

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.**

**The Tree of Life for week ending 11/23/03.**

**When the time is short...**

Wake up before it's too late!

***Luke 12:13-21***

**Revelation 12:12-13** *For this reason, be celebrating you heavens [elect angels and resurrected Church-age believers] and you who live temporarily in them [Old Testament saints and Tribulational martyrs, who reside in heaven in the interim body]. Woe to both land and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having and holding on to great wrath [foaming with fury], knowing that his time is short. And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] who gave birth to the male child [the Lord Jesus Christ].*

Many people react in crazy ways when they realize the time is short, as Satan does here. However, with the right lifestyle, you have control of your life in living or in dying, even though you know the time is short. Whatever you are, when you come to a pressure period in your life, all your virtue or all your evil comes out. Consider the fool who ignores the fact that the time may be short; his testimony is given in **Luk 12:13-21**.

**Luk 12:13-21** *And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry."' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

Our Lord sees deep within the heart of this man; He sees the problem of greed, and He does not address the request, but simply passes it off with a powerful statement, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" The fool ignores the fact that the time may be short and concentrates on the things of this earth. Our Lord says to the crowd (not to the man), "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." He is not merely addressing greed; He is addressing life.

How would you live if you believed the time was short? The viewpoint we need is given in **Jam 4:13-14**, "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow, we shall go to

*such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*" There is nothing wrong with having much; our Lord never attacks having much, but He does attack motives, and He warns the wealthy about being blinded by how much they have, when in reality the time could be short. We are to enjoy our health, our children, our mate, and all our blessings because the time may be short for us to enjoy them.

*"This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?"* Death has a way of correcting our perspective. When we view life in the long haul and realize we all wind up in the grave, it does wonders for our greed in the passing of time. There are many forms of greed, and those who have little can be just as greedy as those who have much. There is nothing wrong with owning things, however, something is wrong when those things own us.

The principle of planning ahead and thinking beyond today is taught in the Bible. It was not wrong for the man to want to build larger barns to store his crops; it would have been wrong for him not to do so, to let them rot in the fields. However, he made two fatal mistakes:

1. He did not understand himself; he forgot about his soul. He thought only in terms of the tangible, that which he could see, touch, and hold. We cannot take treasure with us when we die, but the Lord Jesus Christ made it very clear that we can send it in on ahead, **Mat 6:19-21**, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*
2. He did not care about others. There is not one word here about him giving to others. Never once does he pray for divine guidance. Never once does he think in terms of other people.

This man is in for a grim awakening because the fool ignores the fact that the time may be short. The fool thinks he is going to live forever. We learn several principles from this passage:

1. When you are blessed with much, give generously. Our Lord does not criticize those who are blessed with much, but He reserves His strongest words for those who are innately selfish, and who keep rather than give.
2. When you plan for the future, think of eternity. When you begin to think eternally, it will do wonders for your planning. You will realize that your fortune, little or great that it may be, will simply be turned over to those who did not work for it.
3. Whether you have much or little, hold it loosely.

How much you have is not even the issue; it is what you do with what you have before it is too late. This principle applies to believers who need to respond to doctrine before it is too late. Many believers keep saying they will get with it later, **Isa 29:24, Rom 8:29-30**. These are the ones who never can handle any kind of adversity or pressure. When helpless people face pressure they always fall apart; they cannot handle it without the humility to rebound and recover. In times of adversity Bible doctrine is the believer's source of comfort, **Psa 119:50,92,107**. For some people, everywhere they go, trouble follows them, but for these same people, God's doctrines can be their delight, **Psa 94:19, Pro 12:25**. Anxiety and stress affect the right lobe of the soul, but a good word, or

reliable doctrine, makes the heart happy. It is good to have people in your life who build you up rather than tear you down, especially in times of adversity.

The Lord said in **Joh 16:33**, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have Tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”* Adversity is used by the Lord to test the believer and to wake up the believer before it is too late, **Isa 48:10**, *“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”* In **Pro 24:10** there is no place for sloppiness in the Christian way of life: *“If you are slack [careless or sloppy] in the day of distress, your strength is limited.”* In **Mal 3:2**, fire represents the way God puts His people through trouble and sorrow in order to remove them from the influence of evil, but not to fill them with stress: *“But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.”* We read of the early church in **Act 5:41-42**, *“So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”* Whether it was in season or out of season, whether it was easy or difficult, they kept teaching and preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ every day.

We are protected from becoming bitter when we understand that adversity is for our own blessing, **Rom 5:3**, *“And not only this, but we also rejoice in our Tribulations, knowing that tribulation [affliction or hardship] brings about perseverance.”* The faith-rest drill protects the believer from allowing adversity to become stress. There are many pressures in life designed to draw us closer to God, and therefore we do not want to give in to stress and miss the purpose of this adversity, **Psa 50:15, 86:7, 91:15, 118:5, 119:67,75**. The Lord uses adversity and affliction in a positive way to draw us to Him, and to strengthen us, **Exo 1:12**, *“But the more they [the Egyptians] afflicted them [the Jews], the more they multiplied and the more they spread out.”*

Worrying (**Luk 10:41**), a desire for money (**Mat 13:22**), a desire for pleasure (**Luk 8:14**), or any excessive desire can be a tremendous source of pressure, **Mar 4:19**. Most Christians fall into evil as soon as they come under pressure, because they never established a system of priorities on a daily basis. You cannot jump over the mundane, routine days of life, from one “highlight” to another, or live in the unrealistic viewpoint of the “party” lifestyle. It is your daily perspective that gives you the power and ability to face disaster. If your daily priorities include doctrine first, then every day is a special day, because you establish a routine by which you make positive decisions for doctrine, have personal control of your life, and have a personal sense of destiny. The life without routine is not organized for either adversity or prosperity. A lot of believers fail because they do not wake up before it’s too late and because they do not know how to handle the times of monotony or boredom or routine. In **Ecc 9:10**, the Bible says, *“Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might.”* **Zec 4:10** tells us, *“Do not despise the day of small things!”* You may think that what you are doing on a continual and faithful basis is a “small thing,” but God does not. The secret is *priority*; if your priority is doctrine and you are consistent, you will make the right decisions for doctrine, and your daily life will be happy.

In **Rev 12:13**, we see the result of Satan’s unhappiness: *“And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.”* Frustrated, arrogant, unhappy people become persecutors. In **Rom**

**12:14-21**, we are to handle persecution in this manner: *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not, rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another [doctrinal viewpoint]; do not be arrogant, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace [live in harmony] with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with the [absolute] good.”* This is tantamount to dependence on the integrity of God rather than on revenge and retaliation, and the function of *impersonal love*.

Remember that God’s will for your life as a member of the Royal Family of God is to *bless you*. His will is to give you prosperity in the midst of all adverse situations. Therefore, in eternity past, God provided a fantastic plan, which included His highest and best just for you. If you go back as far as you can go in your imagination to the beginning of the past, and you step off, you are now in eternity past, and God is there, **Gen 1:1**, *“In the beginning God...”* And even then, He was thinking of you and your adversities, **Rev 13:8**. Then if we could go forward to the farthest point of the future, as far as our imagination can take us, and step into the infinity of the future, God is there, **Rev 21:1**. We go from **Gen 1:1**, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,”* to **Rev 21:1**, *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.”*

In **2Pe 3:10** we see a part of the believer’s future and the challenge of pressing on and waking up before it’s too late: *“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief [the new heaven and new earth in **Rev 21:1**]. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed [dissolved] with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”* The principle here is that what endures the destruction of the universe establishes the true eternal values of life and the highest priorities. Waking up before it’s too late means that you have permanent values and all other values are built around them. This is how you *think* as you are looking forward. In **2Pe 3:11**, this challenge is based upon your understanding that the destruction of the entire universe at the termination of human history will inevitably happen. This at the end of the Millennium, the future 1,000-year reign of our Lord on earth, **Rev 20:2-7, 21:1**. *“Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way [the earth and its works], what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct [living the spiritual life].”* **2Pe 3:12-14** goes on to say, *“Looking forward with confidence and hastening of the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise [of life in the eternal state] we are looking forward with confidence for new heavens and a new earth, in which perfect righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since we are looking forward with confidence for these things [the new heavens and new earth], be diligent [self-motivated] to be found by Him in peace [a state of tranquility], spotless [the execution of the spiritual life] and blameless [the result of fulfillment of the spiritual life].”*

Having this attitude fulfills the principle of living your life in the light of eternity,

in spite of the monotony and routine of life. Waking up before it's too late means that we are to look forward, never backward. The future of the believer in the eternal state becomes a great motivator once we have woken up and found the right priorities. God is building character in your life through the daily routine functions of your life, without you even seeing it.

For a more detailed study, order tapes IA11-342 to IA11-345.