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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, June 13, 2010
Communion Sunday
Glorious Fruit
Ezekiel 15**

When we walk into our local grocery store, there is a large display of different kinds of fruit, apples, oranges, strawberries, bananas, peaches. You name it, our grocery store has it.

In fact, I stopped by this week, and brought some fruit along.

And then how delicious to bite into a tasty apple, or eat some fresh strawberries.

What a Creator our God is, to bring into existence such a variety of fruit. And as you know fruit is very good for our health.

As God created physical fruit for physical health, He also made it possible for us to participate in His spiritual fruit that He provides for us so our lives can be healthy spiritually.

To see how God provides us the opportunity to participate in His spiritual fruit, let's look at our text in Ezekiel 15.

Here we find God talking to the nation of Israel about spiritual fruit, while many of the people are in Babylonian Captivity.

Through Ezekiel, now in exile with his people, God has something very important and specific to tell them regarding spiritual fruit in their lives.

Let's read the Ezekiel 15 first. It is a short 8 verses.

**1Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
2"Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest?
3"Can wood be taken from it to make anything, or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel?
4"If it has been put into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and its middle part has been charred, is it then useful for anything?
5"Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything!
6"Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
7and I set My face against them Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them.
8'Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully,'" declares the Lord GOD.**

Let's approach these verses by asking some questions.

I. What is God saying through Ezekiel to God's people in captivity?

You are like a wild fruitless and useless vine in the forest. Since you are a wild fruitless and useless vine, you have been partly charred by judgment (15:4 – the time of Ezekiel's deportation along with others in 597 B. C.). Eventually, Jerusalem will be destroyed in 586 B. C. (15:7-8).

God had used this figure of speech, a vine, and also a vineyard to describe Israel before (Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 12; Christ in Matthew 21:33-45 also uses the term vineyard to refer to Israel.). It is figure of speech that the people of Israel would understand, since grapes were grown in Israel.

God is telling the nation of Israel that as God's vine, or vineyard, God's people, Israel should be giving evidence in their character of God's spiritual fruit. God had told Israel through Moses in Leviticus that she was to be holy for He was holy (Leviticus 19:2;20:7). The entire 10 commandments were given to Israel so the nation in following them would show forth a holy people, a people set apart to God to be His possession. Israel was to be a witness to the other nations of His holiness, love, grace, His lovingkindness (Isaiah 43:10; 44:10).

II. Why was nation Israel a fruitless vine?

Israel had been unfaithful to God (15:8). Ezekiel has just told the people in captivity in Babylon with him that they were involved in gross idolatry, involved in the gods of the other nations. The leaders of Israel had idolatry in their hearts (Ezekiel 14:3). The people in Jerusalem were worshipping the sun, the creation rather than the creator (Ezekiel 8:15). Idolatry led to sin and wickedness in their lives, which in turn caused the people to think that they could continue to live as they pleased (Ezekiel 13:10), saying all is at peace when there was no peace.

The bulk of the people in Israel, although there were some who still believed in the true and living God, had rebelled against the LORD (Ezekiel 12:25), and were living as they pleased, following other man-made gods.

The bottom line is that the nation of Israel had rejected the Source, the Savior, the Sovereign, the Supplier, and the Sustainer of their lives. They broke the first commandment and subsequently all the other commandments were broken as well.

The nation was a fruitless and useless vine spiritually because they rejected and rebelled against the ONE who provided them true and everlasting life. Such rebellion resulted in their character exhibiting the evil one rather than the GODLY ONE, the living, eternal, holy, and personal God.

III. What would God do about Israel as a fruitless vine?

1. In the Old Testament time.

As mentioned God would use Babylon to destroy Jerusalem finally in 586 B. C.. Israel would be in Babylonian Captivity for 70 years, and then God would move in the heart of the Cyrus, the king of Persia to let those who wanted of the Israel to return to their homeland. The temple would eventually be rebuilt with the Lord's help using Zerubbabel, Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah. The walls of the city of Jerusalem were finally rebuilt under the leadership of Nehemiah.

Of course, the nation of Israel never had it's place of significance in the nations after that. The nation did not give clear evidence of being a fruitful vine for the Lord. Still the nation of Israel had a future.

2. In the New Testament time.

When Christ came on the scene, Israel was under the Roman Empire. Christ, however, presented Himself to Israel as the fulfillment of their Messiah and Savior. They rejected their Messiah.

One of Christ's major teachings to His disciples in the midst of Israel's rejection of HIM while on earth, is found in John 15, where Jesus taught that He was the VINE and His Father was the Vinedresser. Those who followed Jesus were the branches. Those who would abide in HIM would bear much fruit.

What was Christ teaching here? He was now the true vine. Since Israel rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ was the ONE and ONLY Vine.

Jesus Christ was the Source, the Savior, the Sovereign, the Supplier, and the Sustainer of all who would believe in Him.

What does this mean for the believer (the branch) in Jesus Christ, the Vine?

- 1. Is spiritually attached to the Vine, Jesus Christ. (Nothing or No One can separate the believer from Jesus Christ (John 10:28-29)).**
- 2. Has the very life of the Vine within him or her (John 10:10).**
- 3. Will bear the Vine's kind of fruit. (the branch will always bear the likeness to the Vine).**
- 4. Must constantly depend upon the Vine (without the vine the branch can do nothing – 15:5).**
- 5. Will bear fruit like the Vine spontaneously.**
- 6. Knows that the fruit is not for itself but for those who come to carry it away. Fruit brings refreshment and life.**
- 7. Realizes that there may be pruning at times (John 15:2).**
- 8. Understands the ultimate of fruit bearing – to make glad the heart of the husbandman – John 15:5 – In this is my Father glorified (shown off) that you bear much fruit.**

IV. How does the follower of Christ, the Vine, have a fruitful life in HIM? (John 15:7).

1. Abiding in Christ – Dwelling in Christ.

What is abiding in Christ? John in I John 3:24 penned this: "The one who keeps His commandments abides (dwells) in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

The evidence the believer is abiding in Christ is obeying Him, of having fellowship with HIM! That comes about by letting Christ's Words abide in him or her.

2. Letting Christ's Words abide in you.

What are Christ's Words? Not just what He taught while on earth, but the entire Bible that applies directly to us is the Word of Christ. That's why Paul told the Colossians to let the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, or be at home in their lives. Have familiarity with the Word of God. Not just read it but let it sink into you heart so it starts to control your thinking like the Lord in the various situations of life.

I was listening to a television program the other evening where the speaker was trying to stir people up to think about what is happening in our country. I was exhorted to be alert and think through the implications and be ready for the worst.

After turning off the program, I was doing my Bible reading for the day, and the reading was in Psalm 97 & 99, "The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad. Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. . . . Be glad in the LORD, you righteous ones, and give thanks to His holy name. . . . Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity."

What a tremendous perspective is that after hearing our nation may be in desperate trouble financially. The biblical God's perspective is what I need and we all need in this day of challenge and change.

3. Being a person of prayer.

Ask what you will and it will be done for you. Of course prayer must be in God's will, but the emphasis here is that to be a fruit bearing follower of Christ, the follower of the Lord must be a person of prayer, in God's kingdom, praying for victory for the Lord's work, opportunities to witness for Him, and for the different needs each of us has.

V. What happens when the follower of Christ doesn't obey the Lord?

Christ is very clear in John 15. The believer's works done in disobedience to the Lord and His word will be burned up. This is what Christ means in John 15:6, when he talks about the branch being thrown away, dries up, and is burned. This is further developed by Paul in I Corinthians 3:11-14, where the one whose works are not built upon Christ (abiding in Him) will be burned up.

VI. Am a fruitful follower of Jesus Christ?

You can check up by seeing if you bear in your life spiritually Christ's kind of fruit, for the branch always bears the likeness of the vine.

1. The negative (works of the flesh – old nature (Galatians 5:19-21)).

Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery (drugs), enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousings, and things like that. Paul adds in his Ephesian letter, clamor, slander, malice, unwholesome words.

These come out of the old nature within. They are works.

2. The positive (fruit of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life) – Galatians 5:22-23.

Let's look at the fruit that a follower of Christ obeying Him will have in his or her life.

The nine fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. These are certainly the very character of Christ evidenced in the believer abiding in Christ.

- (1) Love – Committed, unconditional, sacrificial, forgiving.
- (2) Joy – contentment in the midst of one's circumstances.
- (3) Peace – right relationship with God and with others.
- (4) Patience – longsuffering with others and a refusal to retaliate.
- (5) Kindness – Benevolence in action – Builds up, reaches out to help others.
- (6) Goodness – uprightness of spirit that abhors evil. Clean cut honesty.
- (7) Faithfulness – serving with regularity and dependability.
- (8) Gentleness – humility with a denial of self.
- (9) Self-control – control of the self-life by the Spirit of God.
- (10) Service – John 7:37-39 – serving the Lord regardless of the task.
- (11) Witness – Acts 1:8 – sharing one's faith when the opportunities arise.

These spiritual fruit along with others will be in our lives as followers of Christ as we obey the living Christ through the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, Christ's character will be evident in us. The branch always bears the fruit of the VINE!!

Paul in Philippians summarizes the spiritual fruit that comes through the believer's life when He prays that the Philippians will be filled with the "fruit of righteousness." Yes, fruit that displays the very character of Christ Himself.

An amazing privilege God gives us to be His fruit bearers for the glory of God in His church.

What about the nation of Israel?

According to the Bible in Romans 11:25-26, Israel as a nation will one day turn to the Lord at His second coming, and be restored to her land promised to her in Genesis 15:18-20. At that time, Israel will be restored as God's Vine to the nations, as Israel once again is used by God to be a witness for Him (Zechariah 14).

And the basis of fruit bearing for the Lord is found in His death, burial, and bodily resurrection that we commemorate here this morning in His Table.

Let's give our Lord praise for giving His life for us so that we might please Him by bearing HIS much fruit in our lives for His glory!!

APPLE: AN APPLE A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY?

Although an apple has a low Vitamin C content, it has antioxidants and flavonoids which enhances the activity of Vitamin C thereby helping to lower the risks of colon cancer, heart attack & stroke.

STRAWBERRY: PROTECTIVE FRUIT.

Strawberries have the highest total antioxidant power among major fruits & protect the body from cancer-causing, blood vessels-clogging free radicals.

ORANGE : SWEETEST MEDICINE.

Taking 2 – 4 oranges a day may help keep colds away, lower cholesterol, prevent & dissolve kidney stones as well as lessens the risk of colon cancer.

WATERMELON: COOLEST

Thirst Quencher. Composed of 92% water, it is also packed with a giant dose of glutathione, which helps boost our immune system. They are also a key source of lycopene – the cancer fighting oxidant. Other nutrients found in watermelon are Vitamin C & Potassium.

GUAVA & PAPAYA: TOP AWARDS FOR VITAMIN C.

They are the clear winners for their high Vitamin C content. Guava is also rich in fiber, which helps prevent constipation. Papaya is rich in carotene; this is good for your eyes.

The fruits list below shows the important fruit nutritional value and fruit health benefits of each specific fruit. This fruits list is designed to help you to choose the most nutritious fruit from the long list of fruits.

And there's plenty of evidence why you should eat more fruit.

Many scientific studies show that two to five daily servings from the alphabetical fruit list below can significantly reduce your risk of:

- Stroke,
- Diabetes,
- Heart disease,
- And certain cancers.

But at least 54% of the population gets NO daily fruit at all, much less two or more of the healthy varieties shown on this fruits list.

How to use the Alphabetical List of Fruits

This alphabetical fruit list has the fruit nutritional value arranged in order. For example, if a fruit in the fruits list has high carotenoids and a moderate level of vitamin C, the higher carotenoid nutrient will be listed first, before the vitamin C, since C is found only in moderation.

Any fruit in the list of fruits where there are concerns, you'll find them in parenthesis. So, if a fruit has a high [glycemic index](#) rating, which could cause high blood sugar levels, you'll see (glycemic).

And if preservatives, such as sulfites, are commonly used on a conventionally grown fruit or if the fruit is usually highly sprayed or waxed, you'll see (preservatives), (pesticides) or (wax coating). Then it's important to buy organically grown varieties of that particular fruit.

Alphabetical Fruits List with Fruit Nutritional Value (in order)

FRUIT	NUTRITIONAL VALUES IN ORDER (concerns)
Apples	flavonoids, fiber, C (pesticides, wax coating)
Apricots	carotenoids, A, C, fiber (preservatives)
Bananas	B6, C, potassium (glycemic)
Blackberries	flavonoids, fiber, C, K, manganese
Blueberries	flavonoids, C, manganese, fiber
Cantaloupe	carotenoids, C, A, potassium
Cherries	flavonoids (pesticides)
Cranberries	flavonoids, fiber, C, manganese
Dates	(glycemic)
Dried fruit	(glycemic, preservatives)
Figs	(preservatives)
Fruit juices	(glycemic)
Grapefruit	carotenoids in pink, flavonoids, C
Grapes	flavonoids, manganese (pesticides)
Guava	carotenoids, fiber, C
Kiwifruit	C, fiber (glycemic)

Lemons	flavonoids, C (wax coating)
Limes	flavonoids, C (wax coating)
Mangoes	carotenoids, A, C (glycemic)
Nectarines	carotenoids, C (glycemic, pesticides)
Oranges	carotenoids, flavonoids, C, fiber (glycemic)
Papayas	carotenoids, C, folate, potassium
Peaches	carotenoids, C (pesticides)
Pears	flavonoids (pesticides)
Persimmons	C (glycemic)
Pineapple	C, manganese (glycemic)
Plums	carotenoids, C
Raspberries	flavonoids, fiber, manganese, C
Raisins	(glycemic, pesticides, preservatives)
Strawberries	carotenoids, flavonoids, C, fiber (pesticides)
Tangerines	carotenoids, A, C (glycemic)
Watermelon	carotenoids, C, A, B6 (glycemic)

The list of fruits above is a great source of quality [high fiber foods](#) with essential fruit nutritional value. The antioxidant-rich carotenoids and flavonoids, plus vitamins A and C, folate, manganese and potassium are all especially important nutrients from the fruits list.

The fruit fiber and enzymes found in raw fruit are