

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

The Parables

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

The Vineyard

Readings:

Isaiah 5: 1-10 or Matthew 21: 28-46

1. Two Types of Vineyards

There are several parables in the Bible about vines and vineyards; each symbolically portraying aspects of Israel's or an individual believer's spiritual life. This Sabbath we will study a few of those lessons.

The Corporate Vineyard

Isaiah 5: 1: *"Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:*
2: *And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*
3: *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.*
4: *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*
5: *And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:*
6: *And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*
7: ***For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant:*** and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

The Individual Vineyard

Proverbs 24: 30: *"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;*
31: *And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*
32: *Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*
33: *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*

34: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.”

Who/What is a Jew?

The passages above tell of the Almighty's vineyard and the results He expects of His people **Israel**. He is the owner of the spiritual vineyard called the **House of Israel**. In fact the Most High calls Himself the **God of Israel** and His Son is called the **King of the Jews!** (Luke 23: 36-38) But, some will ask “**Who is an Israelite?**” “**Who/What is a Jew?**” Many people these days claim to be **Jews**, or members of the **Lost Ten Tribes of Israel**. They come in all colours: black, brown and white. Are they all Jews or the descendants of the ancient Israelites?

According to the dictionary a Jew is:

- A member of the tribe of Judah
- An Israelite
- One whose religion is Judaism

In the Old Testament, the term **Jew** initially meant a member of the tribes of **Judah** and **Benjamin**; who together comprised the southern kingdom of **Judah**. After the 70 year captivity the terms **Jew** and **Israelite** became fused as many captive Israelites - dispersed many years before - returned to Israel with the Babylonian exiles. According to the **Halakha**, the body of religious law generally accepted by Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed Jews, **a Jew is someone who has a Jewish mother**. But this definition would exclude king David's grandfather **Obed**, whose mother was **Ruth** the Moabite; and possibly even king **Solomon**, whose mother **Bath-sheba** was the former wife of **Uriah** the Hitite.

In June 1970 the **Israeli Supreme Court** ruled that the child of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother may be registered as Jewish by nationality. But this ruling is disputed even to this day by orthodox Jews. **David ben-Gurion**, Israel's first Prime Minister, even suggested that **anyone who wished to be considered a Jew should be accepted as such**. Many other definitions have been suggested and even applied; but the question still remains unanswered for many.

The New Testament-backed answer to the question: “**Who/What is a Jew?**” is stunning to say the least. Comparatively few Jews - or even Christians for that matter - would accept it. Nevertheless, in essence, here is what the New Testament teaches:

**That regardless of nationality, race, colour or sex,
a Jew or Israelite is a true believer in the LORD God of Israel
and His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.**

In short: once a Gentile becomes a true believer in the **CREATOR**, the LORD God of Abraham and of His Son Jesus Christ; from that moment that person is grafted into the **Olive of Israel** and becomes an Israelite, a Jew! This, almost inconceivable reality, is detailed in the following verses:

Romans 2: 28: *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*

29: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Galatians 3: 26: *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

27: For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Romans 11: 17: *“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree.”*

Ephesians 2: 11: *“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

12: That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:
13: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

For more information see **Israel...The Chosen of God.**

2. Climate / Soil / Work

The output of all vineyards depends basically on three things: **climate, soil quality and work.** The Most High has more than done His share in these three areas.

Isaiah 5: 1: *"My well beloved planted a vineyard in a **very fruitful hill.**"*

Matthew 21: 33: *"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:*

34: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it."

3. Personal Effort

But, even with the very best of climate and soil, **personal effort** on the part of the believer is required to produce good fruit. Notice that after Yahweh had done the initial preparatory work of digging, planting and hedging He called upon his husbandmen (workers) to do the rest - **to work** in the vineyard; to put forth a **personal effort** to produce fruit. It is very doubtful if good fruit can ever be produced year after year without **personal effort.**

Matthew 21: 28: *"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard."*

Mark 13: 34: *"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, **and to every man his work,** and commanded the porter to watch."*

This does not mean that all must become missionaries, preachers or writers of spiritual books. Nor does it mean that we are to spend every moment of our spare time telling others about **Jesus Christ** and his love. It doesn't mean that we are to read the Bible for hours on end or say long prayers. Within certain limits, these activities are admirable; but they are not the Master's primary objective when he says: **"Go and work in my vineyard today."**

What then does he mean? I believe that he means: **'go and produce spiritual fruit in your own life.'** After all, this is the main produce of every spiritual vineyard. **Those who are lazy about this all-important task** - to produce **spiritual fruit** in their own lives - will deeply regret it on the Day of Judgment.

Proverbs 24: 30: *"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;*
31: And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.

32: Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.

33: Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

34: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

4. Expectations

All vineyards, orchards and gardens must be given time to come to fruition. Some fruit trees, depending on their type and climate, take up to 10 years to produce fruit. Others bear fruit within two, three or four years. No two fruit trees are identical. But all are expected to eventually produce fruit.

Matthew 21: 34: *"And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it."*

5. Results

Results are inevitable. They may be excellent, fair, poor or bad; but results are inevitable. **The Most High expects results in proportion to the input He has made to the vineyard.** When evaluating results He also considers the conditions: the social climate, a person's spiritual background (the soil) the age of each tree, (a believer's spiritual maturity) the opportunities each of us has received in times past, etc. All these factors are considered when the Almighty evaluates the crop of His people.

Alas! so often:

Isaiah 5: 4: “...*He looked that it should bring forth **grapes**, and it brought forth **wild grapes**.*”

NOTE: The crop the Almighty is expecting from His vineyard is not a crop of **material possessions, money, houses, lands or possessions.** It is not a crop of higher education or fame - important as these things may be. The fruit Yahweh looks for in His people is the **Fruit of the Holy Spirit:** faith, love, joy, peace, judgment, righteousness (obedience) and holiness etc.

Galatians 5: 22: “***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,***
23: ***Meekness, temperance:** against such there is no law.”*

Isaiah 5: 7: “...*and he looked for **judgment**, but behold oppression; for **righteousness**, but behold a cry.*”

The **Fruit of the Holy Spirit** should be produced, in varying quantities, on **every vine** and **every branch** in the Almighty's spiritual vineyard. To the Most High this is the only fruit of any worth. All other achievements, regardless of how much they are valued by the world, count for nothing when compared with the **Fruit of the Holy Spirit.** How do you measure up to God's expectations?

6. Yahweh's Response

Each sacred season the Almighty responds to the produce of His vineyard in direct proportion to the fruit individuals and congregations produce. If the expected results are not forthcoming, He is displeased and **reacts accordingly.** If the fruit is good and abundant, He is overjoyed and, once again, **reacts accordingly.** In short, **the Most High reacts to every harvest, whether it is good or bad.** This is an important fact to remember. It would be foolish to ignore or forget it; because the Almighty does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever: and will respond to **individual harvests** in exactly the same way as He did in ages past. I repeat: each month, each year at spiritual harvest time, Yahweh comes looking for fruit. **Every vine is examined on an individual basis.** Every corporate vineyard (Israel or Church group) is also assessed as a unit and the presence of **good fruit** is the divine consideration. Notice the **divine reaction** to an individual's or group's production.

Bad Results

John 15: 2: “***Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:***”

Isaiah 5: 5: “*And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:
6: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*”

Good Results

John 15: 2: “*... and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*”

King Solomon summarized man's responsibility in similar terms. He wrote in Ecclesiastes chapter 12:

Ecclesiastes 12: 13: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments:
for this is the whole duty of man.*
14: ***For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.***”

Believers do well to keep the coming Day of Judgment in mind. See sermon note, **Works**, are they Important?

7. Examine Yourself

Though we are told not to judge others, simply because we do not have all the facts, we are **advised to judge ourselves**. The Bible says:

1 Corinthians 11: 18: ***“Let a man examine himself...”***

2 Corinthians 13: 5: ***“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”***

Too often we Christians try to convert the world. We put forth enormous effort and spend countless hours attempting to bring others to Christ: but neglect our own families. Wives become disenchanted and children leave the church. Nor is the world impressed by all this frantic effort.

1 Timothy 3: 5: ***“{For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?}***

6: Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

7: Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.”

I conclude with the Master's words:

John 15: 4: ***“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.***

5: I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6: If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8: Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”

May the Most High bless you all as you go from here with the main objective of producing **good fruit in your own life - fruit that lasts!**

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.

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