

## I Am The Vine

In the Old Testament, the imagery of the vine is used to describe Israel, taken from Egypt, planted in prepared soil, and growing into a great nation (Psalms 80:8-11). Isaiah uses parts of a vine to illustrate messiah's ancestry, rooted in Abraham, growing to the kingdom of David, and finally to Jesus (Isaiah 11:1, 10; 60:21). The words used in Isaiah 11:1 point to a difference between the Davidic kingdom, with most of it cut off by Assyria, and the remnant of Israel. *"There shall come forth a Rod (literally a shoot or twig) from the stem (stump) of Jesse, and a Branch (strong and fruit-bearing limb) shall grow out of his roots."* The use of a twig that cannot bear weight for the earthly kings of Israel and a strong branch for the Christ shows the contrast between the earthly type and the eternal antitype. See also Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15

Moving into the New Testament, the nation Israel as the vine is replaced by the Christ as the vine with the Father remaining as the vinedresser. *"I am the true (alethinos) vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."* (John 15:1) The use of alethinos which means truthfulness or true is defined by Dr. Thayer as "that which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real nature corresponding to the name, in every respect..." The shadow of the true, Israel, is replaced by the true kingdom of Christ. (Zechariah 6:12-13; Matthew 16:18) The branches then are the disciples of the vine, who are members of His body (John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27).

As the branches of a plant draw nourishment and support from the main trunk or stalk and root system, and die when removed from the plant, so it is with those attached to the Christ. *"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."* (John 15:4)

Paul writes to the Romans describing how the "branches" of Israel, torn from the "vine" when they rejected the messiah, can be grafted into the new vine in Romans 11:16-24, *"...if they do not continue in unbelief, (they) will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"*

A wild olive branch produces bad fruit, but when grafted into a good plant, soon develops good fruit. To produce acceptable fruit both Jew and Gentile must believe the gospel of Christ and obey it. Peter says in Acts 15:11, *"We (Jews) shall be saved in the same manner as they (gentiles)."* And Paul writing about the gospel of Christ in Romans 1:16 *"... for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."* To the Jew who was part of the original vine, knowing God from an early age and looking forward to Messiah, believe in and obedience to Him was necessary. The Gentile, who never knew the intimate relation to God as did the Jew, had to learn of Him, believe in Him and obey Him. Both Jew and Gentile must become attached to the source of nourishment to have the true life of a child born of Water and The Spirit, John 3:5-6, *"...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

Therefore, as a grape vine is expected to have branches that produce many grapes, the branches of the True Vine, the True King, our Lord and Christ are expected to produce very much fruit. John 15:2-8 *"... By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."*

Many point to "the fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22-23 and conclude that producing love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control within one's self is what is meant. But how about making more disciples, Matthew 28:19; or live like a Christian, Romans 12:1, 9-21 and Ephesians 4, 5, 6:1-9? Then there is assembling and exhortation in Hebrews 10:24-25 to consider.

In addition to being remade to do good works, Ephesians 2:10, the job given to each branch is found in Matthew 28:19-20, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Are you a fruitful branch in the kingdom, a firm obedient part of the True Vine?