

# Some of the Food in Heaven

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### 1. The Hidden Manna. Rev. 2: 17.

The miraculous food of Manna was a temporary supply for the nation of Israel alone during their passage of forty years through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan.

Incidentally it is a proof of the power of God to sustain His redeemed people even when they are cut off from every earthly resource, however great may be their number and however incessant their need. Nature may supply no answer; the heavens rainless and the earth barren meant neither food nor drink for that mighty host, yet they lacked neither food nor water; and so far as we read not one Israelite died from either hunger or thirst.

But from 1 Corinthians 10: 3 we learn that the manna had a spiritual significance over and above its meeting the hunger of Israel. There is certainly one spiritual lesson which it was intended to teach the nation to whom it was given. This is found in Deuteronomy 8: 3: "He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna . . . that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." The commissariat department of an army is indispensable, and we have a saying that an army fights on its stomach. But in things divine our great concern is to live under the control of the Word of God. We may be most amply supplied with rations, and yet not truly *live* according to God. And we may be tested as was our most holy Lord in the wilderness by the lack of provisions (and indeed later by Satan himself) and yet live to God in absolute dependence, refusing even to work a miracle unless directed by Him (Matt. 4: 1-4). Though Jehovah, Jesus took the place of *man* Godward, and no temptation could ensnare Him, no bait induce Him to depart from that dependence proper to *man*; He would not move under any direction save that of God. "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth *man* live." Hence Satan was foiled. Perhaps nothing contributes so much to spiritual disaster as the saint acting before he has received guidance from the word of the Lord. But when subject to Him, our bread will be given and our water be sure.

The discourse in the latter part of John 6 seems to warrant our seeing in the Lord Jesus the Antitype of the manna, although (as is always the case) the Antitype appears to be so much greater than the type. For example, "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. *This* is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and *not* die." Again, the manna was for Israel only; not for Amalekites, or Moabites, or any Gentile nation. But, says Jesus, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if *any man* eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread which I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of *the world*."

The manna came noiselessly into the scene of need, falling so gently that it did not disturb the

dew. It was God's provision and gift, a heavenly food, unthought of and unasked by man, by no means the product of chemical analysis or experiment, nor wrought by labour; but God's own and ample provision to meet the need. In it was every element to sustain life and to give the people strength for their daily march or daily duty. It baffled Israel; the very name they gave it (manna; what is it?) showed it to be outside the range of their ken or their comprehension. But its suitability for its purpose is proved by the fact that they lived on it, and on nothing else, for the whole of their sojourn and journeyings in the wilderness. It was just as nourishing for young as for old; the man partook of it with his household. It was lovely in appearance, the colour of bdellium, free to all, without money and without price; and as it followed the Israelitish camp in all its travels it was always within the reach of all. It was in the simplest of positions, upon the dew, and none could complain of the effort required to come at it, unless it were the effort of *going down*. It was a small round thing, such as the veriest infant could pick up and feed upon without detriment; and it had a most wonderful elasticity in its properties; for he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. *None of it*, if taken according to divine instructions, *had ever to be thrown away*. Everyone who fed upon it was happily satisfied as long as his heart was right with God; a little made him happy, yet as long as his appetite craved more there was always more for him. It was only when his heart murmured against God that he pretended to find fault with the manna. It was capable of being ministered and taken in a variety of ways; there need not have been any monotony in the food. Eaten as it fell, its taste was sweet and its quality sustaining; but it could be baked or boiled, it could be ground in mills or beat in mortars, and cakes be made of it, and it was in every form pleasant to the taste and sustaining to the whole person. It was indeed a stupendous miracle of forty years' duration, and its cessation, when other food came in Canaan, was just as remarkable as its provision had been so long as it was needed (Ex. 16: 35; Joshua 5: 12).

Of what was it the type? Of Christ surely, of Christ come down from heaven to earth, of Christ the Incarnation of God's grace to His people; primarily available for Israel, but as we shall see, ultimately for all believers through faith and by the Spirit. How truly was He sent of God! How really was He out of heaven, a heavenly stranger here!

How gently He came as the Babe in an unambitious household! How lowly was the place He took and the path He trod! What food there is for the people of God as we see Him from the outset of His life here, increasing in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man; subject to His parents, yet His heart set on His Father's business! How absolutely was He here for the good of men and for the will of God! But in what language can we unfold all the grace that came by Jesus Christ? It is especially set before us in the first three Gospels; and the fourth, written from a different standpoint (assuming His rejection by Israel from the first), presents some of the most charming examples of the same theme although overlapping it.

He was *Man* here. The greatest element in our apprehension of Him must be God's appreciation of His worth. He was here for God. His motive in coming into this scene of need, and primarily to the chosen nation of Israel, was the fulfilment of God's will. He was sent by Him, and came here, a new order of manhood. It was not as a superman, an evolution of the old Adamic order, a phenomenal production of human generation that He came. He was born of woman truly, or else He would not have been *Man*, but He was conceived of the Holy Ghost and not of Joseph, and so was a Man of a new Order, holy from His birth, Son of God eternal, but now Son of God in manhood. No wonder that the world has been trying ever since to unravel the profound mystery of His glory, and has in effect been saying, "What is it? What is it?" Darwinism knew it not; Spencer has no light to offer; German philosophy stumbles over it and gives it up; Jew, Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, all in turn

examine it, attempt to analyse it, and still say, "What is it?" But our hearts, taught of God, echo the Master's own words, "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world."

He is the Bread of God. Not only might men delight in Him, but the heart of God traced His way, and in His every movement found satisfaction as when man taketh food. Over Matthew's Gospel the living God can write, "Satisfied." Over Mark's Gospel, "Satisfied." Over Luke's Gospel, "Satisfied." Over John's Gospel, "Satisfied." In thought, in word, in deed, He did always the things that pleased Him. In His birth it was announced "Good pleasure in men." At His baptism, "My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." At the transfiguration, "Well pleased; hear Him." At the grave in the garden of Calvary not words greeted Him but deeds. For God raised Him from the dead and gave proof of His infinite delight in Jesus by exalting Him to the highest heaven and investing Him as Man with eternal and unbounded glories. But more of this in a moment.

He was characterized by obedience. He truly lived by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. His experience tallied in every point with all that was forecast concerning Him in Holy Scripture, because He was always found in the pathway of God's appointing and in a condition in absolute accord with the mind of God.

He was never at fault, however circumstanced, because the grace of God could always express itself in Him without friction or loss. The resources of God to meet man's need flowed most fully where the need was greatest; and the greatest marvel was where man's unbelief hindered its outflow. In the expression of that grace He was accessible to all. His activities were chiefly in the lowest walks of life; one feature of His service so markedly in contrast with the hirelings of His day was that the poor had the gospel preached to them. He brought all the fullness of God into contact with empty vessels. In Him the fatherless found mercy. He healed the broken in heart, and bound up all their wounds. His disciples in zeal for His comfort might repel and drive off little children; He recalled them, and by laying His hands upon them and blessing them has taught us for all time that God's blessing is for little ones. He encountered the woman at the well with that marvellous tact which fills our inmost soul with delight, and that won her from a life of shame to be a worshipper of the Father and a messenger for His Christ. He met a dying thief on the verge of death and damnation, and though in trials of His own unfathomed by mortal ken, found leisure to pour in oil and wine from the resources of God when He found repentance there.

But these are instances; there are multitudes more of them. The manna was found in every camping place of the Israelites. The grace of God in Jesus was found wherever human need presented itself. In many cases, all unsought and unasked, the Lord from heaven touched men. The pool at Bethesda bears witness to it. The blind man in the ninth of John tells the same tale. Did the demoniac in Mark 5 seek the Lord, or did the Lord seek Him?

In other cases He was sought after, and wanted. The bearers of the palsied man, the woman of the seventh of Luke, the centurion, the nobleman, the woman with the issue of blood — such swiftly occur to mind. Did He turn one away? Did not the boundless grace of God show itself to be at the disposal of human need?

He was as tender as He was gracious. He understood the shock on Jairus' heart when news came of the death of his little daughter. Instantly comfort flew as on seraph wing to the breaking heart: "Be not afraid, only believe." He knew that amid all the crowd at the gate of Nain one widowed and bereft woman knew not where to turn in her grief, and He hastens to her side with His most compassionate "Weep not." But wonder of all wonders, that, in Martha's and Mary's sorrow, the Lord of glory brings

down the crowning display of divine sympathy, mingles His tears with theirs, and (as the narrative all but tells us) in a voice broken by a sob, says, "Where have ye laid him?" Others might discuss His apparently unkind ways in permitting Lazarus to die; but some who seemed most touched by His grace could only say, "Behold how He loved Him!"

Not alone in His compassions and resources in meeting others do we see His suitability for meeting our need. His own experiences qualify Him to be support and strength to us. He was in all points tempted as we are apart from sin. He chose a life of poverty and exposure. He who laboured for the comfort and good of others, and used God's power to supply all real wants, suffered want and hunger and thirst Himself without working any miracle. He often spent nights under the open canopy of heaven; He had no place to lay His head. His labours were so arduous that at times He had no leisure to eat bread, and His friends thought and said He was beside Himself. He was ever the target of men without principle. Time-servers and hirelings, who fleeced the flock but fed them not, regarded Him remorselessly as an enemy. They watched Him that they might accuse Him, they intrigued to entangle Him in His talk, they prejudiced the common people against Him where they could, they misrepresented His works and His mission, they spent money freely to overthrow Him and, by and by, the truth of His resurrection. He told them the truth of God; they sought to dash Him over a precipice and to stone Him, and in the end they crucified Him. They sought to turn Him from His service and His path by the threat of what Herod would do to Him. But nothing stemmed the flow, the torrent of grace. No murmurings, no failures on the part of Israel in the wilderness stayed the rain of manna from heaven; and no opposition and no treachery stayed the goodness of Jesus. He was just Himself all through infinitely well-pleasing to God, and full of blessing for men. His disciples misunderstood Him, and often practically misrepresented Him, their loved master, to those around. He patiently corrected their mistakes, showed what His mission was, and made their every failure not an occasion of depressing them but of lifting their thoughts on to a higher plane, even into fellowship with His own. No wonder they loved him! Yet in their weakness they shrank from full identification with Him, they forsook Him when He looked for comforters, they failed Him when He wanted them to watch with Him one hour. Yet He patiently excused their sleep when He needed them, saying, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." He would fain have let them sleep on and take their rest while He went on in His magnificent devotedness to shame and death, but that He knew how their hearts would reproach them if He did not give them opportunity to follow Him. So He said, "Rise up, let us be going." Yet they failed Him, and He was left alone. Lover and friend were far from Him, and His acquaintance hid away in the darkness. How capable is He of understanding our every loneliness, our whole adversity, even the worst of sorrows, the being misrepresented and deserted by our brethren and our friends!

And sorrow? And suffering? Ah! Whose suffering and whose sorrow were like His? For we must remember that Jesus was holy. His sensibilities of body and mind were not numbed as are ours by sin. We often reach the don't care state; He never did. Every slight was felt, every unkind look or remark as we never could feel them. Above all, who can measure what He felt as He bowed in Gethsemane and looked the morrow in the face? Who has ever prayed with the intensity of His prayer, the heart-agony expressing sweat of blood from His sacred Person, "Abba Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt?"

Why do we speak of all this? Because in these things we read the heavenly grace presented in the Lord Jesus. We are not speaking to-day of His atoning sacrifice, though by means of it we are set in peace and rest before God, and are enabled to discern in the humbled Christ these beauties and attractions. But our faith and our affection attach themselves to Him as the Spirit shows His ways to us.

We come into the company and share the feelings of His disciples, although separated from their era by hundreds of years. We love Him in measure as they must have loved Him. He was more to them than all beside. Their hearts burned within them as He talked with them by the way.

Yet He was rejected by Israel and by the world, and was taken from them. The manna ceased to be seen here on earth, and the Person who was It, the Life, the Food of their spirits, was transferred to the regions unseen, to the presence of God in the holiest, up to His place within the Throne. Was He now beyond their reach, never to be known again in all His lovely grace?

So far as the world is concerned it will never see Christ in lowliness and humiliation again. The same so far as Israel after the flesh is concerned; they will know Him thus no more. When again He appears it will be with the splendour of many crowns upon His brow and with ten thousand times ten thousand in His train. No more the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief; nevermore the suffering, the despised, the rejected One.

But dear fellow-Christians, has God lost that precious One? Does Christ cease to be all this because He has gone from earth to heaven? Nay, what He was He ever will be; God will never lose it, nor shall we. Do we not remember even in the history how that a pot of manna was gathered and laid up before the Testimony in the Lord's presence to be kept for their generations; that they might see the bread wherewith He fed them in the wilderness? Contrary to all precedent, outside the experience of any Israelite, this pot of manna was kept, not days and weeks only, but months and years, in pure and uncorrupted state. God ever had it near *Him*, and although it was *hidden* manna, it was not for Him only, but that other privileged eyes might see it too. It is to this that Hebrews 9: 4 refers; and it is from this that the figure of Revelation 2: 17 is borrowed.

In uncorrupted and incorruptible excellency and sweetness does Christ remain. Every grace which made Him precious and indispensable in His life and ways on earth is perpetuated in Him where He is. He is hidden from men's eyes; but the Spirit has come from the very spot to which He ascended, empowered to conduct the faith of every believer to *where* He is, and to inform the heart of every saint in *what* He is. He is accessible to us all; He is food to our souls, He is sympathetic as ever, full of grace and truth, not a feature lost of all His infinite attractiveness. The greatness of His resource is the same, His obedience and love to His Father still the same. His circumstances are altered, but nothing can alter the beauty, the sweetness, the sustaining character of this "manna."

But it is only to be found in the presence of God. It is only to be appreciated by faith and true affection. It is only to be apprehended by the teaching of the heaven-sent Spirit. Those who are indifferent to Christ, and those who know not the privilege of access into the Holiest, cannot be said to understand it, still less to feed upon it. It is mentioned in Revelation 2: 17 in contrast with Revelation 2: 14. Such as eat things sacrificed to idols may not eat of the "hidden manna." Those who participate in the food of a world estranged from God may not feast on God's treasured store. Those who wish to get on where Satan's seat is (ver. 13) will never understand fellowship and intimacy with Christ once humbled here. It is he that overcometh that feeds upon Him, not he that is overcome.

Such then is some of the saints' food in heaven. For ever to revel in, and to be in contact with, the perfections of Christ as they were brought out in His circumstances of humiliation here. They required the setting of humiliation to bring them out, and the environment of human need, yea, even of opposition; His obedience and love, His meekness and lowliness, His patience, His suffering grace, His sympathy and tenderness, His faithfulness to God, His compassion toward men; how could we have learned them fully apart from His incarnation, His coming down out of heaven to earth?

But once known, they remain for our eternal delectation and satisfaction, a support and a stay to

our spirits for ever. If the Tree of Life (Rev. 2: 7), the food of saints, represents to us the fullness and charm of Christ's glory and greatness, the manna in the same chapter brings home to us the eternal freshness and grace and charm of all that was learnt through Christ's humiliation.

As we learn what is to be our portion for ever, may we seek grace to feed upon Him now, being overcomers and not overcome.

## **2. The Tree of life. Rev. 11: 7.**

Every Bible student has probably noticed the similarity between the beginning of the Bible and the end of it. We have Paradise, the tree of life, and God with men; showing that, all the history of sin notwithstanding, God carries out His plan through Christ. The serpent who came in in the first book is cast out in the last, while the woman's Seed promised in Genesis is seen triumphant in the Revelation, with heaven and earth in sweetest accord acclaiming His victory.

A few suggestions are offered as to the Tree of Life. It is mentioned in some five or six places in the Word.

In Genesis 2 it is found at the heart of things in the midst of the garden of Eden. Adjacent to it was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Now while the latter was forbidden to Adam, the former was not. It seems certain that two actual and special trees stood there, to which God in wisdom attached certain moral lessons. That of the knowledge of good and evil represented Adam's responsibility to his Maker, while that of Life represented the privilege that he might enjoy as long as he remained unfallen. The forbidden tree was by no means a privation or a denial to Adam of pleasure or taste; for the Lord God had set in the garden every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Upon it hung fruit truly; but the restriction imposed as to its consumption was purely to remind God's wonderful creature that he held all in trust under his Maker. Beneath man was everything in this lower creation. Above him, God. The one simple security for his tenure of the position, obedience. And obedience, not to a complicated code of laws, but to one simple command. Obedience would have maintained him in the knowledge of good and good alone. Disobedience would leave him with the knowledge of the good he had once enjoyed, but with the added knowledge of the evil he had acquired, which would overpower and condemn him. It was the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

But the tree of life was there, unfenced by any such law. It was available for the man's advantage. Whatever we may learn of its teaching, the tree itself stood there for his good. It represented what was really life in its fullness for Adam in the condition in which he had been created. We venture to think that few people realize the greatness of the intercourse which was brought within the reach of man who was made in the image of God. Far from the idea of the original Adam being a man in a very undeveloped state of evolution, his mind was capable of the widest intimacy with his Maker Himself. There was no perverted will, there was no debasing lust, there was no degrading conception of idolatrous worship, there was no distraction such as we feel in a world that puts ten thousand interests in the place of the living God. The wisdom of God surrounded him with an infinite variety of objects, in which he might discover the glories of his best Friend; there was illimitable fullness in which his soul might bathe from day to day; while his heart was made capable of uttering its praise at every fresh communication or discovery. Sciences that men are struggling over now with minds be-drugged by sin, and which they misuse to praise their own powers of observation, were all open to him with stainless purity, and without the painful effort man now puts forth. Every growth, every hue, every colour, every form, every sound, every force in nature, had its spiritual lesson to convey to him; and all affording themes for adoration Godward. The Bible intimates that the Lord God Himself sought to commune

with Adam in the cool of the day. Probably all that Adam touched during the daylight would have afforded reason for wondering inquiry in the evening, and the delightful business of the Creator would have been to explain cause and effect, and to instruct him how to proceed in his responsible position as head of all. We may almost imagine Proverbs 3: 13-26 to have been Solomon's summary of Adam's position; showing at any rate what the tree of life suggested to him. It was all the wisdom of God, made available for the creature, according to the capacity with which he was created. If we put it more in New Testament language, the tree of life in Eden may set forth what Christ was as the Revealer of God in creation; and the fruits of the tree in that position, all the glories of Christ so far as the first creation could be the expression of them. But Adam would think within the compass of the thoughts proper to his creation; and to him all would be a knowledge, not exactly of Christ, but simply of the Creator, the beneficent God.

All this privilege was lost through Adam's sin and fall. Neither now was he fitted to commune with God, for his sense of shame and guilt prevented any desire for such intercourse; nor was it possible for God to resume intercourse with the creature who had apostatized from Him, with that awful sin question opened but unsettled. A dreadful gulf had been created, man had become a pervert from good; feeling utterly wretched, yet having a taste for the evil that ruined him, that led him and his posterity deeper and deeper into the mire, and that placed an impassable distance, and set an insurmountable barrier, between God and man. Of this the end of Genesis 3 is the picture. The tree of life, the fullness of life for man in his innocence, was cut off from him, and he from it, by the sword of flame which turned every way.

Passing from this material representation of the goodness of God in Eden, and from the consideration of what might have been enjoyed by Adam had he remained sinless, we come to a later period in man's history, to an experience which confirms and corroborates the former one, and to an event more momentous still in its issues for God and for eternity. For Christ Himself came. He was not a mere pictorial representation of some unseen reality, nor was He sent to a Paradise on earth. He was life itself, and life adapted to the conditions in which He found men. The tree was bearing another manner of fruit now according to its season. The goodness of God brought privileges to men that were unknown before, though they had been foretold by the prophets. "Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, and went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Proposals were made to Israel, and to man, all guilty and helpless as they were, to avail themselves of the grace and goodness of God. He would forgive their iniquities and heal their diseases, He would satisfy their poor with bread, comfort those that mourned, and bring deliverance to the captives. He would bring them the truth about God, long misunderstood by, and misrepresented to, their hearts. He would discourse to them, not now about creation glories alone, and the privileges of intercourse with the Creator, not now about God's demands in law, but of a Shepherd Who sought lost sheep, of a Father Who welcomed repentant prodigals. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. No flaming sword now turned every way to keep men from Him; rather the sweetest of invitations called men to Him. He had to expostulate with the Jews, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." God's compassions and mercies fructified in Christ for man's good, and once more possibilities of blessing and immense privileges were put within man's reach.

Alas! what are we? What is man proved to be? A hopeless wreck, an utter failure, rotten to the core, not only forgetful of good but hostile to it; so that the greatest good that ever came from God into a world of sinners was met only by scornful hatred, and the carnal mind was seen in its true colours at

last, enmity to God. The very grace which brought the one only Son to the vineyard, sent by the Father, encountered the almost incredible, the most malignant, proposition: "This is the heir, come let us kill him"; as the Lord says, "Now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." The compassions that brought Him to men's side for their blessing gave range for the spite that spat in His face, crowned Him with thorns, and nailed both hands and feet to a cross of wood. The overtures were fruitless, the reconciliation was refused, the tree of life was sneered at and rejected, the Author of life was slain.

The Tree of Life is not on earth now. "Though we have known Christ after the flesh," says the Apostle Paul, "yet now henceforth know we Him no more." He has been removed from the reach of the natural, earthly man, and has been transplanted on high. He is to be found alone in the Paradise of God. God is not defeated; nay, far from it, His grace is triumphant. For Christ has been exalted as Man out of death into boundless glory. Happy as might have been Eden, the blessedness connected with Christ risen in the new scene which is opened out by reason of His death and resurrection is greater still. Paul was caught up into Paradise, and the communications of God's wisdom there, and of Christ's fullness, were simply unrenderable, incommunicable, in any language under the sun. Joy unspeakable, unsearchable riches, love surpassing knowledge, glory excelling, communications unutterable, — such is the vista now open to faith and Christian affection. However much we know, we know only in part; but one day we shall know as even we are known. Illimitable blessing will fill heaven and earth, with Christ as the centre and fullness of it all, the Tree of Life with privileges new and eternal, setting out all the resources of God in grace for our enjoyment for eternity. Who that knows these things does not exult in the victory that God has gained?

The Epistle to the Ephesians shows how that God, working in the very world whose condition was so alienated from His life that men must be regarded as dead in trespasses and sins, has begun at the bottom in the death in which He found them and has quickened saints together with Christ. He has imparted life and character of a new order, derived from and consonant with Christ, has associated them with Him risen and glorified, and set them in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Even now the privilege is accorded us in the Christian company, of entering into, enjoying, and expressing the all-varied wisdom of God; but in coming ages God will fulfil to the outermost bound His purpose of displaying the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. I have little doubt it was intended that the Ephesian saints should be fitted by the instruction in their epistle to enter by the Spirit into that heavenly Paradise, and to taste now the fruits of the Tree of Life. There was at least no reserve on God's part; Christ in glory as the Centre and Life of the new scene was set before the eyes of their heart, and God intimated His wish to initiate them into, even as He had opened out to them objectively, the knowledge of the mystery of His will, that He would gather together all things in one in Christ.

But the Ephesians were, and we are, still in the world actually, where hostile spirit-powers will spare no pains to divert us from Christ. Ten thousand wiles do they employ to distract us from our calling, and to alienate our affection from the Source and Centre of blessing. A tendency to teach some other doctrine is found at Ephesus in 1 Timothy 1: 3.

Departure from the faith is foretold in 1 Tim. 4: 1. Defection had already set in, in 2 Timothy 1: 15, of a most widespread character in Asia where Ephesus was; the wonderful vessel Paul who had told them of Christ is seen forsaken, save by one or two.

But Christ, the Son of Man, dealing with His faithless church on the ground of its responsibility, lays bare the secret of the whole departure in His address to this very church of Ephesus in Revelation

2: 1-7. "I have against thee," He says, "that thou hast left thy first love" (New Tr.). They had given up the sense of His love, He was no more to them personally what He had been in their first days; He was no longer their one absorbing Theme, their Object, the known, trusted, and beloved Lover to their hearts; and He missed their warm response, their sweet affection, their loving confidence, their complete absorption with Himself.

It is in this connection that He says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

Our present object is not to consider the path of the overcomer, though that path may be very simply summed up in this, that we make everything of Christ; again let us say it, — that we make everything *of Christ*.

But it is to learn if possible what may be meant by this eating of the Tree of Life. What thought is conveyed to us now by this figure, the Tree of Life? May I suggest that it represents to our spirits the infinite privilege accorded to the saints in the knowledge of Christ, in Whom is seen the fullness of Life according to God's purpose? Not seen now within the limitations of created and material things, but in His new acquired Manhood glories; ever revealing on the one hand all the wisdom, and glory, and love of God, and on the other ever defining for us our place in the fair scene of blessing, and conducting our hearts into all the fullness of that Life which has been designed for us from eternity. If a material creation so vast as this was required to express the *creatorial* glories of God, how infinite must be the delights in Christ, Who expresses *every* glory of God! And further, how infinite must be the capacities of that life which is formed for the enjoyment of all God's glory for ever! Of this life Christ is the living expression. Eternally will He conduct our hearts into the apprehension of the blessed God, and discourse with us of the infinite wisdom that has created such a scene for His own delight and glory, as well as for the delectation and blessing of the favoured subjects of His grace. In this sense I suppose we shall eat the fruits of the Tree of Life through that golden age which we call Eternity. But the beginning of the feast will be during the millennial reign of Christ, when overcomers will taste the sweetness of reward.

One element remains to be examined. It is probable that Ezekiel 47: 12 refers to the same thing as Revelation 22: 2. In both passages we learn that not only does the Tree yield meat, but the leaves are to be used for medicine. In the Revelation it distinctly applies this feature of the Tree of Life to the nations, *i.e.* such as are spared to enter the millennial blessing on earth. We shall not need medicine in heaven, beloved saints of God. Neither will there be there crippled or diseased bodies, nor broken and sorrowing hearts again. Ours to eat the fruit, ever varied, never palling, of all that Christ is, in its season. But how comforting, as we look around today and see the "open sores" as Livingstone called them, and the fevered condition of the nations on earth, to know that the Tree of Life will afford in its season healing for them. They will not learn war any more; and even to earth's utmost bound the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will spread as the waters cover the sea. Earth will unite with heaven in that thousand years of His glorious reign in glad acclaim of the benefit derived from being under Christ, Israel and the Gentiles sitting down under *His* shadow with great delight.