

“I am the true Vine.”

John 14:31 but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

We begin with the last verse of chapter 14 because it sets the stage for the ensuing words of Jesus, and because I like to work with maps!

Jesus has set His face like flint. He is moving closer and closer to His agony, arrest, trial, beating and crucifixion.

/When He says “let us go from here”, this is a literal change of location.\

At this point, Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room. Jesus would continue His teaching as they moved along the streets of the old city of Jerusalem. After that, Jesus would pray to His Father. That’s recorded as John 17.

And then they would be on the move again. This time they will end up in the garden of Gethsemane.

John 18:1

1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.

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Let's look at a map of Jerusalem in Jesus' day. <map>.

/ We find (1) the path from the Upper Room to the west side of the Kidron, leading to (2) the path that crossed the Kidron and ended up at the Garden of Gethsemane. \

There, He would face His own private agony. Then He would face the soldiers whom Judas had brought to this garden. The final die had been cast.

/Then, the hour and the power of darkness would arrive. (Luke 22:53)\

All right. Let's pick things up in chapter 15 verse 1.

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

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/Here in verse 1 we have the seventh and final "I am" statement of Jesus. \

Previously He has identified Himself as the bread of life, the Light of the world, the door of the sheep, the good shepherd, and the way, the truth, and the life.

Now He compares Himself to a vine. But not any old vine; the True Vine.

/You see, in the Old Testament, the vine was used as a symbol of Israel. \

Ps 80:8-12

8 You removed a vine from Egypt;

You drove out the nations and planted it.

9 You cleared the ground before it,

And it took deep root and filled the land.

10 The mountains were covered with its shadow,

And the cedars of God with its boughs.

*11 It was sending out its branches to the sea
And its shoots to the River.*

*12 Why have You broken down its hedges,
So that all who pass that way pick its fruit?*

/But Israel turned out to be a faithless vine. The nation did not produce the fruit that the Lord expected from her.\

Isa 5:1-2

*5 Let me sing now for my well-beloved
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.
2 He dug it all around, removed its stones,
And planted it with the choicest vine.
And He built a tower in the middle of it
And also hewed out a wine vat in it;
Then He expected it to produce good grapes,
But it produced only worthless ones.*

/Isaiah also prophesied about the True Vine – The Lord Jesus Christ.\

Isa 11:1-2

*11 Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

*2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

Undoubtedly, Jesus had these scriptures (and others) in mind when He identified Himself as the True Vine.

/Jesus is the True Vine as opposed to the fruitless vine: faithless Israel.\ The disciples would hopefully have made the connection.

John 15:1-11

15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Let's begin with an overview.

In verse 1, Jesus identifies Himself as the True Vine. But of course He wasn't going to teach them about agriculture.

/Jesus is going to use facts about the vine and the branches to illustrate spiritual principles.\

/The vine has but one purpose: to produce grapes.\ A vine that does not produce grapes will be pulled out of the ground. It is only fit to be burned.

It's vital that the believer produce the fruit that the Father expects from us.

/Jesus wants His disciples to understand that they cannot bear spiritual fruit unless they abide in Him, and He abides in them. \

Now, a word of caution:

Jesus uses the vine to make a single essential point: You can't bear fruit unless you abide in Me and I in you.

/It is a mistake to take each element in this illustration and turn it into its own teaching.\

For example, there really isn't any warrant for saying that the fire in verse 6 represents the Lake of Fire. Jesus simply doesn't make that point here.

So again, in verse 1, Jesus introduces this figure of the True Vine.

/In verses 1-6, we find references to the natural vine and its branches. \

In verse 1, we have the vine and the vinedresser.

In verse 2, we have branches that bear fruit, and branches that do not. And we have the pruning so the branch can produce more fruit.

Again, these are statements about agriculture. The natural vine and branches.

In verse 4, we have the branch abiding in the vine that bears fruit.

In verse 5, we have the vine and the branches.

And in verse 6, we have the branch that dries up, is thrown away, gathered, and burned in the fire.

/Notice how He intertwines statements about the vine with His teaching on His disciples bearing fruit. \

Take verse 4 for example:

John 15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

He drops the vine imagery after verse 6.

/From verse 7 on, its straight teaching on this subject of spiritual fruitfulness.\

So let's continue with our high-level look at this passage.

John 15:2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

/In John 15:2-3, Jesus is contrasting a believer with an unbeliever. \

He uses the figure of the branch in the Vine.

/The branch that does not bear fruit is an unbeliever.\ This branch is dead wood.

/Judas was an example of a branch that was cut off. \He was dead spiritually.

Some branches are green shoots. They share the same life as the Vine.

/The branch that bears fruit is a believer.\ Jesus spoke of these people as the seed in the good soil in Luke 8:15 -

Luke 8:15

15 "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

/Then in verses 4-10 of John 15, Jesus teaches that it is vital for the believer to abide in Christ so that he will produce fruit.\

So, verses 2 -3 separate the believer from the unbeliever.

Verses 4-10 are devoted exclusively to the believer.

/Finally, in verse 11, Jesus states the purpose of His teaching in verses 1-10.\

Namely,

John 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

In other words, He wants to encourage them. To build them up. He wants them and us to see that His teaching is ultimately very joyful and life-enhancing.

Therefore,

Verse 11 is the lens through which everything Jesus teaches in verses 1-10 should be seen.

/We need to see the things Jesus teaches in verses 1-10 through the lens of verse 11.\

that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Abiding produces fruit. Fruit enables effective prayer. Fruit glorifies the Father. Abiding in Christ's love means keeping His commandments. When we live this life, we have tremendous joy.