

# Finishing Well

Lesson #11

Past, Future & Present Vines

March 15, 2023

The King's Garden

Song of Solomon 4:12-16; Isaiah 58:11-12; John 15:1-8

The one place in Jerusalem where it is possible for gardens to flourish all year is the lower part of the Kidron valley which is watered by the overflow from the Pool of Siloam.

- Rivers of Living Water > a place of fruitfulness

John 15:1 I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser.

Key: God the Father

- Vinedresser, Farmer, Owner
- Everything is being done for Him.
- He is the One who reaps the harvest.
- God tends the vineyard and makes the vineyard grow.
- He is the One who prunes and takes away.
- His objective: Lots of good fruit!

Key: Jesus is the TRUE VINE.

Throughout the Old Testament, God described Israel as His choice vineyard.

This image of Israel being God's vineyard was ingrained into the mind of every Israeli Jew.

As soon as you mentioned the word, "vineyard," every Jew would think, "Israel."

The Temple itself was decorated to remind Israel: They were God's vineyard.

From writings of Josephus, War 5:207-211

"The holy Temple ...was covered with gold...and the surroundings of the inner gate all gleaming with gold...It had, moreover, above it those golden vines, from which depended grape clusters as tall as a man..."

## *God's Purpose For Israel, His Vineyard*

Ex. 19:3-6 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

<sup>4</sup> Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine:

<sup>6</sup> And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

### *God's Disappointing Vineyard*

*Israel was God's "past" vine. Ps. 80:8-19; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Ezek. 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1 Isa. 5:1-6* Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.

<sup>2</sup> He dug it up and cleared out its stones and planted it with the choicest vine.

He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it;

So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes.

<sup>3</sup> "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. <sup>4</sup> What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?

Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?

<sup>5</sup> And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

<sup>6</sup> I will lay it waste; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.

In an act of wonderful grace, God "transplanted" Israel into Canaan and gave the nation every possible benefit. If ever a nation had everything it needed to succeed, it was Israel.

As God's chosen vineyard, Israel was to bear fruit by obeying God, glorify Him and display the goodness of God to the world.

But the vine produced wild grapes! They were the FAILED vineyard that produced bad fruit.

They broke the law and defiled the land with their sins. They failed to produce fruit for God's glory. Instead of practicing justice, it practiced oppression. Instead of producing righteousness, it produced unrighteousness and cries of distress from the victims.

In Isaiah 5:8-25, he lists the sins that brought judgment on the land.

- Covetousness      Drunkenness      Carelessness
- Deception      Pride      Injustice

God's hand was raised in judgment and would not come down until He had completed His work.

He would summon the Assyrian army from afar and use it to chasten His people [5:26-30].

The northern kingdom of Israel would be destroyed, and Judah, the southern kingdom, would be devastated but eventually delivered, only to go in captivity to Babylon a century later.

God had to deal with the nation Israel and chasten it, but even that did not produce lasting results. When God's own Son came to the vineyard, they cast Him out and killed Him.

- Matt. 21:33-46      Parable of the Wicket Tenants

Problem: The Jews thought they were the "True Vine" in God's vineyard simply because they were children of Abraham.

But Jesus said: He is the True Vine who succeeded where Israel failed.

He fulfilled the Law, glorified God and displayed God's goodness to the entire world.

## Future Vine Of The Earth

This is the *Gentile* world system ripening for God's judgment.

The unsaved depend on the world for their sustenance & satisfaction.

"Vine of the earth" will be cut down & destroyed when Jesus Christ returns. Prophesied?

Ps. 2:1-9 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, <sup>3</sup> Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.

<sup>5</sup> Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure.

<sup>6</sup> Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

<sup>7</sup> I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. <sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

<sup>9</sup> Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Dan. 7:13-14 I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

<sup>14</sup> And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. [Coronation of Jesus Christ]

Daniel 2:31-35, 44 Thou, O king, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

<sup>32</sup> This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, <sup>33</sup> His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

<sup>34</sup> Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay and brake them to pieces. <sup>35</sup> Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

<sup>44</sup> And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Rev. 14:14-20 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. <sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

<sup>16</sup> And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

Note: John shifts his attention to the battle of Armageddon which is compared to a grape harvest. The "vine of the earth" will be cut down and destroyed when Jesus Christ returns.  
<sup>17</sup> And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the Vine Of The Earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

The earth is portrayed as a grape vineyard with many "clusters" of grapes which represent the different armies from around the world that will fight against Jesus Christ at Armageddon. These various armies must be removed from their different locations around the globe to be "gathered" to Jerusalem [Zech. 12:3; 14:2].

Somehow Satan will deceive the kings of the earth to assemble outside Jerusalem to make war with the King of kings and Lord of lords as He returns to the earth with His church.

Rev. 16:12-14, 16 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

<sup>13</sup> And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

<sup>14</sup> For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

fully ripe = ēkmasan = *fully grown or in prime condition.*

- *The grapes were full of juice and ready for harvest."*
- The rebellion of these armies that gathered to make war against King Jesus had reached a crescendo. It was time for their judgment.

Rev. 14:19-20 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

<sup>20</sup> And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

- Megiddo, the site of the bloody battle between the Lord Jesus Christ and the armies of the Beast, is approximately 40 miles northeast of Jerusalem.
- This severe judgment by God against the Beast and his rebellious armies is portrayed as grapes being trampled in a winepress by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The blood of these armies will literally flow up to the height of the horses' bridle[s] which is about four to five feet, for one thousand six hundred furlongs, which is 200 miles [14:19-20; 19:15-21].

For that much blood to flow, vast numbers of people will have to die.

Nothing in human history has ever come close to the ferocity of this battle.

Key: God is patient in giving people a chance to repent prior to judgment. God waited until the grapes were fully ripe before He threw them into the great winepress of His wrath. He does not judge people at the first hint of their sinful rebellion, though that would be entirely justified. Instead, He provided extended opportunity for repentance. He strikes with the sickle of judgment when rebellion has matured into an unmistakable pattern.

### *John 15:1-8 God's Present Vineyard*

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

<sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that bears not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

<sup>3</sup> Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.

To understand the meaning of this passage, we must consider:

the context, the theme, the setting & the purpose.

The theme: Spiritual maturity & how to bear fruit for Christ.

This story is not about salvation. It is about maturity.

The setting: This is part of Jesus' last words of instruction to His disciples prior to the cross. Jesus spoke these words right after the Passover meal and right before His betrayal would take place, followed by His suffering on the cross.

He was speaking to His disciples, minus Judas who had already left to go and betray Him.

The purpose: Prepare His disciples for their need to be spiritually mature so they could go forth after He left them, bear the most fruit and complete their mission of taking the Gospel to the world.

### *Three Kinds Of People & God's Response.*

John 15:2a	Saved Believers Who Do Not Bear Fruit
John 15:2b-5	Saved Believers Who Do Bear Fruit
John 15:6	The Unsaved

## Saved Believers That Do NOT Bear Fruit.

John 15:2a Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away...

- Branch in Me: clearly shows He's referring to a saved believer who is "in Christ" and has a saving connection to Jesus.
- Problem: There's no fruit in the believer's, branch's, life. His purpose is defiled.
- The outcome: The Vinedresser or the father "takes away" that unfruitful believer.

Question: What does "takes away" mean? If you define this term incorrectly, you will struggle over this and perhaps come to a wrong conclusion. Many who do not believe in eternal security falsely say that it teaches a saved believer can lose their salvation.

Look at the *Greek*: The term "takes away" is one word in *Greek*.

- *airō* #142 has a threefold definition and usage; accurately describes God's dealing with an unfruitful believer
  1. to raise up, elevate, to lift up, to raise from the ground.
    - God's first response is to raise them up.
  2. to bear with, to take upon oneself and carry what's been raised up; to restore them
    - God bears with them to restore them.
  3. to remove, to carry off, and can mean to take from among the living, either by a natural death, or by violence, to cause to cease, to move from its place.
    - If they still don't respond God may decide to remove them.

To raise up

To bear with

To remove, which can include natural death

Note: Nothing in this expanded definition could mean casting someone into hell.

It just speaks of raising up, bearing with or removing, in which the worst outcome listed is that of physical death.

If a believer is unfruitful, God's first response will be to raise that person up.

If left on their own, the vine and branches in a vineyard would naturally grow along the ground, where they could be contaminated by insects, mold, and many things that would keep them from being fruitful.

The branches would try to root into the ground instead of drawing nourishment from the vine.

Deuteronomy 7:1-6 "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, you **MUST DESTROY THEM TOTALLY**. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy.

- 5 D's of Divine Instruction: Drive Out, Destroy, Demolish, Dispossess, Dwell

The Holy Spirit of God commands us under His influence and His authority to **DRIVE OUT** the enemies in our land! They are not compatible with Godly holy living!

- These enemies will work through our flesh and our soul [mind, will, emotions].
- Each one is like a parasite: Attach itself to you and destroy your life
- The FLESH will be empowered because it desires to be exalted and its desires and goals fulfilled.
- These enemies are active elements of your spiritual warfare.
- Their goal: Prevent your spiritual growth and maturity;
  - Hinder your experience of the Abundant Life; Rivers of Living Water
- Their defeat is ONLY possible as you surrender to the Holy Spirit and avail yourself of His power to overcome them.

If these enemies remain, they will be "snares, traps, scourges and thorns" to the people of God!

### What do you know about PIGS? Compare With Girgashite Spirit

1. They love to roll around in the mud. Girgashite literally means "Clay Dweller."
  - Clay symbolizes earthliness and slipperiness
2. Pigs are always looking towards the ground.
  - The Girgashite spirit = Earthly Focus on temporal things and exhibit a strong DISLIKE for things that are "spiritual" and eternal.
3. It is physically IMPOSSIBLE for pigs to look UP at the sky.
  - The Girgashite spirit leads you from focusing on heavenly, eternal things or things ABOVE. Your focus will be on what can be SEEN and VISIBLE.

Girgashite has 2 meanings:

1. Dweller in clay soil or black mud
  - Enjoys wallowing in muck and mire of the earth [flesh]
  - Clay or earthly people who focus on earthliness & unbelief in whatever can't be seen
  - Insatiable spirit that strives for the visible rather than the invisible
  - Spirit that thrives off the lusts of the flesh & supports the evil, perverted pleasures
  - Represent worldliness and lack of faith
  - Concentrates on material gain and wealth - covets the momentary, not eternal things
  - NO focus on things that can add value to your destiny
  - Eternal Life > Not in their life's agenda
  - You can be blindsided due to the PRIDE of your flesh

If a believer is unfruitful, God's first response will be to raise that person up.

If left on their own, the vine and branches in a vineyard would naturally grow along the ground, where they could be contaminated by insects, mold, and many things that would keep them from being fruitful.

The branches would try to root into the ground instead of drawing nourishment from the vine.

The common practice is to raise the vine up, or lift them up, to where the branches that are to bear fruit cannot be contaminated by the ground.

Neither can they then root into the ground but must depend on the vine for nourishment.

Picture of Israeli Vineyard: Notice the rows of crosses. The vinedresser would take the branches, raise them up and let them be supported by the cross.

Ps. 27:5 "For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle;

In the secret place of His tent, He will hide me; He will lift me up on a rock."

1. God will attempt to raise up the unfruitful believer.

It includes providing that believer with encouragement and teaching truth through His Word and warnings in His Word. A believer may experience dreams where God is trying to correct them. God uses the Body of Christ working in your life to raise you up from being unfruitful.

2. If the gentle encouragement to raise up the believer doesn't work, God begins to bear with the unfruitful believer.

He begins to chasten and discipline the believer, allowing consequences of sin to happen.

He can remove blessings such as health, allowing sickness and disease to occur.

Paul told the Corinthian church: Many of them had become sick and some died because they were partaking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner.

Jesus also bears our struggles by being our Intercessor, offering prayers on our behalf to the Father. Or God may raise up other believers to pray on our behalf. If that doesn't work, God begins to lift His protection from the believer, not only allowing things like sickness or the consequences of sin to happen, but possibly allowing spiritual oppression into our lives.

Consider: The more we drift away from God, the more He lets us experience how bad it can get.

God's motive is not to punish us for our sin, which has been forever paid for on the cross.

Heb. 12:10-11 For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure;

but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.

<sup>11</sup> Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

3. To Remove The Unfruitful Branch

Acts 5: Ananias and his wife Sapphira were removed by death for lying to the Holy Spirit and not being truthful to the church.

I Cor. 11:29-30 For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

<sup>30</sup> For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. [have died]

Question: What happens to unfruitful Christians after this earthly life is over.?

Are there consequences to a believer who does not bear fruit life in this life?

For the past 2,000 years, we have been in the Church Age where God is patiently giving mankind the opportunity to turn to Him before His final judgment comes.



➤ The Rapture of the Church is the next event on God's timetable. God will remove His true church from the earth before the 7 year tribulation commences. During this period of 7 years, God will deal with Israel and the nations. The True Church will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where He will examine our works on earth after we are born again.

II Cor. 5:9-10 Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

I Cor. 3:10b-13 But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

<sup>12</sup> Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

<sup>13</sup> Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

I Cor. 3:15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

- For unfruitful Christians, those who did not serve Christ faithfully as believers on earth, their works will be burned up and rewards will be lost.
- The unfruitful Christian will still be saved "yet so as by fire."

### Lot's Tragic End

- He was a recipient of God's magnified mercies and he squandered it!
- He was sinned, stripped of everything and traumatized by the severe discipline of the Lord.
- His earthly life was a wretched failure, made up entirely of "wood, hay and stubble."
- He was saved by the grace of God but saved so as through fire. [I Cor. 3:15]
- He was snatched as "brand from the burning."

Lot, who tried to gain it all, lost it all. By the grace of God and by the skin of his teeth, Lot was saved. But his life was wasted from an eternal point of view.

Many Christians never completely shed the garment of the world.

Instead, they become more entrenched in it.

Ensnared by a Girgashite spirit, one can drown in his own vomit.

Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Where is my vision cast?