



Learn Your Bible

Resources to help you learn and understand the Bible

Short Study 028: Biblical Symbols 4: The Vine

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Read Psalm 80:8-16

Introduction. Grapes were a prolific crop in biblical times, grown mostly to make wine but also to eat, either straight from the vine or dried to make raisins. In the Bible, the vine is used as a symbol in various ways.

(Note: This Study contains several questions to answer or ponder. If you are unsure how best to answer any of the questions, look up a Bible commentary on the relevant passage.)

Old Testament usage.

1. The spreading branches of a grape vine made it an ideal symbol of the spreading nation of Israel as God's chosen people*. What verse in the passage you read do you think most positively identifies Israel as the 'Vine'? (Read Deut 4:20 if you are unsure.)

* It is used of other nations too, as in Deut 32:32.

Now read Isaiah 5:1-7. Notice who planted the 'Vine', and how He gave it the best possible chance to produce good fruit. What sort of 'fruit' did the nation produce and what was the result?

2. It is also used to denote peace and prosperity. How do Micah 4:4 and Zech 3:10 suggest a period of prosperity?

New Testament Usage

1. Read John 15:1-6. Do you think Jesus had the Old Testament usage of the symbol in mind when He called Himself the *True Vine*? What do you reckon was true about Jesus that was not true of Israel?

It is important for a branch to remain attached to the vine if it is to produce fruit. Jesus was referring to this biological principle when he spoke of producing spiritual 'fruit'. What do you reckon this spiritual fruit to be? (Could it refer the Gal 5:22-23 perhaps?)

Read verse 2 carefully. The branches that that are 'taken away' are those that bear no fruit at all (show no evidence of the life of Christ in their character and behaviour). Those that *do* bear fruit are not taken away, but things that might hinder their bearing more fruit might be removed from them.

2. Parables. There are other parables of Jesus involving vines, vineyards or wine: Matthew 21:28-32; Matt 21:33-41; Mark 2:21. Read them if you have time.

3. The Blood of Christ. Though not about the Vine itself, we cannot leave this Study without acknowledging our Lord's reference to His blood as the fruit of the vine, to be drunk by all His disciples (1 Cor 11:25).

To think about: How can I ensure I remain firmly attached to Christ the 'Vine' and be fruitful through that attachment?

To dig deeper: Read about ancient viticulture (the cultivation of grapes and wine) in a Bible Encyclopaedia or similar and consider how various aspects apply to the parables mentioned in 2 above.