the two categories? It is the way fire affects them. Wood, hay, and stubble, completely change in the form and shape of them. The other fire may change them. Gold and silver will melt, stones my change color. Fire does not change intrinsic, essential elements that make them what they are. Even in the melted state, gold and silver are of the same worth as they are solid. Not so with hay, straw, and stubble. As they are burned there is nothing left. What does that have do with our discussion we are having now? Those eyes of fire as they are described in Revelation, they are going to look at you and the things that you have done. This is not about salvation. Notice it says that even though the work is burned, they still receive the reward. This is about the maturing of the Christian.

One last passage of Scripture. This passage of Scripture in Matthew 7 is fairly well known. We need to look at it in light of what we are discussing. Narrow is the way. So many times we think that this is about rules and regulations. At its essence this is incorrect. This is more about the way we want to live. Difficult? It is because there is so much in the world that cause us to stray from the right way.

The next verse is built upon this thought. The narrow way. A fruitful life. A man that is a craftsman in building will only use certain materials. Only certain tools for certain jobs. Christian, do you see it? Christ is looking for men who are doing right. By their fruits you will know them. A thorn tree in bloom is beautiful, but it is good for nothing after the bloom. In fact, the thorn will maim or

blind. What is that kind of tree good for? Nothing but the fire. It seems that we have seen that phrase once in our reading.

To use the wording of the Apostle, you should be able to tell whether you are using hay, wood, or precious stones. It is of utmost importance that Christians are talking about Christ. Being vessels that the grace of God can move through. Yet look at what Christ says here. Christ uses the word iniquity here. That word is a specialized word for sin. It deals with the sins that we try to hide and make excuses for. The sin that we refuse to allow the Lord to speak to us about. If we can not follow after the narrow way and want the narrow way, then Christ wants nothing of us. Blow the trumpet, sound the alarm, the Day of the Lord is at hand! Are you ready? Oh yes, I am ready! Really?

As we finished in the last letter I left you with a hope of mercy. I would do the same today. As we go back to Joel we find in verse eleven "... who can abide it?" Peter puts it that judgment must begin with the House of God. If we barely get in; how is the world going to fare? There is hope. There is mercy. There is grace. In light of what God has revealed to us about that Day, He uses the word therefore. God tells us what to do to avoid harsh judgment on that Day.

God's answer is in verse thirteen of Joel. It is to rend your hearts. God wants repentance. God wants a change in our way of life. We live in the shame of our sins, we live in the confusion of sin. We know that we have disobeyed the voice of God. I want to be clear here. God does not just want a acknowledgment of us knowing what sin is. He wants us to put those sins away from us; and come to Him with a whole heart. He wants us to live in righteousness, in truth, in His presence. He wants us to live so that when He returns his people will experience His holiness more fully, not glimpse it for the first time. To know Him; and He knows us.

To make sure that Day will be a joyous Day, there has to be a complete change. We need to break up the places in our hearts that we have not allowed the Lord to touch. Like a farmer that tills up the ground before planting, we need to get out the rocks of sin. We need to get out the weeds of this world that are growing in our heart.

Oh Lord, show us the awesome glory of that Day! I want to be ready, oh Lord! Give me wisdom and a heart for change.

## The Spirit of Shame

Mark Lavine

(This is an abridged version of this sermon. The complete audio is available upon request. --Editor)

Isaiah 61:1-7; Luke 4:16-21; Romans 10:11; Hebrews 12:2; Zephaniah 3:19

We need to recognize something about the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus. First, He is still in a earthly ministry in His body, the church. Second, he did not just heal their body, He made them whole. When the ten lepers that came to Jesus, He told them to go to the priest, and one returned. As the one was praising God, Jesus said that his faith had made him whole. That tells me that not had the disease departed from his body, but anything that he had emotionally, mentally or physically that was caused by the leprosy. If the man had a finger missing, it was replaced and healed. Not only physical scars but there were a lot of emotional scars from having leprosy. You were ostracized from society. When Jesus heals, he does not just heal the physical things, He heals in every area of your life. He does not heal your body and not cause your marriage to be restored. The reason He can do that is that He is our everything, He is our all. He is the Alpha and Omega, He is here to cover our needs!

The passages before us are Messianic promises. They are something that Jesus has fulfilled. As we meditate on them we find that they are a summary of His ministry. As you read through them you find that verses three through ten are a specific application of the first two verses. As we look at the passage in Luke, Christ read the words of Isaiah, and sat in the midst of them. There are those who say that in the synagogue that there was a chair reserved for the Messiah. They say Jesus walked over sat down in that chair, and said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Jesus read the first two verses, and said it is finished, it is accomplished. That means that whatever that went with the application has been accomplished also! Hallelujah!

I like the way that Jesus says this in Luke 4:18. It says that ... "He began to say unto them ..." In other words, he did not just read the words and sit down he began to say to them, if you are blind, I am here. If you are sick, I am here! What ever you have need of I am here! If you have depression you do not need to be depressed any more! If you are mourning, I am here to give you the oil of gladness and the garment of praise. Everything that Isaiah wrote about has already been fulfilled.

As we turn back to Isaiah, I want to talk to you about one specific area that hinders us from fulfilling the call of God on our lives. It hinders missionaries from being missionaries. It hinders pastors from being pastors. It hinders people from flowing in the Spirit of God. It hinders people from believing that their prayers are being heard and answered by God. It hinders people from prospering. They believe they do not measure up. I want to talk about the spirit of shame and the spirit of guilt.

Let me tell you what shame is. I believe that sometimes the shame we experience does not come from the world it comes from the church. I do not care what the name of your group is, any group that shames people is not of God. The Holy Spirit does not shame people. He leads people. People say, "God is condemning me over this sin." God does not condemn you over anything. He convicts you. Condemnation pronounces sentence. The Holy Spirit pronounces conviction, He wants you to do better than what you are doing. Condemnation says you can never change. Conviction says you can change, I am making you something better. Sometimes in the body of Christ we have turned the wrong way and preached the wrong message to people. Sometimes we think that if we preach real hard, people will turn. The Bible says it is the goodness of the Lord that leads to repentance.

Let's define shame now. Shame tells us because of what we have done, what we have experienced, or what we have been involved in, we will no longer be able to fulfill the plan of God in our lives. Shame tells us that we will always be second class citizens in the Kingdom of God. I believe that there are a lot of people in the Kingdom who do not believe that they are first class citizens. They know they are on the bus, but they think that they have to ride at the back of the bus. Because of the drugs in your past. Or that baby out of wedlock. Because of the divorce. Because of that unsaved child or husband. Because ... Because ... Because. The enemy comes and in effect says I will let you go so far and no further. Before we go on, let me say this. We can still intercede for our children and ourselves. We can still plan and fulfill the vision of God for our lives. The Bible says for us to come boldly to the throne of grace.

There are three kinds of shame. There is shame by action. In other words you did something shameful. How many of you have messed up? Next time you think that you are the only one that messed up, look around you. Guess what? We have all come short of the glory of God. We all have needed a Savior! He came and died for all of us!

Number two is shame by association. In other words, you were not the person who did wrong, but because it involved you, you were shamed. A pregnant daughter. A son on drugs. Your family name is bad in the community. The color of your skin or your country of origin.

The third form of shame is shame by accusation. We know the supreme accuser of the brethren is the devil. He tempts us and we yield to that temptation. He then shames us with the sin that he tempted us with. It can take on another form also. The child or spouse who is sexually, mentally, emotionally abused and then gets told it is their fault that these things are happening.

One final word on shame. We think that everyone in the Scriptures walked on cloud nine. Look at the life of David. He sinned and had great shame. That is not the first thing you think of with David, is it? A man after God's own heart. I think of Abraham. We think of him as the father of the faith. He was also the father of Ishmael. Yet Jesus thought both of these men were good enough for them to be His family tree. That is what God does when he removes the shame. Everybody says they want to be like Moses. You want to be a murderer? No! This is the power of God. Moses went up in the mountain and brought back the Law of God. And what did it say? Thou shalt not murder! That is God removing the shame!

Go to Isaiah 61:7. "For your shame you shall have double ..." When shame came it robbed you and lied to you. It said that your kids would not serve God because of this or that. It told you that because of the way you have abused your body you can never be healed. But when God forgives the sin and takes away the shame, He increases the vision.

Let me tell you what double meant. In the time that the Bible was written, when you had a debt to pay they would post that debt on the gatepost of your gate. Then everyone could shame you for that debt. Then when the creditor came, he could demand payment. Here is where the double comes in. A benefactor could come in, take the debt off the gatepost, put his name on it, and pay it in full. Then when the people wanted to come by to shame, they could not for the debt had been paid by someone with more money. The creditor could not demand payment any longer, the debt was paid!

That is what Christ Jesus did with your shame. He nailed it to the cross. The devil is showing you the debt, but you need to turn it around and show him what God has said! He says that He has paid the debt!

Turn now to Romans 10. All of this garbage on TV talks shows, "Believe in yourself" It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe something." Believing in me does not set me free. I know me. I know my shortcomings. I know how ugly I can be. I know that God has redeemed them, but there is still the shame. The Bible says that believing on Him is the release from shame. I was praying telling God that He could not use in some way. The Lord spoke to my heart and ask if His cross was not good enough. Just believing in the cross is not enough. We also have to believe what he says about me.

We think that because we have done wrong, that is who we are. We did wrong because we did not know Christ and did not know who He says we are. We need to get a revelation of who we really are. We are not the person the devil says we are. We are not the person that our neighbors say we are. We have to stop saying I am this or that shameful thing and start saying I am what God says I am!

Read Hebrews 12:2. We all agree that Christ bore the sin. That is the bedrock of Christianity. I do not know any one who has sinned and did not have shame attached with it. If He bore the sin, He had to bear the shame. That is such an awesome message. That He is the Author and the Finisher of our Faith. Why did He endure the cross? For the joy that was set before Him. All the churches, the believer that would come out of those churches and be saved, healed and delivered! Notice the next phrase "... despising the shame ..." He bore the shame!

His whole life He had to deal with shame. He was accused of being a wine bibber. A friend of publican and sinners. That did not mean that He was just buddies, that meant they thought He was

sleeping around. He was accused of being illegitimate. People do not lift their hands in church because they are ashamed. They do not sing because they are ashamed. Jesus bore all the shame. Some say you do not deserve anything. Praise be to God, you have the right to receive everything! One last passage of Scripture.

What God is saying in Zephaniah is that no matter what happened to you, no matter what area that put you to shame, I am going to restore you, I am going to lift you up, I am going to use you in the very area that the devil tried to crush you in. Did you go through a bad marriage? God will restore and give you a good marriage, and then you will be teaching others! Did God deliver you from sexual sin? You will now be out teaching and delivering others out of the sins of lust and desire!

## Christian Maturity

Myrna Marble

We are going to look at getting the Word of God in us so that we can be preserved blameless. Now in this preservation process, we come into a place that the Scripture calls sound doctrine. The word sound is one of the definitions of the word salvation. In this great salvation plan of God, there is preservation, deliverance, healing, and there is soundness. I need to be sound in those things that I am trying to do in my own life. We look at that verse "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" This effects the whole body of believers if there is error or there is false doctrine that has come into that household of faith. For us individually, we must never allow any leaven to come into our being. We want what is pure, which is good that we may be sound in every area of our life.

Let me give you an example. I say that I know Christ, to give that witness and testimony that He is my personal Savior. I believe His Word does not change, and I preach that, teach that, and say that, and then I am not sound in my practical, daily life. If I am a gossip, or do not pay my bills, these kinds of things show that I am unsound. It may not mean that I have not the salvation experience, acknowledging Christ as my Savior. It means that I am not sound in all areas of my life as God would want them.

For our first thought on soundness we come to the word stability. I use four words to define soundness. They are stability, sifting, security, and scourging. Any one of these four could be happening in our life at a given time. God places it there, He wants us to be stabilized. To be sound, I must become stabilized. I have got to be anchored. That which anchors my soul, is my hope in Christ. The Apostle says that if in this life only I have hope, I am a man most miserable. For all of the human race, nothing is more miserable, than for all of our hope to be in this life. You think about the world in which we are living. It is totally unstable, and it is changing so quickly. If we are anchoring our hope in money, or nations, or leadership, or family name, we can understand that we are not anchoring in anything that will remain. The anchor of my soul, which is steadfast and sure, is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Into the truth of Word that He has left me to live by. This is my road map. He wants me to stay completely stabilized in the things that I find in the Word of God.

Which is easier, Jesus said, for me to say that I have healed this person, or that I have saved them? What He was saying was that I have provided everything that the human race has need of. Jehovah-Jireh was one of His Old Testament names. That is how He revealed Himself to the people of that day. Jehovah-Jireh means that The Lord Is My Provider. Now that brings a great stability to my life. That my God shall supply all of my need, according to His riches and glory. I am not looking man for the answer. I am not looking to a denomination. I am not looking to a new system. To a new theory, a new revelation. If I am going to be stabilized in my salvation, then I must be stabilized in the fact that everything that I have need of will come to me through the person of Jesus Christ.

As the we come to the book of Hebrews, the writer has been speaking of the order of Melchizedek, which is a spiritual order. Christ Jesus, our High Priest, is in that order. This is an eternal order, different than the Levitical priesthood. That order was all of man, set up here on earth. We are a spiritual body, as God is a spirit. Christ is in a different order, called of God. That is teaching that the writer has been dealing with. The writer says that there are many things that he would like to say, but they are hard to be uttered. They are hard to explain. Why? Because it takes spiritual understanding. Everything in this book deals with the Hebrew worship system. It deals with how God grows them and deals with them in faith. As we go in this faith walk, we find that God was not just dealing with the Hebrews, He was dealing with all of humanity. By faith the Gentile nations now have the privilege of coming into the Holy of Holies. In the Old Testament, only the High Priest could do that. Now, any born again child of God, are to come boldly into that Holy of Holies. Before He can teach them more, they need to understand that they are dull of hearing. They do not have a spiritual hunger or ears for the things of God.

The time has come, the writer says, that you ought to be teachers. They had not matured enough. They seem to have to have a knowledge of Christ as Savior. But they are still holding to this old foundation. They have not been willing to move over onto the new foundation where Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. They have not moved, they are dull of hearing. They have need of someone teach them again. He does not stop there. He says that they have need of milk. That is the basic fundamental doctrines. They should have been mature beyond that.

Now let us think about the church we are in, the church of our day. It is a time of when people have been saved for the better part of their life. Yet they have very little revelation knowledge of Christ. All they really know is that Christ saved them. They did not want to mature. With maturity comes grave responsibility, and grave accountability. They should been maturing, but they did not press into the things of God. They kept falling back on their former knowledge of the Hebrew way of religion. They were like babes in Christ! They may have been saved for quite a period of time, he says it is time for us to grow up. He is encouraging them to get into a sound pattern in their life experimentally. They have to use Christian doctrine, so that they can come to full age, to maturity.

This is how you mature. "... who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." There has to be a moving into the Word of God by obedience, and allowing God to work in us. In the Garden of Eden the mistake was made when Eve was not willing to wait on God to reveal to her that which good and that which was evil. She was tempted by the enemy, he beguiled her. He led her away from the one commandment that they were given. The command was not given to keep something away from them. It was to give them opportunity under His leadership, His instruction, to have their senses exercised, to discern between good and evil. Instead of waiting on God, like many Christians, she was impatient. The writer is saying that your senses are exercised as you begin to use the revealed Word of God in your lives. Then you will discern, you will know, the good and the evil. It may look good. It may look absolutely beautiful, but it may be bad.

You take a little child, let them play in the yard. The little child sees a copperhead coiled in the yard. The child sees the beautiful brown and gold. The child would be fascinated by the snake. They do not know it is dangerous, they would try to pick it up. They do not know that it could destroy their life. They have not had their senses exercised to know. We could name off a hundred things that a little child does not know about. That is why they have parental instruction.

It is the same in the things of God. We come to him as a newborn babe, but He does not want us to stay that way! He wants to learn and mature, and become stabilized. Remember that the Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. Remember also that it is a divider of soul and spirit, and discerns the intents and thoughts of the heart. That is what the Word of God will do. There is not a creature manifest not in His sight. We do hide anything from God. People try to put things over on

other people, try to hide hypocrisy in their walk. But we do not hide anything from God. Woe is the word that Jesus used to the hypocrites. He was not pleased with them.

A hypocrite is someone who claims to be something, and does not allow the Lord to change them into what He wants. They are pretenders. They are also mockers, Jude says. They are mocking the way of true Christians, and true Christianity. They are not bearing the true fruit of a Christ-like nature. They are not bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Neither are their works that of Christ. This is a serious subject to be sound, to be stabilized in the things of God.

As His word comes to me, we are getting prepared. For what? The next world. That is why I love the book of Ephesians. Every chapter takes the body of Christ, and its members, and compares them to something. One chapter compares us to a soldier, with the armor of God. In this dressing room, why would I need on armor?

Because of the sifting. The wheat and the tares are going to grow up together. It is not our job to separate the wheat and the tares. My job is to be sound in the doctrines of God. In becoming sound in doctrine there is a great deal of sifting. As I teach, preach, as my neighbors watch me, I need to be giving a clear pattern for them to follow. Even as Christ was a clear pattern, so do we need to be a clear pattern. I am either a stepping stone to someone or I am a stumbling block. This is a grave responsibility. We must live our lives in the light of eternity, not in the light of right now. I live everyday knowing that the Lord may come. I live every day knowing that I may go. You have no promise of tomorrow. How much time has been wasted by looking to the past and saying how good it was then. How much time is wasted looking to the future when Christ comes. Instead of living the victorious, conquering life of today! Today is the day of salvation.

Everything that can be shaken and sifted is being so done. Everything. Jesus said that heaven and earth may pass away, but my word endures forever. His Word is sound doctrine. I build my life on the Word of God. I keep my soul fed with the Word of God. I live in obedience to the Word of God. Then when the sifting and shaking comes, I am in a position to do the will of God. He that does the will of God shall remain.

*Now may the saving grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Love of God the father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, rest remain and abide with us all, now and forevermore. Amen*

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