

The True Vine

Written by Jerry Henderson

Jesus, in John 15:1-7 teaches a great lesson about fruit bearing and the necessity of abiding in Him. In verse one and two Jesus says: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." God, in the beginning created plant life and decreed the law of reproduction. "And God said, let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so." (Genesis 1:11) We understand that the "seed" bears within itself the germ of life and that every plant reproduces after its own kind. Therefore, a person selects the seed according to the desired fruit. This principle never varies; bean seed produces beans and watermelon seed produces watermelons. Have you seen anywhere in nature a vine, plant or tree that produces various kinds of fruits? Never do you find, in nature, a tree producing both apples and peaches, because it is contrary to the natural laws that God instituted in the beginning.

At various times, in discussing religious division, which it seems, continues to get worse almost on a daily basis, members of different religious groups have used the above passages to try to justify such division. They have argued that the various denominations in existence today are simply branches of the vine. However, it is very easy to see this is not the application Jesus is making. Jesus is not saying that "churches" are the branches, but rather, He is saying individuals are the branches. Notice in John 15:5 Jesus uses the personal pronoun "'he' that abideth in me, and I in him....". So, it is obvious that Jesus is talking about individuals as the branches. However, just for arguments sake, let's assume that Jesus is talking about different "churches" being the branches. You will remember Jesus condemned division. In John 17:20, 21 he said: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." How can the denominations existing today, teaching different doctrines fulfill this prayer of Jesus. The answer is: they cannot! The word "denominate" or "denomination" itself implies division, because it means to name so as to differentiate between or to make apparent differences that exist. Denominational writers admit change from the original ideal has occurred. Edward T. Hiscox wrote, "It is most likely that in the Apostolic age, when there was but 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism,' and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by that

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very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, 'baptism was the door into the church.' Now it is different..." (Hiscox Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, 1890, p. 22). It is recognized by such authors that there were no denominations in the beginning of the church. Remember, Jesus said: "I will build MY church, singular, just one Matthew 16:18. If it is now different, then these religious denominations teaching and practicing things not found in the doctrine of Christ do not have God, according to 2John 1:9,10. Therefore, we must conclude that denominations existing today, teaching different doctrines, are not the branches that Jesus was talking about in John 15:1-7. It takes different doctrines "seeds" to produce denomination, therefore they cannot be of the same vine. Jesus says this does not happen in the realm of nature and certainly it does not happen in the spiritual realm.

What, then, is the lesson Jesus taught in John 15:1-7? As already shown above, Jesus said individuals are the branches of the vine. We understand from nature as decreed by God in Genesis 1:11 that "seed" produces new plants of its own kind. Jesus said: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Matthew 15:13. In explaining the parable of the sower Jesus said: "The seed is the word of God." Luke 8:11 As Jesus continued explaining this parable in verse fifteen He said: "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience." So, in order to become a branch in the vine, that is, to be a part of the body of Jesus, which Paul said in Colossians 1:18 is the church, one must receive the word of God into their heart and allow it to change their lives and then the Lord will add them to HIS church. This is exactly what happened in Acts 2:37-41. After Peter preached to them about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, they gladly received his word. We understand that "gladly receiving His word" involves believing or having faith, which is evidenced by the fact that these people were "pricked in their hearts" by what Peter had preached to them about Jesus. This faith caused them to ask: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were then told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins and they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

We are forced, then, to conclude from these scriptures and many more that could be used, that Jesus is the true vine as stated in John 15:1 and all those who respond in obedience to His word are the branches. This figure which Jesus uses here illustrates the church which belongs to Him. It is the one he promised in Matthew 16:18 to build; the one which he purchased with His own blood Acts 20:28. There were churches, or bodies of God's people, that were established by the preaching of the gospel in various cities where the apostles and other inspired men went. An illustration of such are the seven churches of Asia to whom John was directed to write Revelation 1:4. All of these churches taught and practiced the same thing. In

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fact Paul told Timothy to: "...charge some that they teach no other doctrine," 1Timothy 1:3. And in Galatians 1:6-9 Paul said that anyone, even an angel from heaven that would teach anything other than what had been taught was teaching a perverted gospel and would be accursed. Paul said he preached the same thing in every church 1Timothy 4:17.

The church Jesus built will wear His name, teach and practice His doctrine. His church, the one He purchased with His own blood is the only one he is going to present to His Father in heaven 1Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 5:27. Are you a branch in the true vine; a part of the church Jesus built or a part of a false vine; a man-made church?