



July 16, 2023

“Who Stands at the Center?”

SS 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

News:

★Welcome Sheeran Family ★ Church Camp August 24-27 ★

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JOHN 15:1–11 ~

What did you think Jesus was on about in this passage?

Is it about whether Christians are producing fruit or not?

Whether they are connected to the Vine or not?

Whether they will ultimately be burned up or not?

Was Jesus telling His friends, that even in His physical absence, I AM with you, and you are with Me?

What does that have to do with fruit?

With glory?

With Joy?

Do you have a Christ-_____ focus, or one that is man-_____?

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

The analogy comes from the Old Testament where the concept is common and always depicts Israel as the _____, the Jewish people as the _____, and God as the _____.

Psalm 80:17&18, plead with God, "Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Then we will not turn away from you; revive us (through Him), and we will call on your name."

The Jews took this as a reference to the _____.

In Jewish teaching the promised _____ would be the new Vine, which would give life to the branches, so that they would finally produce proper _____, all to the eternal glory of the Vinedresser (Isaiah 27:6, etc.).

Jesus said Ἐγώ εἰμι (ě-gō ā-mē), which is the covenantal name of _____. It refers to His timeless immutable pure existence and so what He was saying is, "I AM that which I Am, I exist as the true vine." The message is unmistakable, and it is profound.

You want to see True Israel? Look at _____.

You want to be a True Jew? Remain in _____.

This does not support "Replacement Theology," nor does it support "Dual Covenant Theology." This presents the reality that Christianity is the fulfillment of _____.

A true Jew is a _____ and so it follows that a _____ is a true Jew (Ephesians 4:4-6).

The branches are not presented here as _____ people choosing one thing over another. The branches were the Jewish people as a whole and they continue here to represent the true Jewish people as a whole, otherwise known as the Christian community or the universal _____.

We can see that by defining the _____.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____



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the gospel of
JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΗΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΗΝ
 ΘΗ ΚΑΙ ΘΕ ΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΥ ΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
 ΤΟΝ ΘΗ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ ΚΑΧΩΤΙΣ



John 15:1–11, 1“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2Every 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. 3You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. 5I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will

be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; remain in My love. 10If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love. 11These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Jesus is the Vine, the Father is the Vinedresser, we humans are the branches, and the fruit is what we produce. That's super easy, no worries, let's move on to the next passage, maybe just call it a day... right?

What I'd like you to do is think for just a moment about how these 11 Bible verses struck you, what do you think it means, how did you take the analogy and explanation given by Jesus here? Take a minute and ask yourself how what I just read impacted you. How did it make you feel, how did it resonate with you, what stood out to you, what did it make you consider, or contemplate, or think about? What emotions did this passage stir within you?

It's okay, I'm not going to have every head bowed and every eye closed and ask you to slip your hand up so that I can embarrass you later by having all the hand raisers come down to the altar. This exercise will truly be between you and God. What did you think Jesus was on about in this passage?

Most people when hearing this pericope think of, well themselves, at least initially. Later they think about other people, specifically about whether they are producing fruit or not, and whether they are connected to the Vine or not. They generally think in terms of people who can be perfectly connected in the Vine, but because of poor fruit production, on their part, they can be hacked off of the Vine by the Vinedresser and ultimately burned up in the Lake of Fire - to mix metaphors.



“The
Expulsion
of Adam
and Eve
from the
Garden of
Eden”

~ Benjamin
West, 1791

Well, by any other name, that's Salvation lost and so most people take this as a stark warning about being productive as a Christian or God will harshly prune you and may even forever cast you out of His vineyard.

It's normal to think this way and it's also wrong. The entire section that I read to you wasn't about those things, it was intended as a positive message given to His closest disciples, just hours prior to His physical torture and execution.



“BEHOLD!
I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS” ~ JESUS

Jesus was telling His friends that even in My physical absence, I AM with you, and you will be with Me. Fear not, for I AM with you always, even to the end of the age.

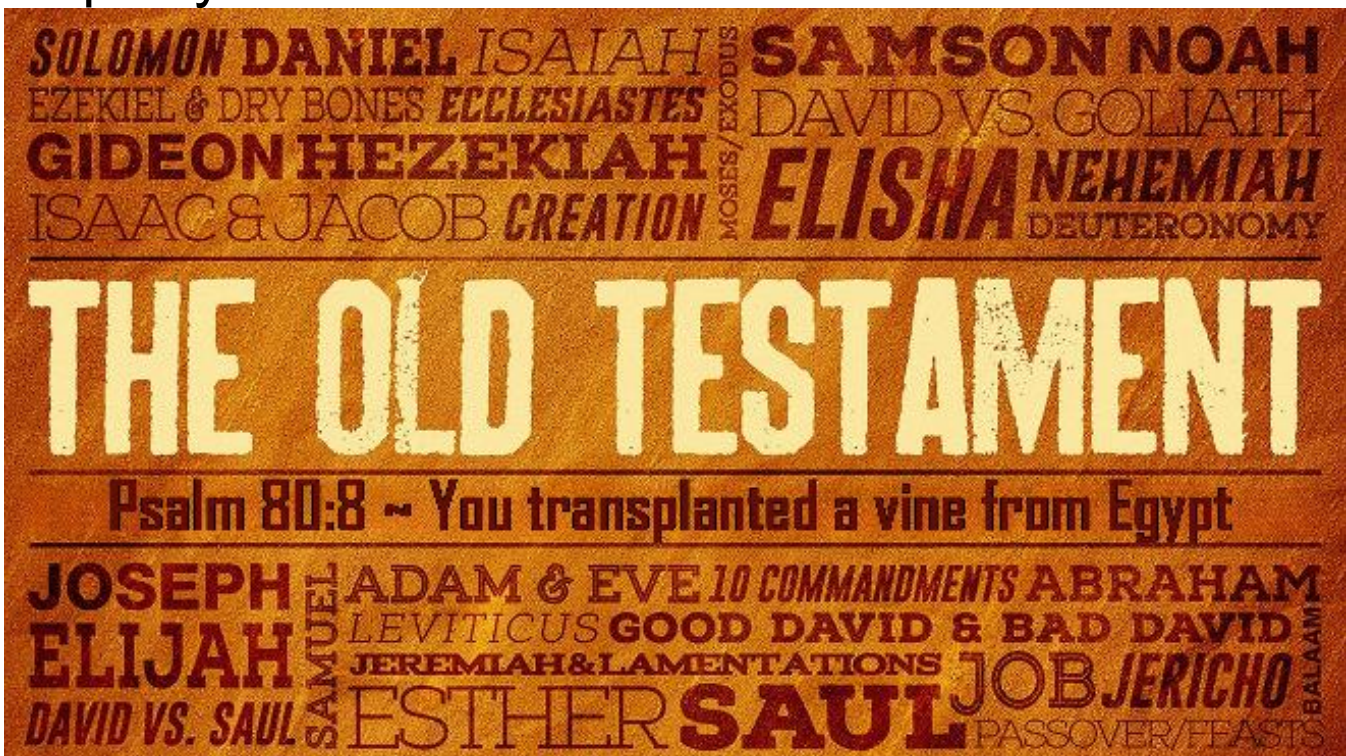
He was saying that the goal of the Heavenly Father is that fruit is produced to His glory, and we will produce that fruit together going forward.

Only together will we produce Kingdom Fruit. It's an entirely different focus and it's the correct focus because of grammar, because of context, but also because it takes all of the focus off of us and keeps it where it belongs... on Jesus.

Maybe that's all we need to do for today. Maybe you spend the week thinking about and praying about that and then next Sunday we can delve into the details?

That's what I'm asking of you. Spend some time reorienting yourself to approaching this passage and the rest of the Bible, for that matter, with a Christ-centered, rather than man-centered mindset.

Since we still have a little time left today, let me just add to that, the background of Jesus' illustration, to help in your meditation on these verses.



The analogy comes from the Old Testament. Jesus used a couple of unusual words and some strange verb tenses that confirm for us that He had the Old

Testament Scriptural references in mind as He developed this illustration.

In the Old Testament the concept is common and always depicts Israel as the vine and the Jewish people as the branches with God being the vinedresser. Psalm 80, as one example, talks about how God brought a vine out of Egypt, cultivated the land of Canaan in preparation for the vine, and then planted the vine there with the intention that it would produce abundant fruit.

Verse 11 of that Psalm says that the vine God planted, “sent its branches out all the way to the Mediterranean Sea, and reached as far as the Euphrates River.” The Psalm goes on to say that because of God’s displeasure with the vine’s lack of fruit, the “vine has been (past tense) cut down and burned up.” The Psalm concludes with a prayer for God to restore the vine and its branches, promising this time that it will produce the fruit that glorifies God. Interestingly the way it conveys that thought is to depart from the illustration in verses 17&18 and plead with God, “Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Then we will not turn away from you;

revive us (through Him), and we will call on your name.”

The Jews took this as a reference to the Messiah Who would one day restore the vine and its branches so that the abundant fruit would be forever produced.

As I said, the theme is common in the Old Testament where the vine is always Israel as a nation and the branches are always the Jewish people as a whole and the vinedresser is always God having to do major pruning. Every time the example is used in the Old Testament it depicts the vine and its branches as wayward, rebellious, gone astray, adulterous, idolatrous, and sinfully unproductive, the conclusion is always a plea for God to fix the vine and by extension the branches, once and for all, so that it would finally be productive.

In the Jewish teaching of the time, we see that the promised and long-awaited Messiah would be the new root, or vine, which would give life to the branches all to the great and eternal glory of the vinedresser God. It's easy to see in such passages as Isaiah 27:6, when the Lord comes to establish His Kingdom it states, “In the

days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, And they will fill the whole world with fruit.”

In this case, poetically, Jacob, another name for Israel is the vine and Israel, another name for the Jewish nation are the branches. It was repeatedly demonstrated in the Old Testament that the Jewish people could not produce fruit. It was proven over centuries of attempts to be impossible and so the lesson learned was that it was going to take God Himself to produce fruit through His people.

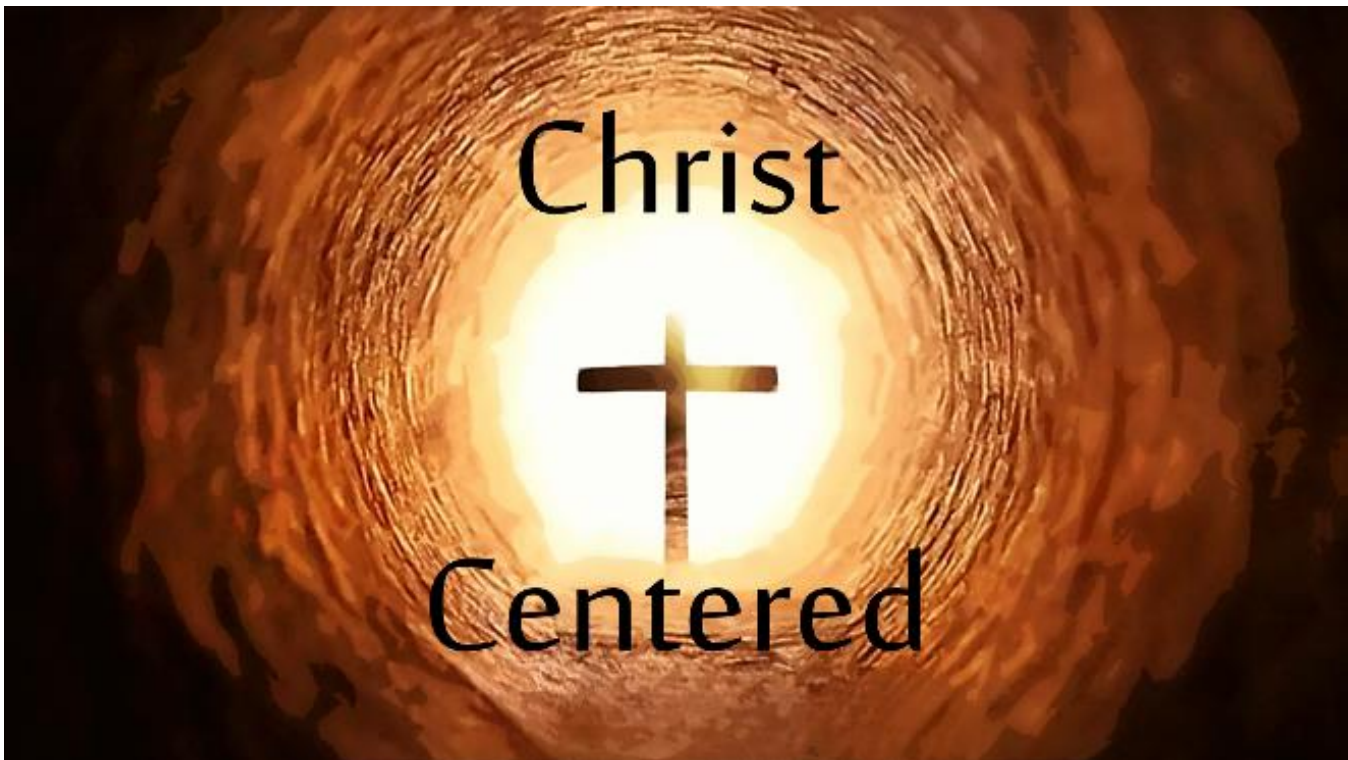


Jesus began this section with the last of His seven formal “I AM” statements. He said Ἐγώ εἰμι (ě-gō ā-mē), once again it is the covenantal name of God and refers to His timeless immutable pure existence and so

He was saying, "I AM that which I Am, I exist as the true vine." The message is unmistakable, and it is profound, even though it is only a few words long.

Jesus was first of all declaring that He was God made flesh and blood. That, in turn, confirms that He was the one and only promised and long-awaited Messiah Who was the True Vine, the True Israel. Finally, the way He stated it, the implication is that He always was and forever will be the one and only true Vine. Of course, that's viewing things from God's perspective. On our physical timeline we would say that Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of God's plans and purposes and so, He became the ultimate, final, and complete Vine of God 2,000 years ago.

At various times in Jesus' earthly ministry, He established that He was that in regard to elements of Judaism. He showed that He was the Temple, that He was the Sacrifice for sin, that He was the Law and the Prophets, here, finally, He asserted that He was, and therefore forever is, the entirety of God's Will done on earth.



You want to see True Israel? Look at Jesus. You want to be a True Jew? Remain in Jesus.

This does not support “Replacement Theology,” nor does it support the other extreme of “Dual Covenant Theology” This presents the reality that Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism. To be a True Jew is to embrace Jesus as God made man, as the one and only Messiah, Lord, and Savior, and to remain in Him through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is another way of saying, being a Christian.

A true Jew is a Christian and so it follows that a Christian is a true Jew. There are no subdivisions of right relationship with God. There are no Messianic

Jews, there are no Islamic Christians, there are no Protestant Christians, there are only Christians - period. "There is one body and one Spirit... one hope... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-6✂).



The final thought that I'll leave you with today is the branches are not presented here as individual people choosing one thing over another. The branches were the Jewish people as a whole and they continue here to represent the true Jewish people as a whole, otherwise known as the Christian community or the universal Body of Christ, the church.



We can see that by defining the Fruit. You see, what Israel was supposed to be, was a root centered in Jerusalem, the crossroads of the ancient world joining the continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe together.

That root of faithful obedience and devotion to Almighty God was to enable a unified people to spread out from it like branches and for those branches to bear much Fruit, all to God's great glory.

Whatever it was that the Jewish people did in the Promised Land for the 15 centuries between their planting and the arrival of Jesus the True Vine, it wasn't bearing Fruit to God's glory.



That was sort of the point though, God was physically demonstrating the inability of man to bear Fruit even when they were His own specially blessed people. The plan all along was that God Himself would be the One to bear the Fruit that would bring Him glory and He would actively do it through His people.

What is the Fruit that glorifies God? In a word, Love. That's where I'll leave you. Please consider these ideas and concepts and we'll reason together a bit more next week, Lord willing.

Consider how we constantly make everything about man, about us. Consider how this passage was actually designed to give us great hope and Biblical

Joy as a tremendous encouragement, rather than a bleak warning against losing your Salvation.



Consider how the branches are unified with the vine and so with each other, how it's all one living entity.



Consider the Fruit. Most of all, consider that the Fruit is absolutely impossible to produce apart from vibrant, healthy, active, connection to the Source, the Vine, the Root.



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