

## Every branch that doesn't bear fruits He takes away (John 15:2-3)

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In the past two weeks we have looked at topics like:

1. "I am the way, the truth and life" by Bishop Hannington
2. "My Father will give you another counsellor" by Evan Sam

John 14:31 Ends with a phrase "Come let's go"

This suggests that Chapters 15 – 17 may have been spoken on the way to the garden Getsemane. Some however think that Jesus was asking the disciples to get ready to leave the upper room but they didn't actually do so until chapter 18:1.

Jesus decided to remain in the upper room a little longer in order to help the disciples understand more by giving the revision. Lesson found in Chapter 15 – 16.

Jesus starts by making the 7<sup>th</sup> part of His key "I am" sayings. "I am the Vine".

The other "I ams" are the following:

1. I am the light of the world. John 8:12
2. I am the good shepherd. John 10:11
3. I am the gate. John 10:9
4. I am the resurrection and the life. John 11:25
5. I am the bread of life. John 6:35
6. I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6

Today our focus is on the 7<sup>th</sup> "I am the true vine" John 15:1

Vine: it is a plant – the common grape vine is a slender plant with trails on the ground or climbs supports by means of tendrils.

It is mentioned through out scripture, frequently in symbolic sense. First named in connection with Ararat (Gen 9:20) "Noah the man of the soil, proceeded to plant a Vine yard." (Gen. 9:20). Perhaps its original habitat it was also cultivated in ancient Egypt.

This plant supports numerous branches and bears many grapes. In OT grapes symbolized Israel's fruitfulness in doing God's work on the Earth Ps. 80:8. "You brought a vine out of Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it."

Is 5:1-5. *[very interesting song please read]*

In the Passover meal, the fruit of the vine symbolized God's goodness to His people.

TRUE: The word translated "true" focuses on dependability. Jesus was not saying He is the true vine and all others are false but rather He is the dependable vine. Others may have much to offer but they are not dependable.

Jesus alone is God's appointed way of approaching God.

Christ is the vine and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are all those who claim to be followers of Christ.

The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit.

But those who become unfruitful / unproductive. Those who turn back from following Christ after making superficial commitment – are separated from the vine.

Unproductive followers are as good as dead and they will be cut off and tossed aside e.g. Judas Iscariot was giving to be cut off from the rest of the disciples and so he was cut off. John 15:2-3

Jesus makes a distinction between 2 kinds of pruning.

1. Cutting off which I have already explained.
2. Cutting back branches (pruning)

Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth. In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith.

Jesus told His remaining 11 disciples, “You’re already clean because clean because of the Word I have spoken to You.”

He had used the same mood earlier, where He had described all but one of them as clean. (John 13:10 – 11)

But despite their cleanness, the disciples could expect that the Father could allow them to go through unpleasant experiences so as to establish them in their faith and Christian ministry.

1 Peter 4:14 “If you’re insulted because of the name of Christ you are blessed, for the Spirit of Glory and of God rests on you.”

We know some of the pruning the disciples endured. Peter for example passed through the pruning of denying Jesus and the restoration that followed (John 18:17, 25, 27; 21:15-19)

A vine owner said this:

“New branches have a natural tendency to trail down and grow along the ground but they don’t bear fruit down there. When branches grow along the ground the leaves get coated in dust. When it remains, they get muddy. The branch becomes sick and useless”

The question is: What does gardener do, cut it off and throw it away? No ! The vineyard says: The branch owner replies “the branch is much too valuable for that.” We go through the vine yard with a bucket of water looking for those branches. We lift them up and wash them off. Then we wrap them around the trellis or tie them up. Pretty soon, they are thriving.