



THE LIVING TREE

FROM CREATION TO THE RIVER

WHOLE BIBLE CONNECTIONS SERIES | 13 MAY 2024



WHOLE BIBLE CONNECTIONS

Five Transformative Themes:

1. The Scarlet Thread (08 Jan)
2. The Holy Place (11 Mar)
3. The Sacred Rest (15 Apr)
4. **The Living Tree (13 May)**
5. The Anointed Persons (08 Jul)

RECAP

The seventh day was meant to last for eternity, where God and humanity can enjoy each other's presence in restedness. But sin ruined that plan. So what is the Sabbath for?

- **The Sabbath serves as a covenant of sanctification between God and humanity, providing release from work and restoring God's divine presence on earth as it is in heaven.**
- **The Sabbath allows us to rest from the burden of our own strive, so that Christ can bring true rest.**



CHECK-IN

What are some famous “trees” or “gardens” that you know of in the Bible?

In today’s session, we will look at how Biblical writers use the motif of trees to describe the present reality and future promise of the Kingdom of God and how gardens are vessels to carry the kingdom to God’s people.

THE LIVING TREE



THE LIVING TREE: FROM CREATION TO THE RIVER

At the end of today's session, you will be able to:

- **Understand the metaphorical significance of trees in the Bible**
- **Appreciate the dual nature of the Kingdom of God**
- **Inspire active participation in the expansion of the Kingdom**
- **Enhance Biblical literacy and interpretation skills**



GARDEN OF EDEN

KINGDOM BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS



DIVINE BLESSING TO HUMANITY

“Hidden” in the Creation story is God’s design for plants and trees to be part of the divine blessing given to humanity

Read Genesis 1:26-30.

GENESIS 1

vv.28-29 “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

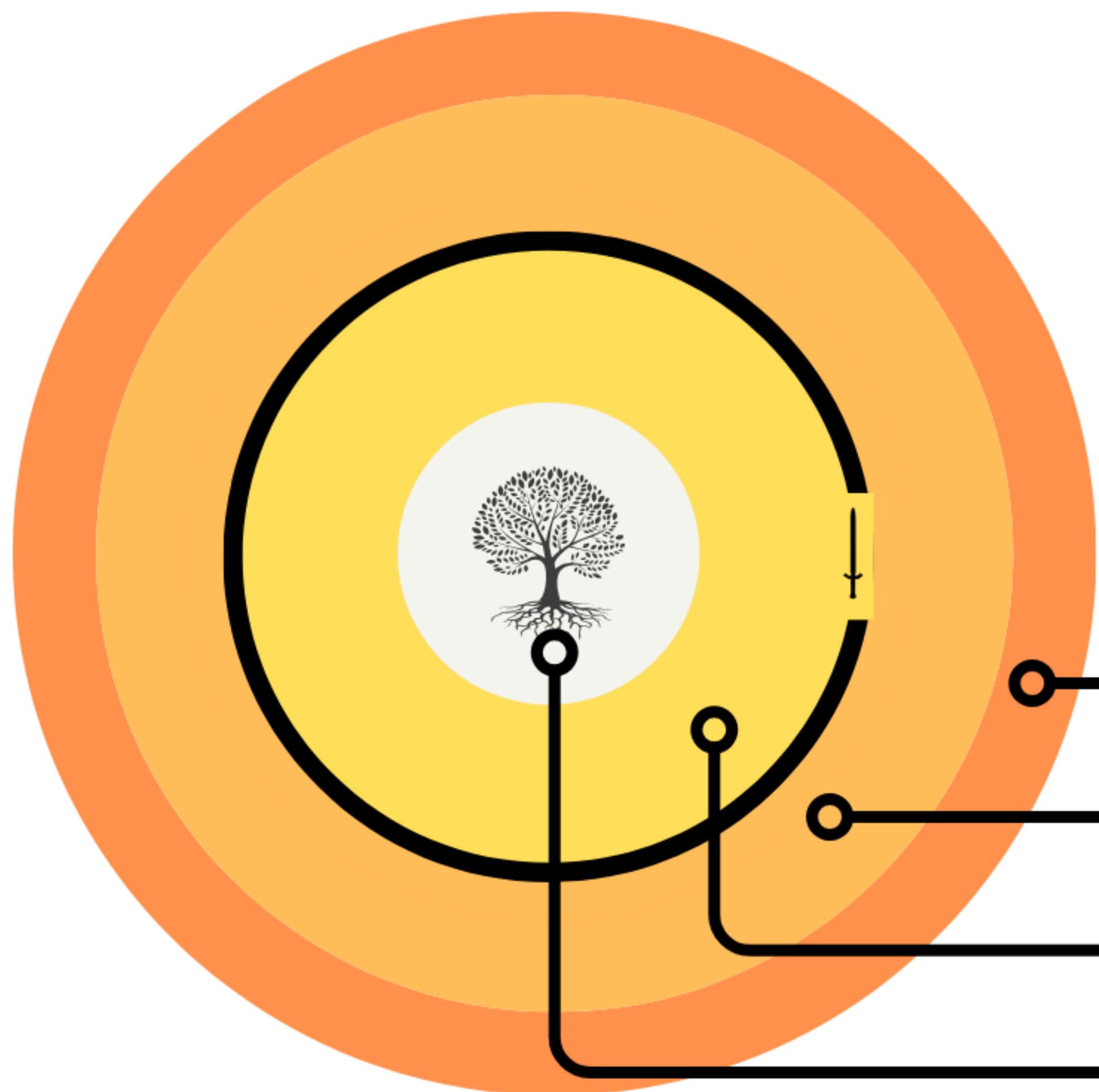
Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.”

THE LIVING TREE

The theme “*every tree that has fruit*” sustaining life is established right from the Creation story.

While humans receive life through God’s life-breath, the Garden of Eden is given to sustain physical life and enable the fruitful multiplication of humans.

But the ultimate life-sustaining tree is planted at the centre of the Garden of Eden.

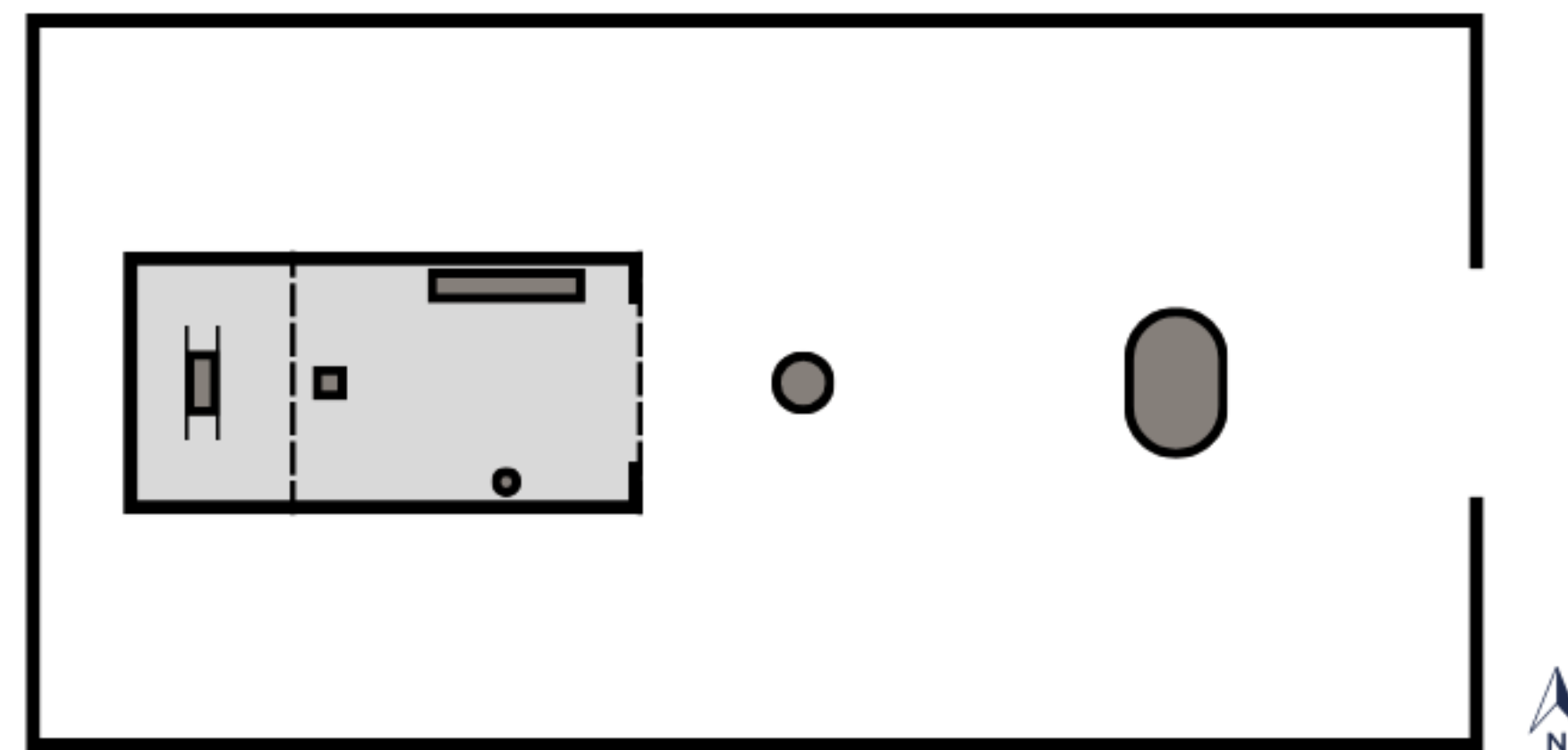


Beyond Eden: Wilderness

Eden: Outer courtyard

Garden of Eden: Holy Place

Tree of Life: Holy of Holies



RECAP: THE HOLY PLACE

The Tree of Life was accessible in the Garden of Eden, representing life in direct communion with God, where His provision and presence were fully experienced.

The same image is established in Revelation.

REVELATION 2

v.7b To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise (garden) of God.

THE LIVING TREE

REVELATION 22

vv.1-2 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

v.14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

THE LIVING TREE



PRINCIPLE #1

- **The eternal purpose of God's Kingdom is to enjoy the presence of God.**



GOD'S CHOSEN

GARDEN REVEALED AND SCORCHED



EMERGING FROM EGYPT

Read Exodus 15:22-27. How does this passage:

- **contrast the life in and outside of Eden?**
- **reflect the themes of restoration?**
- **reveal God's intention for His people?**

Present reality: The present Kingdom of God gives restoration and renewal to those who listen.

Future promise: The future Kingdom of God promises the restoration of Edenic conditions.

ESTABLISHING A KINGDOM

Read 2 Samuel 7:8-13. How does this passage metaphorically liken Jerusalem to the past and future Eden?

Present reality: The present Kingdom of God offers His people the divine assurance of His presence.

Future promise: The future Kingdom of God promises the full realisation of peace, justice, and righteousness for eternity.

TALE OF TWO TREES

Read Psalm 1:1-3 and Isaiah 1:27-31. How do these two poems describe the fates of two contrasting groups of people?

PSALM 1

***vv.1-3 Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of
water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.***

THE LIVING TREE

ISAIAH 1

***vv.29-31 "You will be ashamed because of the
sacred oaks***

***in which you have delighted;
you will be disgraced because of the gardens
that you have chosen.***

***You will be like an oak with fading leaves,
like a garden without water.***

***The mighty man will become tinder
and his work a spark;***

***both will burn together,
with no one to quench the fire."***

TALE OF TWO TREES

Read Psalm 1:1-3 and Isaiah 1:27-31. How do these two poems describe the fates of two contrasting groups of people?

Present reality: The present Kingdom of God offers those who follow God's ways nourishment and sustenance.

Future promise: The future Kingdom of God promises the ultimate restoration of all things under God's just and righteous rule.

NEW SHOOTS EMERGE

Isaiah's declaration in Chapter 1 does not undo what God had promised David. The rest of the book of Isaiah develops this image of the new seed that God will sprout in the new Jerusalem on the other side of the exile. Particularly vivid tree imagery occurs in connection with a coming messianic king.

ISAIAH 10 & 11

*vv.33-34 See, the Lord, the Lord Almighty,
will lop off the boughs with great power.
The lofty trees will be felled,
the tall ones will be brought low.
He will cut down the forest thickets with an axe;
Lebanon will fall before the Mighty One.*

*vv.1-3 A shoot will come up from the stump of
Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him,
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.*

In the period of the exile, multiple prophets and wisdom literature point to a renewed tree with branches sprouting from the stump:

- **Isaiah 27, 37, 44, 61**
- **Ezekiel 47**
- **Psalms 1**
- **Proverbs 3, 11, 13, 15**



PRINCIPLE #2

- **The eternal promise of God's Kingdom is restoration through righteousness and justice.**

ETERNITY



THE LIVING TREE

A close-up photograph of a wooden bowl filled with mustard seeds, with more seeds spilled out onto a wooden surface. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent brown filter. A solid blue vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

THE LIVING TREE

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS HERE



MARK 1

vv.9-11 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

v.15 "The time has come," Jesus said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

KINGDOM IMAGES

What do these parables tell us about the Kingdom of God in terms of its present reality and future promise?

1) Mark 4:26-29

2) Mark 4:30-34

PRESENT REALITY

The present Kingdom of God...

grows independent of human
intervention

doesn't come to fruition
overnight

offers refuge and impacts wider
circles as it grows.

FUTURE PROMISE

The future Kingdom of God...

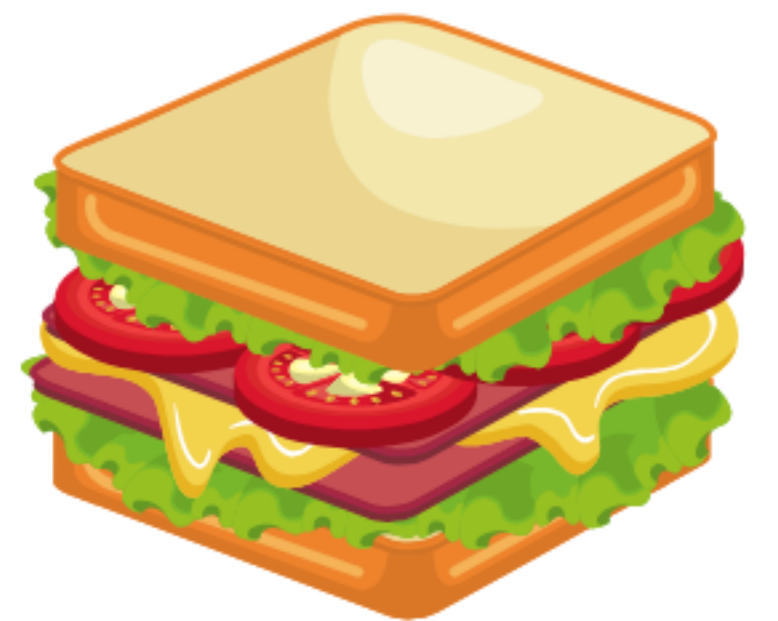
gathers the faithful at the end
of the age

will reach its intended scope
and scale

JESUS JUDGES _____

Read Mark 11:12-21. Consider what this passage means in relation to the Kingdom of God.

- **What does the fig tree represent?**
- **Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?**

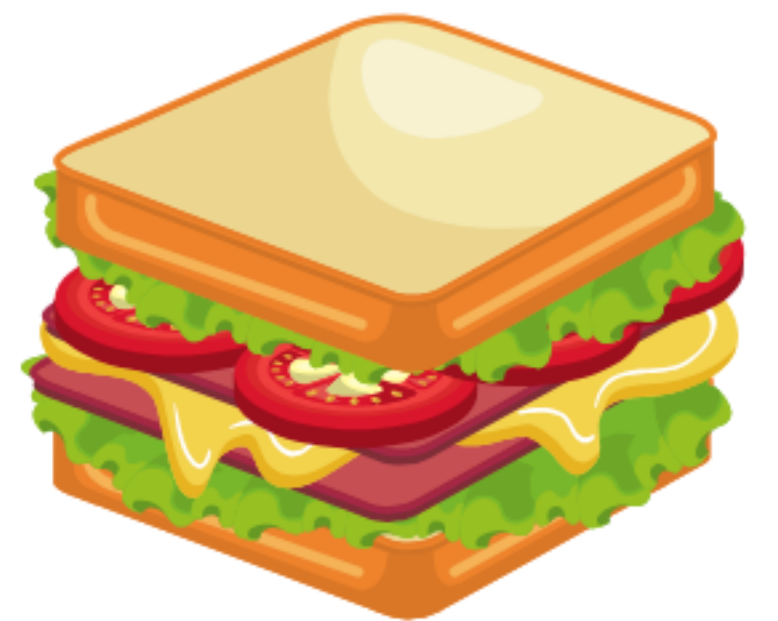


THE LIVING TREE

JESUS JUDGES JERUSALEM

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- **What does the fig tree represent?**
- **Why did Jesus curse the fig tree?**



THE LIVING TREE

MATTHEW 26

vv.36-38 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

On three occasions, Jesus exclaimed to His Father:

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”



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REVELATION 2

v.7b To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise (garden) of God.

HOW TO BE VICTORIOUS?

- **Ephesus: Return to first love**
- **Smyrna: Remain faithful unto death**
- **Pergamum: Repent from tolerating falsehood**
- **Thyatira: Reject immorality**
- **Sardis: Reinvigorate spiritual fervor**
- **Philadelphia: Retain the crown of Christ**
- **Laodicea: Renew commitment to Christ**



PRINCIPLE #3

- **The eternal promise of God's Kingdom is reserved for those victorious at the complete arrival of the Kingdom of God.**

ETERNITY



THE LIVING TREE

CHECK-OUT

Summarise what you learned today in **one** phrase or sentence.



RESOURCES

- "The Already and Not-Yet Kingdom" by David M. Shaw
- "Tree of Life" by The Bible Project
- "The Here and Not Yet: What is Kingdom Theology and why does it matter?" by Joseph S. Hopping
- "Here and Now: Thriving in the Kingdom of Heaven Today" by Robby Gallaty

