

Revelation 22:1-5 - The Tree of Life

The sense that we will live forever somewhere has shaped every civilization in human history...the unifying testimony of the human heart through history is belief in life after death. Anthropological evidence suggests that every culture has a God-given, innate sense of the eternal-that this world is not all there is.

– Randy Alcorn

There is a universal longing for the tree of life

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb – **Revelation 22:1***

*He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. - **Ecclesiastes 3:11***

*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. - **Romans 8:19-23***

1. Where do you see the longing for eternity and redemption -which God has placed in every human heart- expressed in the world? In vain pursuits and living for the “whooshes”? In the world's conflicts and struggles?
2. How might people interpret and explain this longing apart from belief in God or eternity?
3. What has been your experience of this longing in your own life?

The tree of life will provide complete satisfaction and healing

*through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. - **Revelation 22:2-3***

*From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” - **Matthew 4:17***

*Heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ - **Luke 10:9***

*Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.” - **Luke 17:20-21***

1. What most encourages/comforts you right now about the promise of eventual complete satisfaction and restoration in Christ?
2. The eventual fading of every feeling of completeness on this side of heaven is the common experience of humanity. How can this be a bridge to engage and help the lost and struggling grasp what our hearts are ultimately longing for?

3. How does the promise of Jesus' future healing and restoration of all things fit with His claim that He has brought His Kingdom to the world with His first coming? (ie: the "already/not-yet nature of the Kingdom")
4. As "new creations in Christ" (2 Cor.5:17), what is our role in bringing a glimpse of the hope of heaven to the world through our lives?

The tree of life is not an end in itself

*They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever. - **Revelation 22:4-5***

*Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you. But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works. - **Psalms 73:25-28***

1. What, if any, has been your understanding of heaven and what it will be like? In what ways have we been prone to subtly but harmfully taking on an "instrumental" view of God- seeing Him as a means to our own ends?
2. What does it mean to truly treasure God Himself above all things?
3. In what ways should God's promises about eternity change and inform how we live here and now?

What will "doing the word" look like for you this week in light of this passage? How will this truth effect how you think, speak, live in your day-to-day life?