

Ezekiel 15

Read Ezekiel 15:1-8: This chapter is about the purposes of God's people. We are called to be holy; which means for a special purpose. We can easily get confused about being special to God, verses thinking that we are better than others. That is not the same thing. We are to be God's best version of ourselves; not like someone else. We were not made to do other people's things. The Jews knew that they were God's special nation; but they thought of Gentiles just as dogs and as firewood for hell. They were not superior human beings; and they failed to see their role as lights to the Gentiles in a dark place.

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. ⁷The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 7)

Israel and Judah are compared here to a grapevine. That is a metaphor which relates to their purpose. Grapevines are only grown for sweet grapes and wine. They serve no other purpose. When they fail to produce; they are cut down and burned. When we chase everything that makes us happy, we need to take our eye off of the ball. We can neglect the Kingdom by just getting busy with everything else.

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2)

Time and money and effort are not invested in grape growing for aesthetics or lumber or anything else. It is not even usable firewood. Part of recognizing your purpose is to stay in your lane and recognize your calling. This chapter not only defines what we need to do to be effective; but also, how anything else will result in failure. I recall hearing Pastor Chuck Smith talk about how somehow, he got set up with a lemon acreage investment in the Ventura area. That enterprise got destroyed by a mega freeze. apparently, God wanted him to devote his energy to

the ministry. Israel is in some ways compared to a fig tree, an olive tree or a grapevine. How is Israel like a grapevine?

Israel and Judah are described as God's hand-chosen grapevine plantings in Isaiah 5.

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. ² 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. ³ "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? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, Did it bring forth wild grapes? ⁵ 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. ⁶ 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. (Isaiah 5)

- Our purpose is to bear much fruit which is filled with sweetness when life crushes us.
 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5)*
 - We are limited people, so that God gets the glory:
 - *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence. (1 Corinthians 1)*

- We have to be pruned, to remove what has become unproductive or diseased or just competing for Kingdom resources.
- We must be attended to by God, who re-shapes our life and protects us. We think that we know where we are going; but we do not.
 - *There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*
(Proverbs 14)
- We are very different from our natural cousins (wild grapevines) who are filled with bitterness and tiny inedible fruit. This is the natural man. When they get crushed the nastiness comes out.



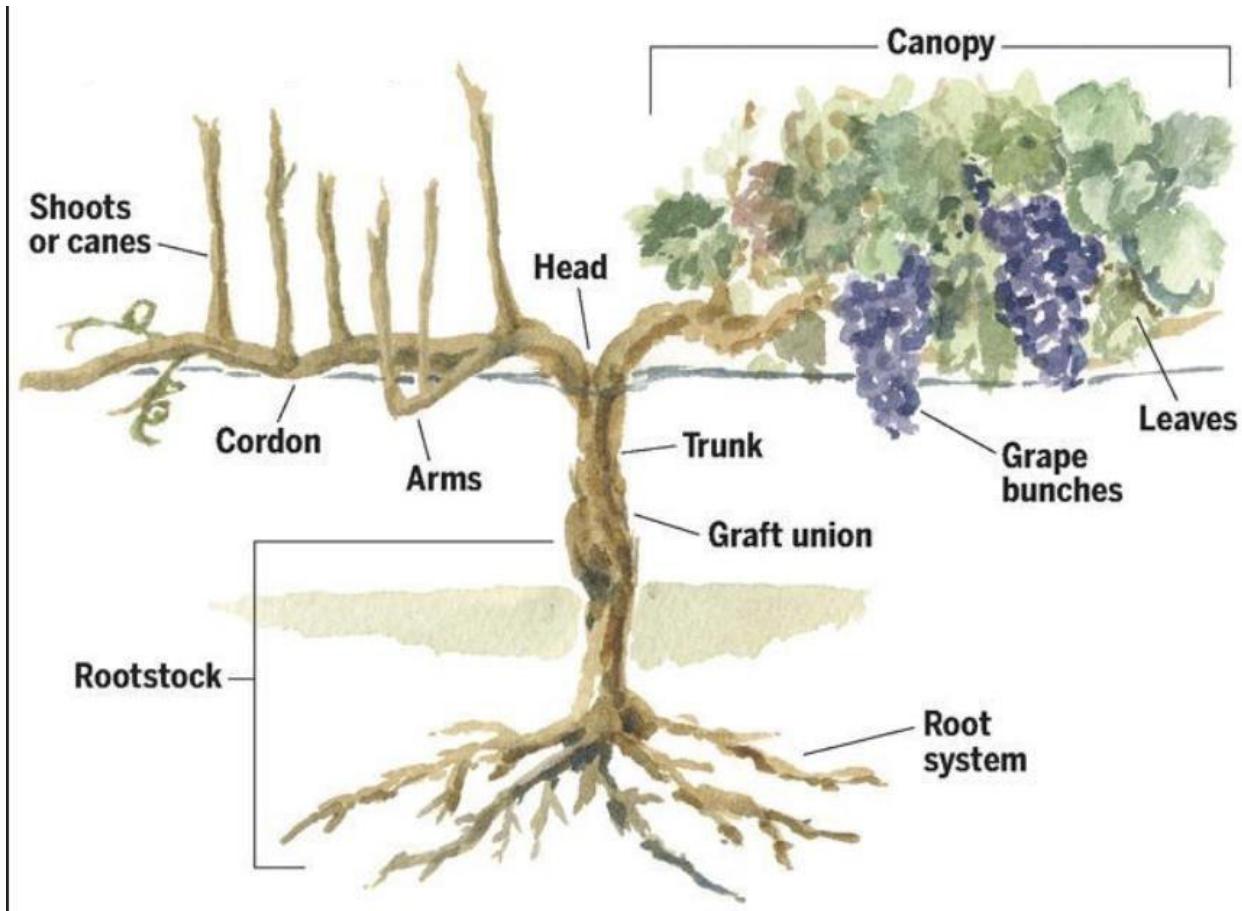
- ○ *And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, ³⁴they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.* (Matthew 27)
- Fruit comes from first year wood (spurs and buds). Only the growth areas of our life contribute to our father's business.
- We have to abide (draw lifeblood and strength from) Jesus to have any fruit in our life.

Grapevine wood is only good for growing grapes. It cannot be used in construction of anything. It is only useful for growing grapes. Jesus tells us that he is the grapevine, and we are the branches.

"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, that it may bear more fruit. ³You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide 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. ⁶If 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. ⁷If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. ⁹“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰If 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, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15)

God closes by telling us that he will clean up the mess and burn the trash.



All fruit is produced on first year wood from spurs (each with 2 or 3 buds), or from the cordon. Every year, the pruners cut off all of the canes growing on the cordon, except for 3-4 on each side of the head. Each remaining cane is cut short (a spur) to only include 2-3 buds each. This all takes place after the frosts, and natural defoliation.

Any diseased cane is cut off. God is always purifying us. If you allow the canes to keep growing, the plant will be supporting a network of branches and leaves. We

all have things that compete for Kingdom energy and time. We even experience loss of things that seem productive.

The concept of abiding is to live off of the life juice that flows from the trunk and cordon. This is spiritual vitality.

And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. (Romans 11)

When we go our own way, we become more like Satan, who is disconnected from God. Anything not connected to God dries up and is destined to get burned.

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! ¹³ For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. ¹⁶ “Those who see you will gaze at you, And consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, ¹⁷ Who made the world as a wilderness And destroyed its cities, Who did not open the house of his prisoners?’ ¹⁸ “All the kings of the nations, All of them, sleep in glory, Everyone in his own house; ¹⁹ But you are cast out of your grave Like an abominable branch, (Isaiah 14)

Grapevines are not for lumber or landscaping. Are we comparing ourselves to cedars and high achievers? Are we comparing ourselves to pretty roses? Men are impressed with stature and beauty, but God wants his variety of fruit.

And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, “Let no fruit grow on you ever again.” Immediately the fig tree withered away. (Matthew 21)

