

Morning Sermon February 24, 2019

"The True Vine" John 15:1-5

I. Jesus is the True Vine in contrast to Israel –

15 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. John 15:1

1. In the Old Testament, Israel was God's vine / vineyard –

7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant... Isaiah 5:7 A

Israel embraced this designation as the vine or vineyard of the "LORD of hosts"

"The grapevine was a symbol of national life. That emblem appeared on coins minted during the Maccabean period ..."

R. Kent Hughes

"In the Roman period ... Herod the Great's rebuilt temple adopted the image. Between the porch and the holy place was a golden gate on which was affixed a gold vine. Clusters of gold grapes hung from it, and wealthy families would give gold tendrils, berries, and leaves as gifts so the vine might always grow larger (Josephus *BJ* v.5.4 [120]; Mishnah *Mid.* iii.8)."

The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary

*The vine as a symbol of Israel, and / or Judah seems to have been embraced with pride by Israel's people, and yet Biblically the idea of the vine / vineyard also proclaims Israel's failure.*

Consider the immediate context of Isaiah 5:7, it is not bragging on Israel as the vine or vineyard –

5 And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. <sup>6</sup> I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds That they rain no rain on it." <sup>7</sup> For the vineyard of the LORD of Hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help. Isaiah 5:5-7

2. Israel seems in Jesus' day to have missed the negative aspects of Scripture's portrayal of them as the vine, Herod thought of himself like a king despite the fact he was a wicked pawn of Rome –

A. As originally planted by God Israel was noble, high quality, yet they turned -

<sup>21</sup> Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? <sup>22</sup> For though you wash yourself with lye, and use much soap, Yet your iniquity is marked before Me," says the Lord GOD. Jeremiah 2:21-22

B. Ezekiel 15 speaks of God burning the vine –

<sup>6</sup> "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; <sup>7</sup> and I will set My face against them. Ezekiel 15:6-7

C. Ezekiel 19 is very telling in its description of what happened to Israel as the vine –

<sup>10</sup> 'Your mother was like a vine in your bloodline, Planted by the waters, Fruitful and full of branches Because of many waters.

<sup>11</sup> She had strong branches for scepters of rulers. She towered in stature above the thick branches, And was seen in her height amid the dense foliage. <sup>12</sup> But she was plucked up in fury, She was cast down to the ground, And the east wind dried her fruit. Her strong branches were broken and withered; The fire consumed them.

<sup>13</sup> And now she is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land.

<sup>14</sup> Fire has come out from a rod of her branches And devoured her fruit, So that she has no strong branch—a scepter for ruling.' " This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation. Ezekiel 19:10-14

- Note like a vine in "your bloodline"

- Note :11 She had strong branches for scepters of rulers. David, Solomon, even nearer the end Hezekiah

- The judgment of God under Nebuchadnezzar is described –

<sup>12</sup> But she was plucked up in fury, She was cast down to the ground, And the east wind dried her fruit. Her strong branches were broken and withered; The fire consumed them.

- This judgment left Israel with no strong branch—a scepter for ruling. No king! They were ruled by Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, in Jesus day, Rome ... they say it themselves - <sup>15</sup> But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said

to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!” John 19:15

3. Note about all these Old Testament “vine” passages, they are all in time shortly before or after the exile, when there was no longer a ruler, an earthly king in Israel –

A. Consider the post-exilic prayer psalm, Psalm 80 -

<sup>8</sup> You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. <sup>9</sup> You prepared room for it, And caused it to take deep root, And it filled the land. <sup>10</sup> The hills were covered with its shadow, And the mighty cedars with its boughs. <sup>11</sup> She sent out her boughs to the Sea, And her branches to the River. <sup>12</sup> Why have You broken down her hedges, So that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? <sup>13</sup> The boar out of the woods uproots it, And the wild beast of the field devours it. <sup>14</sup> Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine <sup>15</sup> And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, And the branch that You made strong for Yourself. <sup>16</sup> It is burned with fire, it is cut down; They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance. <sup>17</sup> Let Your hand be upon the Man of Your right hand, Upon the Son of Man whom You made strong for Yourself. <sup>18</sup> Then we will not turn back from You; Revive us, and we will call upon Your name. <sup>19</sup> Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved! Psalm 80:8-19

According to Psalm 80, God was at first good to His vine and it grew, Psalm 8:8-11 Yet, God broke down her hedges, her borders, her safety and even the wild beasts devours it – Psalm 80:12-14 Psalm 80:15 starts a PRAYER for the vine, mentioning a Man and a Son of Man, the same person He they revive and restore the vine...

II. Jesus does not “replace” Israel as the Vine but fulfils and revives, He has always been the TRUE VINE, before Abraham was “I AM” –

15 “I AM the true vine...

What is the difference between replace and fulfilled?

1. Replace means God had Israel, the nation as His original vine, they failed and so His original plan failed, and so Jesus as Vine #2 is God’s plan B!

2. Fulfilled means Jesus was always God’s Plan and His only plan.

A. The bloodline, Ezekiel 19:10 is Jesus’ blood shed on the cross –<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, Revelation 1:5

B. He has new strong branches of rulers, Ezekiel 19:11 –

<sup>6</sup> and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 1:6

C. Jesus as a Vine reaches beyond Israel –

<sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,<sup>10</sup> And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:9-10

III. You cannot be a king, priest or branch of Christ, without abiding in Christ –

15 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:1-5

1. God the father tends this Vine

A. John 15:2 He lifts or takes away branches that do not bear fruit

B. He prunes branches in order that they might bear more

2. We are clean / saved by the Word of Christ –

<sup>17</sup> So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

3. Abiding in that clean state is absolutely needed –

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. <sup>32</sup> And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:30-31