

Unlocking The Mysteries & Treasures Of Our Inheritance

Lesson #43 A Burned Vine; Cedar Tree; 2 Eagles & 3 Shoots

Dispensation of Law covered a period of time from the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai until Christ's death when He declared: "It Is Finished." Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law.

Included in the Dispensation of Law:

The Period of Wilderness Wanderings under Moses

The Period of Conquest under Joshua

The Period of the Judges - Dark time in history - Ruth/Boaz > Line to bring Savior

The Period of the Kings

The Period of the Captivities (under Assyria & Babylon)

The Period of Restoration to the Land under Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah

The Period of History Covered by the Four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John)

Setting: Ezekiel, a priest at the Temple, was taken captive with the 2nd group to Babylon in 597 BC to be God's prophet to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

His first task: Prepare the exiles in Babylon for the final destruction of Jerusalem.

His Message: When God's People turn from His Word and become satisfied with substitutes, they are Headed For Failure.

Problem: False prophets in Jerusalem and Babylon were building up the confidence of the people by telling them the Lord would never allow Jerusalem and the temple to fall into the defiled hands of the Gentiles. [Jer. 29:20-32]

1. Israel felt they were Jehovah's Special Vine planted by Him in the Promised Land.

2. They were married to Him in a divine covenant. He will never divorce them.

3. God has promised David an endless dynasty. [II Sam. 7]

4. The Davidic dynasty, like a tall sturdy cedar tree, could never be felled by the Gentiles.

Consider: Ezekiel used various images [worthless vine, unfaithful wife, 2 eagles and 3 shoots] to teach Israel: God is judging His people because of these special relationships to them.

Privilege > responsibility > accountability

There are at least four idioms for Israel:

1. The Olive Tree Idiom of covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel [Rom. 11; Jer.11]

2. The Fig Tree Idiom which speaks of Israel in a national sense [Mt. 24:32]

3. Bramble Bush Speaks of Israel in terms of their failure [Judges 9:14-15]

4. The Vine Speaks of the spiritual relationship between Israel & YHWH

Ps. 80:8-9 Thou hast brought a Vine Out Of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. ⁹ Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

1. The Almighty was the "Divine Husbandman" who transplanted them.

2. It was ALL GRACE. The moral and spiritual condition of Israel in Egypt was as a degenerate vine.

3. God cast out the heathen nations in order to "clear the ground" for their transplanting. Canaan was a land of "walled cities" and "giants." [Num. 13:26-33]

Ps. 80:10-11 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. ¹¹ She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

1. The transplanted "vine" began to grow and spread over the land reaching to the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates River. [Deut. 24]

2. During the reign of David and the early reign of Solomon, the vine was fragrant and fruitful, a witness to the Gentile nations.

3. This will be completely fulfilled during the Millennium.

Isa. 5:1-4 Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.

My well-beloved 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.

a. Solomon introduced idolatry into the nation and eventually the kingdom divided.

b. The Jewish people began to Bear "Wild Grapes" instead of fruit for God's glory.

c. Subsequent kings of both Israel and Judah worshiped idols and engaged in evil practices.

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

Note: If ever a nation had everything it needed to succeed, it was Israel. Greatly favored Why then, When I Expected It To Bring Forth Good Grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? [God's disappointment]

Isaiah listed the "wild grapes" in verses 8-25: covetousness, drunkenness, carelessness, deception, pride and injustice.

God's Complaint of Israel's Failure: Jer. 2:21 Yet I Had Planted You A Noble Vine, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?

Hosea 10:1 Israel is an EMPTY VINE, he brings forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. [Matt. 21:28-46; Luke 20:9-19; Rom. 11:17-22]

Judgment on The Fruitless Vineyard

Isaiah 5:5-7 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.

I will lay it WASTE; It shall not be pruned or dug, But there shall come up BRIERS and THORNS. I will also command the clouds that they RAIN NO RAIN on it."

⁷ For the Vineyard Of The LORD Of Hosts Is The House Of Israel,
And the MEN OF JUDAH ARE HIS PLEASANT PLANT.

He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.

Ezekiel 15:1-8 We are a special vine. You Are A Worthless Vine.

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ² Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?

³ Is wood taken from it to make any object? Or can *men* make a peg from it to hang any vessel on? ⁴ Instead, it is thrown into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned. Is it useful for *any work*? ⁵ Indeed, when it was whole, no object could be made from it. How much less will it be useful for *any work* when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned?

[Note: Grapevines are not good fuel for cooking because they burn too hot and too quickly! They are too soft to be used for furniture or construction. Not even a tent peg!]

⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so Will I Give The Inhabitants Of Jerusalem. ⁷ and I will set My face against them. They will go out from *one* fire, but *another* fire shall devour them. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I set My face against them. ⁸ Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,' says the Lord GOD."

[Judah and Jerusalem are given to Babylon for the burning. Jer. 21:10; 32:28-29; 39:8; 52:13]

Key Point: The vine's only purpose is to PRODUCE FRUIT! Otherwise: USELESS

Produce fruit or burn up! Israel DID NOT PRODUCE!

What can you make out of the fruitless wood of a vine? It is only good for fuel for the fire.

1. Ezekiel saw the nation's first taste of the fire in 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar took the temple treasures to Babylon along with some of the best young men, including Daniel.

2. 597 BC there was a second deportation of exiles, including Ezekiel.

3. 588 BC - The siege of Jerusalem began and the fire began to blaze.

4. 586 BC - Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and took thousands of Jewish captives to Babylon.

Note: God allowed the Gentiles to invade the land and eventually destroy Jerusalem and the temple. [Ps. 80:12-13] The holy vineyard was defiled and devastated.

II Chron. 36:19, 21 Then they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions...To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths.

As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

5. The vine was now burned at both ends and in the middle.

Note: Israel is now passing through the "fires of persecution." As she is not bearing fruit, she is only fit for fuel. However, it is only the stem that is being consumed; the ROOT is alive and the "Vine" will spring up again. The vineyard will be fruitful in the Millennium.

Jesus, The True Vine - John 15:1-2; 4-6

"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, that it may bear more fruit.

⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, 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, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out As A Branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

Key word: ABIDE = 11x Stay in fellowship with Christ so His life can work in and through you to produce fruit.

Evidence of Abiding: You produce fruit. Experience the Father's pruning so you will bear more fruit. Prayers are answered. You experience a deepening love for Christ and for other believers. You experience joy.

Fruit-Bearing Comes At A Price

This abiding relationship must be cultivated; only way to bear fruit. It is not automatic.

It demands: worship, meditation on God's Word, prayer, sacrifice and service.

Note the progression of fruit-bearing: no fruit, fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

Consider: Once you experience abiding in Christ, you have no desire to return to the shallow life of a careless, carnal Christian.

1. If I fail to abide in Christ, I lose my spiritual power, wither and fail to bear fruit for His glory.

2. The fruitless branch is tossed aside and eventually burned. [John 15:6]

Note: I don't believe this burning means condemnation in the lake of fire, for no true believer can be condemned for sins for which Jesus died.

3. I believe the image of the burning branch is that of a worthless life, a life useless to God.

John Wesley: "Lord let me not live to be useless."

Context: Ezekiel, trained as a priest, but called to the office of a prophet, was taken captive to Babylon during the second siege. The third siege yet forthcoming (~5 years from this passage), would be the final fall and destruction of Jerusalem. His message pointed out to them that Jerusalem would fall, and God was going to judge them for their idolatry and their sins.

The Two Eagles and Three Shoots (17:1-24) Deals with Judah, Babylon and Egypt

Ezek. 17:1-3 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ² "Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel, ³ And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD;

A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

Point 1 Jews called the Temple at Jerusalem "Lebanon" because its woodwork was wholly of cedars of Lebanon. [Eusebius]

Point 2 The cedar tree represents the royal dynasty of David which is of vital importance. Through it God had promised to bring a Savior to His people and to the world.

[II Sam. 7:16; Luke 1:32-33, 69]

Point 3 It was essential a descendant of David sit on the throne so that the blessing of God's covenant with David might rest on the land.

Point 4 At that time, the kingdom of Judah was a vassal state of Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar was in charge. He is the first "great eagle."

Ezek. 17:3b-4, 11-12 took the highest branch of the cedar ⁴ He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants.

¹¹Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ¹² Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

The three kings are represented by three shoots.

A. King Jehoiachin Ezek. 17:3-4, 11-12 = Highest Shoot in David's Family Tree

Note: Jeremiah called him "Coniah" [Jer. 22:24, 28; 37:1]

Matthew called him "Jeconiah" in his genealogy of Jesus [Matt. 1:11-12]

1. Nebuchadnezzar swooped down on Judah in 597 BC, deposed King Jehoiachin.

They took him, his family and staff to Babylon.

2. He took the temple treasures and 10,000 officers, artisans, and soldiers. II Kings 24:8-17

a. This fulfilled the prophecy Isaiah had spoken to King Hezekiah after the king had shown all his wealth to the Babylonian visitors [Isa. 39; II Kings 20:17].

3. Jehoiachin had reigned only three months and ten days (II Chron. 36:9).

a. He did evil in the sight of the Lord instead of leading the people back to faith in the Lord. He died in Babylon.

4. In Ezekiel 19:5-9, Jehoiachin is compared to a lion who would be caught and taken to Babylon.

B. King Zedekiah Ezekiel 17:5-10, 13-21

Ezek. 17:5a He took also of the Seed Of The Land,

Note: Throne in Judah is vacant. Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoiachin with Zedekiah [Mattaniah] who was "of the seed of the land," a native and not a foreigner.

Zedekiah, youngest son of good King Josiah, was Jehoiachin's uncle.

Ezek. 17:5b-6 and planted it in a fruitful field [Israel]; he placed it by great waters, and Set It As A Willow Tree. And it grew [for 11 years], and became a Spreading Vine Of Low Stature, whose branches turned toward him [loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar], and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches [his sons], and shot forth sprigs [other nobles].

1. He was set as a TREE; he produced a humble vine.

2. Zedekiah swore an oath before the Lord to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar.
3. The impression you get from Ezekiel: If Zedekiah had kept his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, there would have been prosperity.

Ezek. 17:7-10 There was also Another Great Eagle [Ruler of Egypt] with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine [Zedekiah] did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches [sons] toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

Note: Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar after 11 years & turned to Egypt for help.

⁸ It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

⁹ Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

¹⁰ Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind touches it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

Note: Zedekiah's foolish decision resulted in the Uprooting And Withering Of The Vine.

This was the end of the kingdom of Judah.

Had he faithfully kept the treaty, Zedekiah might have saved the city and the temple.

Ezek. 17:13-16 And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: ¹⁴ That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

¹⁵ But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? ¹⁶ As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

1. Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate his treachery in seeking Egypt as an ally.

a. He captured Zedekiah, killed his sons before his eyes, blinded him, and took him captive to Babylon, where he died. [Ezek. 17:16; II Kings 24:17–25:7]

Ezek. 17:17-21 Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons:

¹⁸ Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.

¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

²⁰ And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

²¹ And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

Note: Ezekiel made it clear: It wasn't only Nebuchadnezzar's covenant that Zedekiah broke. He Had Broken God's Covenant. Zedekiah had sworn his oath in the name of the Lord.

[II Chron.36:11-14] Therefore he was obligated to keep it.

God punished him through Nebuchadnezzar.

1. In looking to Egypt for help, Zedekiah turned a deaf ear to the warnings of Jeremiah.

[Jer. 38]

2. Isaiah had preached the same message over a century before [Isa.31:1; 36:9].

3. God caught the king and his officers in His net and turned them over to the Babylonians. (II Kings 25:1-10; Jer. 52:1-11)

Wiersbe: "Jehoiachin had been a shoot plucked from the top of the cedar and taken to Babylon, but his descendants were rejected (Jer. 22:28-30). Zedekiah was a shoot planted in Judah. Both of these men failed to please the Lord or do His will.

Was there any hope left for the people of God? Yes"

Fast Facts To Remember:

1. Zedekiah's dethronement and death in Babylon seemed to mark the end of the Davidic line and therefore the failure of God's covenant with King David, but this was not the case.

2. The prophet Hosea predicted that the children of Israel would be "without a king, and without a prince" (Hos. 3:4), but the messianic line did not die out.

3. After Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their land.

4. One of their leaders was Zerubbabel, a great-great-grandson of godly King Josiah.

(I Chron. 3:17-19) and an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:11-16; Luke 3:27).

5. Once again, a godly remnant stayed true to the Lord, and the promised Messiah was born.

C. Messiah the King Ezek. 17:22-24

Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the Highest Branch Of The High Cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a Tender One, and will plant it upon an high mountain and Eminent:

²³ In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

²⁴ And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

Wiersbe: This "shoot" is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, who came from the stem of Jesse and one day will establish His glorious kingdom on earth. [Isa. 11:1-10; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-17; Zech. 6:12-13).

The small "shoot" will grow into a mighty tree and provide shelter [Dan. 4:17, 32-37]. In order for the "shoot" to be planted, take root, and grow, the other "trees" (kingdoms) will have to be removed. Some of them will be cut down and others will just wither.

"The kingdoms of men seem large and powerful today, and the kingdom of the Lord seems small and withering, but when Jesus returns to earth to reign, the tables will be turned.

This is why we must never be afraid or discouraged when we survey the world scene.

Jesus came as "a root out of a dry ground" [Isa. 53:1-2], an insignificant shoot from David's family tree, but ONE DAY HIS KINGDOM WILL FILL THE EARTH.

Never stop praying, "Thy kingdom come," for that prayer will be answered.

The fulfillment of God's kingdom promises to David [II Sam. 7) is in Jesus Christ [Luke 1:26-55, 67-80], and He shall not fail."

It was a dark day for the people of Israel, but when the day is the darkest, the Lord's promises shine the brightest. God's people today need to take heed to this prophetic Word, which is a light that shines in our dark world (II Peter 1:19). Just as Jesus fulfilled prophecy and came the first time to die for the sins of the world, so He will come the second time and reign over His righteous kingdom.

The tender "shoot" of David will be the mighty monarch, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!