Book Of John Essay, Research Paper

Chapter 15 of the Book of John

This chapter takes place in the upper room in Jerusalem. This was during the Passover feast, though some scholars say otherwise. Jesus was speaking only to the disciples. The first part of the chapter is devoted to the analogy of the vineyard and it’s branches. The second part is talks about the future relationship with the “world”. This is an important chapter, which deals with not only relationship with Jesus and the Father, but also with the outside community.

1. “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. egw eimi h ampeloV h alhqinh kai o pathr mou o gewrgoV esti

The scene must be kept in mind. The Lord and his disciples had just eaten the last supper. He had said, “Arise, let us go forth” (John 14:31). They had risen, but were still standing in the room. On the table, from where they had just risen, was the “fruit of the vine,”(wine) and the Lord had said he would never drink it again upon the earth. (Matthew 26:7) (Johnson)

There are numerous Old Testament passages, which refer to Israel as a vine: Ps. 80:8-16, Isaiah. 5:1-7, Jeremiah. 2:21, Ezekiel. 15:1-8, 17:5-10, 19:10-14, and Hosiah 10:1. The vine became symbolic of Israel, and even appeared on some coins issued by the Maccabees.

The Old Testament passages which use this symbol appear to regard Israel as faithless to why and/or the object of severe punishment. Ezek. 15:1-8 in particular talks about the worthlessness of wood from a vine (in relation to disobedient Judah). A branch cut from a vine is worthless except to be burned as fuel. This appears to fit more with the statements about the disciples than with Jesus’ description of himself as the vine.

Ezek. 17:5-10 contains vine imagery that refers to a king of the house of David, Zedekiah, who was set up as king in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah allied himself to Egypt and broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar (and therefore also with God), which would ultimately result in his downfall (17:20-21). Ezek. 17:22-24 then describes the planting of a cedar sprig, which grows into a lofty tree, a figurative description of Messiah. But it is significant that Messiah himself is not described in Ezekiel 17 as a vine, but as a cedar tree. The vine imagery here applies to Zedekiah’s disobedience.

Jesus’ description of himself as the “true Vine” is to be seen against this background, but it differs significantly from the imagery we have surveyed above. It represents new imagery that differs significantly from Old Testament concepts; it appears to be original with Jesus. The imagery of the vine underscores the importance of fruitfulness in the Christian life and the truth that this results not from human achievement, but from one’s position in Christ. Jesus is not just giving some comforting advice, but portraying to the disciples the difficult path of faithful service. To some degree the figure is similar to the Head-Body metaphor used by Paul, with Christ as Head and believers as members of the Body. Both metaphors bring out the vital and necessary connection that exists between Christ and believers. (Harris)

This is the seventh and final “I Am” statement in which Jesus makes in the book of John.

The term “true” means, pure or genuine, which would assume that there are false or counterfeit vines. (Bryant) The false vine could have meant Israel. (They had not been pruned.)

2. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. pan klhma en emoi mh feron karpon airei auto kai pan to karpon feron kaqairei auto ina pleiona karpon ferh

The verb klhma can mean “lift up” as well as “take away,” and it is sometimes argued that here it is a reference to the gardener “lifting up” a weak branch so that it bears fruit again. (Harris)

A gardener will prune his garden to keep it looking the best he can. He may slave for hours at a time just snipping here or there. So God does that to his people. Those that are injuring the others in his garden he will cut away for they are more of harm than help.

3. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. hdh umeiV kaqaroi este dia ton logon on lelalhka umin

Now it becomes clear what kaqaro in the preceding verse means: it refers to cleansing from sin. This phrase occurs elsewhere in the Gospel of John only at the washing of the disciples’ feet in 13:10, where Jesus has used it of the disciples being cleansed from sin. Judas is specifically excluded from this statement for he was not present. (Harris)

4. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. meinate en emoi kagw en umin kaqwV to klhma ou dunatai karpon ferein af eautou ean mh meinh en th ampelw outwV oude umeiV ean mh en emoi meinhte

As all spiritual fruitfulness had been ascribed to the mutual inhabitation, and living, active interpenetration of Christ and His disciples, so here the keeping up of this vital connection is made essential to continued fruitfulness. (Brown)

Jesus describes the relationship between his disciples and himself as one of remaining. Remain occurs 7 times in verses 1-8. In reference to the vineyard analogy it is clear that the branch must remain on the vine or else it will die. But Jesus brings it deeper as meaning Dwelling or Living or Making A Home in the vine… He promised never to leave his disciples. (Bryant)

5. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. egw eimi h ampeloV umeiV ta klhmata o menwn en emoi kagw en autw outoV ferei karpon polun oti cwriV emou ou dunasqe poiein ouden

What is the fruit mentioned here and in 15:2, 4, and 8? One’s initial impression is to interpret the imagery in terms of good deeds or character qualities, relating it to passages elsewhere in the NT like Matt. 3:8 and 7:20, Rom. 6:22, Gal. 5:22, etc. This is not necessarily inaccurate, but we must remember that for John, to have life at all is to bear fruit; while one who does not bear fruit shows that he does not have the life (Harris)

6. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ean mh tiV meinh en emoi eblhqh exw wV to klhma kai exhranqh kai sunagousin auta kai eiV to pur ballousin kai kaieta

The lifeless, fruitless branches in the vineyard are lopped off and carried out, and wither and are burned. So, too, any one who does not abide in Christ is severed from the Vine, and they (the angels at the great day; not men, as in the Common Version.) cast them into the fire and they are burned. (Johnson)

7. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ean meinhte en emoi kai ta rhmata mou en umin meinh o ean qelhte aithsesqe kai genhsetai umin

Jesus is addressing his own again, the disciples from whom the traitor Judas has already departed (13:30). They are already clean (cf. 13:10). Thus there is a change to a more positive note from the “if anyone” of verse 6 to “if you” in the present verse. Once again Jesus promises the disciples that they may ask whatever they will, and it will be done for them. This recalls 14:13-14, where the disciples were promised that if they asked anything in Jesus’ name it would be done for them. The two thoughts are really quite similar, since here it is conditioned upon the disciples’ remaining in Jesus and his words remaining in them. The first phrase relates to the genuineness of their relationship with Jesus. The second phrase relates to their obedience. When both of these qualifications are met, the disciples would in fact be asking in Jesus’ name and therefore according to his will. (Harris)

Jesus said this to show the disciples that he loved them. Nothing on this Earth or form the under the Earth would be held away from them. Only if they did not remain in Him were they not to get what they asked. God will grant those things to those who are truly seeking it who are in him.

And what can we desire more than to have what we will for the asking? Note, Those that abide in Christ as their heart’s delight shall have, through Christ, their heart’s desire. If we have Christ, we shall want nothing that is good for us. Two things are implied in this promise:- First, That if we abide in Christ, and his word in us, we shall not ask any thing but what is proper to be done for us. The promises abiding in us lie ready to be turned into prayers; and the prayers so regulated cannot but speed. Secondly, That if we abide in Christ and his word we shall have such an interest in God’s favor and Christ’s mediation that we shall have an answer of peace to all our prayers. (Henry)

8. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. en toutw edoxasqh o pathr mou ina karpon polun ferhte kai genhsesqe emoi maqhtai

This is my father’s glory, that you bear much fruit- not only from His delight in it for its own sake, but as from “the juices of the Living Vine.”

Showing yourselves to be my disciples- evidence of your discipleship. (Brown)

9. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. kaqwV hgaphsen me o pathr kagw hgaphsa umaV meinate en th agaph th emh

Jesus begins in verse 9 by affirming his love for the disciples (comparing it to the Father’s love for him). He then commands the disciples to remain in his love. (Harris)

He knew of what was to come so he wanted to reaffirm that they would hold strong even as the tides of darkness swelled.

10. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. kaqwV hgaphsen me o pathr kagw hgaphsa umaV meinate en th agaph th emh

Jesus goes on to explain what he means by remaining in his love: it is indicated by obedience to his commands. Obedience and love are inseparably linked and are mutually dependent upon one another. A similar idea may be seen in 1 John 4:20 (”If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen”), when we realize that loving one’s brother involves obeying the command to “love one another” (John 13:34, 15:12, 17). Thus 1 John 4:20 is really addressing an attempt to separate obedience to God’s commands and love for God, much as Jesus is talking about keeping his commandments and remaining in his love being interrelated here. (Harris)

11. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ean taV entolaV mou thrhshte meneite en th agaph mou kaqwV egw taV entolaV tou patroV mou tethrhka kai menw autou en th agaph

The purpose for Jesus saying these things to the disciples is so that his joy may reside in them and their joy may be complete. Although it is mentioned only in passing here, the theme of joy will be resumed again at greater length in 16:20-24. (Harris)

12. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. auth estin h entolh h emh ina agapate allhlouV kaqwV hgaphsa umaV

Now the reference to the commandments (plural) in 15:10 have been reduced to a singular commandment: the disciples are to love one another, just as Jesus has loved them. This is the new commandment of 13:34, and it is repeated in 15:17. The disciples’ love for one another is compared to Jesus’ love for them. (Harris)

13. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. meizona tauthV agaphn oudeiV ecei ina tiV thn yuchn autou qh uper twn filwn autou

In the context this must refer primarily to Jesus’ own self-sacrificial death on the cross on behalf of his followers, whom he will describe in the next verse as his friends. Some have questioned whether love for enemies is not greater than love for friends, but that is not the point here, since in the context in which Jesus is speaking these words only friends are present. (Henry)

The highest human exhibition of love that earth has ever seen was this. Christ was about to exhibit this highest type of human love by dying for his friends. He did even more, as Paul shows us in Romans 5:6, he died for his enemies, something that man had never done. (Johnson)

14. You are my friends if you do what I command. umeiV filoi mou este ean poihte osa egw entellomai umin

This means to- hold yourselves in absolute subjection to Me. (Brown)

15. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ouketi umaV legw doulouV oti o douloV ouk oiden ti poiei autou o kurioV umaV de eirhka filouV oti panta a hkousa para tou patroV mou egnwrisa umin

There is a sense in which the follower of Jesus may legitimately be thought of as a servant (dou’lo”); this is what Jesus in Luke 17:10 taught the disciples to call themselves, and this is a term which Paul commonly applies to himself and to others in his letters. But here Jesus is talking about more than just service rendered; here he is talking about intimacy with God. From this perspective the Christian is far more than just a servant, because he has been taken into God’s confidence in an intimate relationship. Everything Jesus has heard from his Father he has passed along to the disciples. Thus they have a privileged relationship with him and with the Father; they are no longer servants but friends. (Harris)

16. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit–fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ouc umeiV me exelexasqe all egw exelexamhn umaV kai eqhka umaV ina umeiV upaghte kai karpon ferhte kai o karpoV umwn menh ina o ti an aithshte ton patera en tw onomati mou dw umin

Each one of the eleven apostles present had been chosen, called, by the Lord, from among his disciples. They did not choose him, but he them, in order that they might bring forth abundant fruit in the conversion of the world. (Johnson)

If the disciples are now elevated in status from servants to friends, they are friends who have been chosen by Jesus, rather than the opposite way round. Again this is true of all Christians, not just the Twelve, and the theme that Christians are “chosen” by God appears frequently in other New Testament texts ( Rom. 8:33; Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12; and 1 Peter 2:4). Putting this together with the comments on 15:14 we may ask whether the Evangelist sees any special significance at all for the Twelve. Jesus has said in 6:70 and 13:18 that he chose them, and 15:27 makes clear that Jesus in the immediate context is addressing those who have been with him from the beginning. It seems most probable that in the Fourth Gospel the Twelve, as the most intimate and most committed followers of Jesus, are presented as the models for all Christians, both in terms of their election and their mission. (Harris)

The purpose for which the disciples were appointed (”commissioned”) is that they go and bear fruit, fruit which remains. The introduction of the idea of “going” at this point suggests that the fruit is something more than just character qualities in the disciples’ own lives, involving fruit in the lives of others. There is a mission involved. It appears that as the imagery of the Vine and the branches develops, the “fruit” which the branches produce shifts in emphasis from qualities in the disciples’ own lives in 15:2, 4, 5 to the idea of a mission which affects the lives of others in 15:16. The point of transition would be the reference to fruit in 15:8. (Brown)

17. This is my command: Love each other. tauta entellomai umin ina agapate allhlouV

This verse is a restatement of the idea of 15:12. This brings to a close the parable of the Vine and the branches.

What all the symbolism stands for in this parable

Vineyard Element Function of Vineyard Intended to Represent Function in the Believing Community

Vine Brings sap from the root to give life to the branches Jesus Brings and sustains life to the disciple

Branches Bear fruit Jesus’ Disciples Continue to carry on the ministry of Jesus by demonstrating his love.

Gardener Prunes unwanted branches, hauls away and burns the rubbish God the Father Judges and cleanses the community

This is Jesus’ third time to announce this command. He is very strong in his belief that this is one of the most important laws of life in following his father, is stands second in importance.

18. “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. ei o kosmoV umaV misei ginwskete oti eme prwton umwn memishken

The world is the unregenerate portion of mankind. It hated and slew the Lord. It has never loved his disciples. Satan is its prince. The Jewish leaders hated Jesus and it would be shown on the cross how much the Jews all hated Jesus. (Harris)

Whereas the relationship within the community of disciples may be characterized by the word love, the attitude of the world to this community is the word hate. Public stands for biblically based morality are thrashed ruthlessly by those who disagree. Nothing sacred to Christians is exempt from the lampooning satire. (Bryant) \*reworded

19. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ei ek tou kosmou hte o kosmoV an to idion efilei oti de ek tou kosmou ouk este all egw exelexamhn umaV ek tou kosmou dia touto misei umaV o kosmoV

Two themes are brought together here. In 8:23 Jesus had distinguished himself from the world in addressing his Jewish opponents: “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.” In 15:16 Jesus told the disciples “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you+”. Now Jesus has united these two ideas as he informs the disciples that he has chosen them out of the world. While the disciples will still be “in” the world after Jesus has departed, they will not belong to it, and Jesus prays later in 17:15-16 to the Father, “I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” The same theme also occurs in 1 John 4:5-6: “They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us”. (Harris)

20. Remember the words I spoke to you: `No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. mnhmoneuete tou logou ou egw eipon umin ouk estin douloV meizwn tou kuriou autou ei eme ediwxan kai umaV diwxousin ei ton logon mou ethrhsan kai ton umeteron thrhsousin

The servants must expect similar treatment to that given the Master. The long roll of Christian martyrs shows how this has been verified. (Henry)

21. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. alla tauta panta poihsousin umin dia to onoma mou oti ouk oidasin ton pemyanta me

Now the reason for the world’s rejection of the disciples’ message and its persecution of them becomes clear: it is because they do not know the one who sent Jesus into the world. In the final analysis it is the world’s ignorance of God that causes them to respond to Jesus and to his followers so. Jesus came into the world to reveal the Father to men (1:18, 14:9); in rejecting him they have rejected the Father also. But had they known the Father (had they been open to revelation from God–had “the Jews” in 8:42 been true sons of Abraham–) then they would have received Jesus and his revelation of what God is like gladly. Instead they rejected him, and in so doing showed that they did not know the one who sent him. Here Jesus has extended to “the world” the same charge he made against “the Jews” in 5:37 and 7:28: they are ignorant of God. (Harris)

22. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. ei mh hlqon kai elalhsa autoiV amartian ouk eicon nun de profasin ouk ecousin peri thV amartiaV autwn

Certain conclusions follow: (1) The degree of our sin is measured by our opportunities; (2) increased opportunities bring a consciousness of sin; light in the room enables us to see the dirt; (3) the sin of sins is the rejection of Christ. Since he came there is no cloak, no covering, and no excuse. Those who refuse Christ die in their sins, because they will not part from them (Johnson)

23. He who hates me hates my Father as well. o eme miswn kai ton patera mou misei

Hatred of Jesus amounts to hatred of his Father as well. The opposite was stated positively in 13:20. (Harris)

They hate both because they are none in the same, yet separate. (Bryant)

24. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ei ta erga mh epoihsa en autoiV a oudeiV alloV pepoihken amartian ouk eicon nun de kai ewrakasin kai memishkasin kai eme kai ton patera mou

Jesus continues his description of the world’s guilt for its rejection of him and the One who sent him. It seems that the sign-miracles he performed are particularly in view here. Had Jesus not done these things, which testified to who he was, the world would again not be guilty of rejecting him and the Father who sent him. But now they have seen and rejected, and their sin remains upon them unatoned. The world has both seen and hated Jesus, and in him it has seen (and hated) the Father too. (Harris)

25. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: `They hated me without reason.’ all ina plhrwqh o logoV o gegrammenoV en tw nomw autwn oti emishsan me dwrean

The ultimate reason for the world’s rejection of Jesus and his revelation of the Father is found in the Old Testament scriptures: the word which is written in their law must be fulfilled. As a technical term novmo” is usually restricted to the Pentateuch, but here it must have a broader reference, since the quotation is from Ps. 35:19 or Ps. 69:4. The latter is the more likely source for the quoted words, since it is cited elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel (2:17 and 19:29, in both instances in contexts associated with Jesus’ suffering and death). (Harris)

26. “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. otan de elqh o paraklhtoV on egw pemyw umin para tou patroV to pneuma thV alhqeiaV o para tou patroV ekporeuetai ekeinoV marturhsei peri emou

John 14:16-18; John 16:13-15

The counselor, by some, is believed to be the Holy Spirit, while others believe it is a real man. Scholars are not too sure on which it means. But Acts would seem to appoint it as the Holy Spirit.

26 and 27 gives the disciples future information about what the holy spirit will do and will not do. The holy spirit will be a confirmation of the continuing presence of Jesus within the believing community after his death and ressurection. But that is not the point of these verses. They are a warning to the discples that they should not epect the holy spirit to assume their designasted tasks of being a witness for Jesus. (Bryant)

27. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. kai umeiV de martureite oti ap archV met emou este

The apostles had been “with him from the beginning,” and knew all the facts. If he was true, they knew it; if he stilled the waves and raised the dead, they knew it; if he rose from the tomb, they knew it. (Acts 1:21,22) They bore witness to him by word and left their words to us. They bore witness by life, gave up all for him and died for their testimony. Such testimony is the strongest human testimony ever offered to any fact. (Johnson)

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