

John Chapter 15

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Following the Passover Meal and the Lord's Supper, the tiny group concluded the ceremony by singing a hymn and left for the Mount of Olives. Matthew 26:

Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:30 NLT)

As they moved along in the darkness, they probably passed vines that served as an allegory of how they would each relate through the coming turmoil.

THE LIVING UNION OF JESUS WITH HIS DISCIPLES (15:1.) "I am the true grapevine, and My Father is the gardener.

- The **Father** in Heaven is focused on **the vine**, caring for it with a view to it bearing fruit. This word-picture shows that a constant connection is in place.
- God is not distant and remote, working only through principles that He has laid down, but He is active in His care for **the grapevine** and all of its branches.
- The Gospel of John appears to be a simple book, but when we see the way the information is structured, we see the power of the Holy Spirit working through John. That is especially true of the "I AM" pictures of speech. Moses of old



asked the Lord for His name so He could tell Israel and the response is in Exodus 3:

God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. Say this to the people of Israel: I AM has sent me to you."

(Exodus 3:14)

The members of the Jewish nation understood clearly that one name for the Lord God they worshiped was "I AM."

Jesus used the name with seven metaphors as recorded by John the writer. It is Jesus' claim to be the Lord God in the clearest of terms.

The Seven "I AM" Claims Recorded by John

1.	I Am The Bread of Life	6:35
2.	I Am the Light of the World	7:12; 9:5
3.	I Am the Gate	10:7
4.	I Am the Good Shepherd	10:11-14
5.	I Am the Resurrection and the Life	11:25
6.	I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life	14:6
7.	I Am the True Vine	15:1

(2.) He cuts off every branch of Mine that doesn't produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more.

- Jesus is stressing that **branches** must **bear fruit**. It is not accurate to say that when followers have made an initial decision to become a **branch**, they will draw nourishment from the vine forever.
- Jesus did not say that all **fruit** came in the form of winning other people. **Fruit** may grow as believers use their time, talent, thought, money and energy for the cause of the Lord. Among the Eleven, talent varied. Peter was a leader, Matthew loved the social outcasts, Philip was a planner and an executive and the list goes on. Only Matthew, Peter and

John were writers. God uses the gifts that each man has. All could tell verbally that Jesus was the Messiah.

- A fruitless branch takes nourishment from the vine without returning **fruit**. These **branches** will eventually be trimmed away.

(3.) You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.

- **William Barclay** shows how the imagery of a *vine* fits into the thinking of the time.

The vine had actually become the symbol of the nation of Israel. It was the emblem on the coins of the Maccabees. One of the glories of the Temple was the great golden vine upon the front of the Holy Place. Many a great man had counted it an honour to give gold to mold a new bunch of grapes or even a new grape on to that vine. The vine was part and parcel of Jewish imagery, and the very symbol of Israel.

(4.) Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in Me.

- There must be ongoing interaction between **the vine** and the **branches** so there can be **fruit**. A detached **branch** will not bear any **fruit**, but will eventually decay.
- The choice of **remaining** was for His men to make. They had free will.
- It's beyond remarkable that Heaven has teamed up with mankind to make the truth known to humanity. The God who can speak the universe into existence has the power to approach the human race in some miraculous way, but God chose to work with *people* to accomplish His purposes. Just as God worked with ordinary humans to build a tabernacle in the wilderness as His meeting place with Israel, so He has

teamed up with ordinary people to spread Heaven's message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

(5.) "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing."

- These men are fast becoming the representatives of Jesus, but they cannot operate on their own. They must stay connected with **the vine**. The promise is not that they will bear a little **fruit**, but they will **bear much fruit**. Disconnected from Jesus **the vine**, they are helpless.
- When we speak of **fruit**, we imply reproduction. All **fruit** has seeds or some way to reproduce itself. It brings more **fruit**.

(6.) Anyone who does not remain in Me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

- In fact, not staying connected guarantees the **branch** will be cast off and **burned**.
- **Paul Butler** says it clearly:

The whole idea of the allegory is that if there is any real union between the disciple and the Master, there will be some life, and if there is any life there will be some fruit.

Therefore, the disciple who has no fruit has no life because he has no real union with his Master.



(7.) But if you remain in Me and My words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!

- The way they stay connected is to follow the **words** of Jesus. With that requirement, He offers the power of prayer.

(8.) When you produce much fruit, you are My true disciples. This brings great glory to My Father.

- The outcome of keeping the words of Jesus is the **fruit** they will **produce**. It is evidence of their **discipleship**.
- The right purpose here is to bring glory to the Father, not glory to the **disciple**. **Disciple** activity that brings **glory** to the disciple is not what the Lord has in mind. The case of Ananias and Sapphira may be a case in point.

But there was a certain man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. He brought part of the money to the apostles, claiming it was the full amount. With his wife's consent, he kept the rest. Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God!" As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified.

(Acts 5:1-5 NLT)

- This discussion about **fruit has been** the outward matters. Next Jesus turns to the inward cause of fruitfulness.

(9.) "I have loved you even as the Father has loved Me. Remain in My love.

- The measure of the **love** of Jesus for His men is the love of the **Father** for the Son.
- **James Smith** develops the love theme:
Jesus deliberately loved his disciples according to the way God the Father loved him. It was a special love. Jesus did not say, "I love you as a mother loves her baby or I love you the way a husband loves his wife or I

love you the way the soldier loves his buddy or even I love you the way an addict loves his dope."

The only way he could characterize his love for the disciples was to reference the love of the Father for the Son. The love of the Father for the Son had no beginning and will have no end. It is a love that is measureless and unchanging. We know that Jesus loved his disciples by teaching them, protecting them, guiding them, sacrificially serving them, and using his power and authority to do good on their behalf.

(10.) When you obey My commandments, you remain in My love, just as I obey My Father's commandments and remain in His love.

- Obedience to Jesus is tightly connected with **love**. This is not unconditional **love**, it is **love** based on a very specific condition.
- We demonstrate our love for Jesus by our obedience to Jesus.

**OBEDIENCE IS
A GOSPEL WORD**

(11.) I have told you these things so that you will be filled with My joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!

- While the events would quickly lead to conflict and the death for Jesus, yet He was **joyful** and wanted His men to be the same way.
- **James Smith** describes a half-way believer's lack of joy:
 No person is more miserable than the Christian who for a time falters in his obedience. He does not love sin enough to enjoy its pleasures, and does not love Christ enough to delight in holiness. He perceives that his rebellion is evil, but obedience seems too difficult. He does not feel at home any longer in the world, but feels uncomfortable singing the songs of Zion. He is a person

most to be pitied; and he cannot forever remain ambivalent toward the things of God.

A NEW STANDARD OF LOVE NEVER BEFORE POSSIBLE

(12.) This is My commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

- Jesus had something that He wanted from His men: that they **love** each other just as He had **loved** them. The Old Testament had required **love**.

"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18 NLT)

In verse 12, Jesus is using His own example of **love** for His men to use as their standard. The same tender affection, willingness to endure trials, to practice self-denial, and, if need be, to lay down their lives for each other. John commented on this in his letter:

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up His life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:16 NLT)

(13.) There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

- The highest form of **love** is that one person will **lay down his life for a friend**. And Jesus was only a few hours away from doing that for His Eleven and the rest of the world.

(14.) You are My friends if you do what I command.

- **Friendship** with Jesus is conditional and requires obedience to His spoken word.
- **Friendship** with Jesus is far more than just not doing or saying certain things. It is carrying out His **commands**.

(15.) I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in His slaves. Now you are My friends, since I have told you everything the Father told Me.

- Jesus was elevating His chosen men to the role of **friends**. This was a promotion from the Rabbi/disciple relationship. He shared whatever the **Father** had revealed to Him. The communication was transparent.

(16.) You didn't choose Me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using My name.

- Normally, a disciple chose his rabbi, but not in this case. Jesus had **picked** these men from the crowds. Several had been disciples of John the Baptist. In exchange for **producing lasting fruit**, Jesus offered answered prayer in response. They were to pray using the **Name** of Jesus.

(17.) This is My command: Love each other.

- Bearing fruit is connected with **loving** each other.
- **James Smith** observes that these men must not disband or turn against each other or act in competition with one another.

BELIEVERS AND THE WORLD

(18.) "If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first.

- They should expect hatred from the man in the street. They will get the same treatment that Jesus received. This opposition is recorded in the Book of Acts. Arrests, imprisonment, beatings were ahead for them. The world crucified Jesus and they will punish or kill His followers, too.

(19.) The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.

- Most of them died at the hands of men who **hated** them.
- When Jesus confronted Saul on the road to Damascus, His question was, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul had been persecuting believers.

(20.) Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted Me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to Me, they would listen to you.

- As representatives of Jesus, they can expect the same kind of treatment that He received. Most would **persecute** them and a few will accept their **words**.

(21.) They will do all this to you because of Me, for they have rejected the one who sent Me.

- Persecutors may be in a religious movement and be very zealous, but they don't know the God of Heaven. This is illustrated by the Jewish Sanhedrin.

(22.) They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin.

- Knowing what God has said creates a responsibility to obey it.

(23.) Anyone who hates Me also hates My Father.

- People cannot **hate** Jesus and love the **Father**. It's both or neither.
- **Paul Butler** writes:

But Jesus had broken no law, injured no one, hated no one. To the contrary He sought only to do good to friend and enemy alike. What cause or reason had anyone for hating Jesus?

(24.) If I hadn't done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, they have seen everything I did, yet they still hate Me and My Father.

- **Paul Butler** pictures the importance of these words:

In verses 22 through 25 are some of the most solemn words to ever fall from the lips of the Saviour of men. He plainly declares that by both His teachings and His miraculous works He demonstrated enough proof of His Sonship, Messiahship that men who reject Him have absolutely no excuse.

In comparison with the sin of not listening to His words, and being taught by His works, all other sins dwindle into nothing. Jesus does not mean to say that these men would have been clear of all sin.

The Jew was condemned by the Law; the Gentile committed sins against his conscience (cf. Rom. 1 and 2). But as *black* as these sins are, they are *white* compared with the blackness of the sin of rejecting the revelation of God in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The rejection of the Messiah was the crowning act of rebellion by the Jews against God which brought down the vengeance of God and caused them to become a “byword among the nations.”

(25.) This fulfills what is written in their Scriptures: 'They hated Me without cause.' [Psalm 35:19]

- Jesus says the Psalm finds **fulfillment** in Him. Oddly, the self-styled custodians of the Law are those who are acting as the enemies and **hating** the Messiah who was prophesied. This opposition to Jesus and His followers stemmed from

hatred, not ignorance. Jesus has *overwhelmed* them with evidence of who He is. **Hatred** cannot be overcome with evidence that the **hater** is wrong.

(26.) "But I will send you the Advocate -- the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about Me.

- Jesus had promised the **Spirit** earlier.

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. (John 14:16 NLT)

These men will be the representatives of Jesus and be supported by the **Spirit of truth** who will also **testify** on behalf of Jesus. Being the **Spirit of truth** means that what they speak by the **Spirit** will be correct.

- **The Spirit** is also one with the **Father**. No conflict or competition here.

(27.) And you must also testify about Me because you have been with Me from the beginning of My ministry.

- These men are being equipped to **bear witness** of Jesus as the Lord, reinforced by the Spirit of truth.
- They have been with Jesus from **the beginning** of His **ministry**. This is a requirement to be an apostle and is restated by Peter when a replacement for Judas was being picked. Acts 1:

"So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus -- from the time He was baptized by John until the day He was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection." (Acts 1:21-22 NLT)

- Here is a sample of John **testifying** about Jesus:

We proclaim to you the One who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw Him with our own eyes and touched Him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. This One who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen Him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that He is the One who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then He was revealed to us. We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, **Jesus Christ.** (1 John 1:1-3 NLT)

MUSIC BOX

Come, let us sing to the LORD! (Psalms 95:1 NLT)

Verse	Link:	Put in Browser:
12	Out of the Ivory Palaces	http://bitly.ws/oSMo