

# **The Vine And The Branches**

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## John 15:1-6

One of the great failings of man in studying the Bible is to allow the interpretations and traditions of others to influence him in his conclusions and deductions. The text of this study has suffered as much or perhaps more than any passage in the Bible because of the false interpretations of men.

It is a common error, heard almost constantly from leaders and members of different religious denominations to say that all religious denominations are but branches of the church. They conclude that the church of Christ, in the general sense, is the vine and all the different denominations are the branches. This is a completely false and unscriptural conclusion. Let us honestly consider the text.

John 15:1-6, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*

## Branches different denominations?

To say that the branches are the different religious denominations is to completely distort and pervert this simple teaching of Jesus. The branches could not possibly refer to any of the modern denominations for several reasons.

It will be observed that Jesus spoke in present tense, referring to facts, or circumstances, in existence then. This was hundreds of years before the modern denominations of our day, which may claim to be the branches of the vine. They did not even exist then.

To be in Christ is to be in His church, and His church is not a denomination, nor a branch of a denomination. Those who are saved by the blood of Christ are they who are members of the Lord's church.

Acts 20:28, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”*

Those who are members of the Lord’s church are they who obtained remission of sins by virtue of the blood of Christ, when they repented and were baptized. Carefully consider God’s word in Acts 2:38, 41, and 47, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ... Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

In Heb. 9:22, the apostle declared that *“... without shedding of blood is no remission”*; therefore, those who repented and were baptized for the remission of sins were saved by the blood of Christ, purchased by the blood of Christ, added to the Lord’s church. The church of Christ was not a denomination; neither were denominations branches of Christ’s church.

Christ did not use false examples to illustrate or teach truth. One thing is certain: It is a known and accepted fact, that it is contrary to nature and common sense to presume that a single vine could produce six hundred different branches with different identities. Can you see a grape vine producing grapes, peas, beans, squash, blackberries, watermelons, persimmons, and strawberries? Whoever heard the like? Yet, intelligent people are asked to believe that the one vine is the church of Christ and all the different denominations are the branches thereof. Such a conclusion is contrary to reason, to nature, and to God’s word!

## **Christ: The vine; individual Christians: the branches.**

In reading this text, it will be observed that Jesus did not use relative pronouns, but personal ones. He said, *“I am the vine.”* Jesus declared that He was the vine, not some religious institution. Furthermore, He said, *“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches”*. Furthermore, our Lord declared, *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch”*. Jesus said, **“a man”**, an individual, not some denomination. Obviously, Jesus was speaking to His disciples, not to a group of denominations. He referred to himself as the vine and His individual disciples as the branches.

## Apart from Christ, nothing..

Not only did Jesus say that He was the vine and His disciples are the branches, but He also declared, *“without me ye can do nothing”*. Surely, the branch does not exist without the vine. Furthermore, the branch must abide in the vine to bear fruit; otherwise, the branches are burned.

The doctrine of Christ affirms that apart from Christ one has no hope of salvation. Men are not good enough to save themselves. No man can obtain salvation apart from Christ. Denominations originated by men, although religious they may be, regardless of what good they attempt to do, are worthless as far as man’s salvation is concerned. It matters not about their mission in the world, nor the principles upon which they were founded.

It is regrettable that some people pride themselves in the fact that they hold membership in some denomination, as though such membership gives them an admission ticket to heaven.

**Salvation is in Jesus Christ**, as we find in Acts 4:12, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* Redemption and forgiveness of sins are in Jesus Christ.

**One body.** Eph. 4:4, *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling,”*

**Body = church.** Col. 1:18, *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

**Hence, there is one church. There is salvation in no other church.**

Wearing the name of Christ does not make a group the church of Christ. Example: Becky, my brother Evert’s wife, is not my wife even though she wears the same last name.

**All spiritual blessings are in Jesus Christ (or in His church)**, as we see in Eph. 1:3-7, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”*

## How branch is in the vine.

Since man can do nothing apart from Christ, how does one get into Christ? Or, how does the branch become a part of the vine? The answer is positive! Notice the words of the inspired apostle Paul in Gal. 3:26-27, *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* The important question is: How many believers are in Christ? The apostle said, *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* How many? As many *“... as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* The penitent believer is *“baptized into Christ”*, the true vine, where he has spiritual life, redemption, forgiveness, salvation! Jesus said in Mark 16:16, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* Out of Christ, men are lost for eternity! *“... Without me ye can do nothing”* to be saved, Christ declared. The branch must be in the vine. Either one is in Christ, as a believer having been baptized into Him, or he is not in Christ!

## Branches may be cut off, lost.

This great parable teaches so impressively the necessity of continuing to abide in Christ, the true vine. John 15:3-6, *“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*

Beyond any shadow of a doubt, the Lord teaches that it is possible for one to cease to abide in Christ and fail to bear fruit, thereby, losing his soul in eternity. *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth ...”*, declared Jesus. Like a dead branch which bears no fruit, the unfaithful disciple is cut off, cast forth, and, as a branch, gathered up and *“burned”*. There can be no doubt as to what will happen to a man who does not bear fruit in Christ. Jesus definitely makes the application, warning, *“... gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”* At the end of time the gathering and disposition of all fruitless branches will be executed.

Luke 18:7-8, *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”*

Coffman Commentary: "... the church, at that last moment, will be reduced to a little remnant ..."

~ 4000 B.C. Start of Patriarchal Age.

~ 2000 B.C. God's promise to Abraham.

30 A.D. Day of Pentecost – church established.

Speaking of the end of the world, Jesus warned in Matt. 13:41-42, *"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*

The gathering will be out of the Lord's kingdom, baptized subjects. To Nicodemus, Christ declared in John 3:3-5, *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."*

Since no man is in the kingdom of God who has not been born again, and since the angels shall gather out of the kingdom all them that do iniquity and cast them into a furnace of fire, it is certain that some of God's children, citizens of His kingdom, branches in the true vine, Jesus Christ, will be cast off and will be burned in the eternity of hell!

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrew brethren in Heb. 6:4-6 about the destiny of those who may fall away, fail to repent, and continue to produce the thorns and thistles of life, *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."* In verse 8 the conclusion is, *"But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."*

Hardly could a declaration be more specific.

## **Those who fall away and do not repent and bear fruits of righteousness will be rejected and be burned!**

**The Apostle Paul admonished** in 1 Cor. 9:27, *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."*

**The Apostle Peter warned** in 2 Pet. 2:21-22 of the possible serious consequences of falling away. Consider it most seriously, *“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”*









