

## Vines

1/19/2025

As Christians we are probably most familiar with the word vine from John chapter 15 where Jesus refers to himself as the vine and his disciples as the branches. This morning we will be taking a little closer look at what Scripture has to say about vines to perhaps better understand our Lord's message written in John.

Vines are spoken of 53 times in the Old Testament but just a handful of times in the New. Vines are spoken of in four of the five books of the Torah. In these first five books of the Bible there are four different Hebrew words used to describe a vine.

The first mention of a vine in the Torah appears in Genesis 40:9 & 10 where Joseph interprets a dream which is good news for one person and bad news for another. Here the Hebrew word is *gepen* meaning a bent or twisted vine as in twining. In this account Joseph, the butler and the baker are all in prison, their lives are intertwined and dependent on the Pharaoh.

Then in Genesis 49:11 we see the word vine used twice. Two different Hebrew words are used here to define different aspects of a vine. The 1st time the word vine appears in this verse it is again the Hebrew word *gepen* as in bending a vine to tie one's donkey. The second time vine is used it is the Hebrew word *Soreq* meaning a specific type of vine. A red vine like the ones which produce purple grapes, the richest variety. The choicest type of vine producing noble wine. Genesis 49 is the chapter where Jacob blesses his sons and this section of the chapter is speaking of his son Judah - *"Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a lion's cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. **He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.**"*

Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:1-5 speaks of this prophesy and its fulfillment - *"As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" (Zechariah 9:9)*

The next time the word vine appears in the Torah is found in Leviticus 25:5 & 11. There it speaks of the year of jubilee, day of atonement and leaving unattended vines for the poor to partake of.

Here on both occasions the Hebrew word for vine is *nazir* meaning separate i.e. consecrate (as prince, a nazirite); hence (figuratively from the latter) an unpruned vine (like the unshorn Nazarite) - unshorn meaning uncut hair.

Matthew 2:19-23 *“After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.” So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.”*

The next reference to a vine in the Torah is found in Numbers 6:4. This time the Hebrew word is *yayin* meaning effervesce; wine (as fermented).

Numbers 6:1-4 *“The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of dedication to the Lord as a Nazirite, they must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or other fermented drink. They must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. As long as they remain under their Nazirite vow, they must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins.’”*

And the final time we see the word vine used in the Torah is in Deuteronomy 32:32 where the Hebrew word once again is *gepen* meaning bent or twisted. The passage speaks of those in Israel who had rejected their God -

Deuteronomy 32:32 “

*“Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom  
and from the fields of Gomorrah.*

*Their grapes are filled with poison,  
and their clusters with bitterness.”*

Thus Israel was taught in the Torah (first five books) that a vine can represent both good and bad. And thus produce either good or bad fruit.

The next mention of a vine comes in Judges 9:12-13 where trees, vines and thorn-bushes are spoken of as types of leaders. Here Israel must make a choice concerning who will lead them. I have underlined the 3 words above because we will see them in something Jesus says later in this lesson.

Then in Judges 13:14 we see that Israel had **not** chosen wisely about who they chose to lead them. And so the mother of Samson is told she must abstain from consuming

the fruit of the vine (wine) for she is to give birth to a son who will be a nazirite. One by vow set apart for God.

Then 1st Kings 4:25 we read this about Israel - *“During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree.”*

The reference to vines along with fig trees appears a number of times in The Old Testament. Good times speak of them growing together and bad times speak of them being destroyed together.

Next in 2 Kings 4:38-41 - *“Elisha returned to Gilgal and there was a famine in that region. While the company of the prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, “Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these prophets.” **One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine and picked as many of its gourds as his garment could hold.** When he returned, he cut them up into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were. The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, “Man of God, there is death in the pot!” And they could not eat it. Elisha said, “Get some flour.” He put it into the pot and said, “Serve it to the people to eat.” And there was nothing harmful in the pot.”*

Here we see the dangers of partaking of a wild vine!

2nd Kings 18:31 - *“Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then **each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern,**”*

Here the commander of the Assyrian army surrounding Jerusalem tells the Israelites they will be safe by surrendering to them. Notice how he describes this safety.

2nd Chronicles 26:9-10 *“Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them. He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and **vineyards** in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.”*

King Uzziah reigned in Jerusalem, the Southern kingdom, for 52 years during which time it grew quite prosperous. But during this time the people also grew quite wicked.

Note \* There are also mentions of vines in Job, the Psalms and Song of Songs. But I would like to skip to Isaiah chapter 5 where one of the most descriptive examples of a vine exists. Recalling that Isaiah received his calling in the year Uzziah died we will see a vivid description of fallen Israel presented here. Isaiah 5:1-7 -

*"I will sing for the one I love  
a song about his vineyard:  
My loved one had a vineyard  
on a fertile hillside.  
He dug it up and cleared it of stones  
and planted it with the choicest vines.  
He built a watchtower in it  
and cut out a winepress as well.  
Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,  
but it yielded only bad fruit.  
"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah,  
judge between me and my vineyard.  
What more could have been done for my vineyard  
than I have done for it?  
When I looked for good grapes,  
why did it yield only bad?  
Now I will tell you  
what I am going to do to my vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge,  
and it will be destroyed;  
I will break down its wall,  
and it will be trampled.  
I will make it a wasteland,  
neither pruned nor cultivated,  
and briars and thorns will grow there.  
I will command the clouds  
not to rain on it."  
The vineyard of the Lord Almighty  
is the nation of Israel,  
and the people of Judah  
are the vines he delighted in.  
And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;  
for righteousness, but heard cries of*

Next we come to the words recorded in John 15:1-17 about The Vine and its branches. *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also 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. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.*

*If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. 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. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.”*

In recent lessons we have been looking into what Scripture has to say about responding to God's call to salvation. We have looked at some of the passages that speak of the roles of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit in this plan. Let us further consider the following passages as part of that plan.

John 4:21-26 -

*“Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.**” The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” **Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”***

**The fruit of the Spirit** - Galatians 5:19-26 -

*“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”*

In Matthew 6:15-20 we read of fruit which comes not from a vine but a tree.

*“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. **Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?** Likewise, every good **tree** bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”*

Thus if we are truly in Christ then spiritual fruit (good fruit) will naturally be produced. It is part of the plan as we learn from Genesis -

*“Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.” (Genesis 1:11-13)*

Growing in Christ is also part of the plan. As Paul prayed for the Ephesians -  
*“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”*

But in Isaiah chapter 5 which we read earlier did God not plant good grape vines? Yes God did! And God attended them well. God did His part. But as we read in the opening of Isaiah - *“Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken: “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me.” (Isaiah 1:2)*

Our part of this plan of God is to grow into good fruit. When we rebel our sins separate us from God and we die. But we also can die on the vine if we fail to be nourished by His life giving Word. Or as Jesus describes - we the branches must be connected to the vine to live and produce. This morning are you connected or separated from your creator and this source of life is the question.