

Notes on John 15

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The Parable of the Vine and the Branches – 15:1-10

One of the most frequently used illustrations in the Bible is that of a grapevine or vineyard. Grapes were commonly grown in Israel and were greatly valued as a food. People in that society were familiar with the activities involved in growing them. Since illustrations help people learn, vines were often used to teach spiritual lessons. (See Isaiah 5:1ff; Psalm 80:8ff; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1; Romans 11:17ff; Luke 13:6-9; Matthew 21:33ff; 20:1ff; Ezekiel 19:10ff; 1 Corinthians 3:9.)

Jesus used the illustration here to teach lessons about three people or groups of people: God the Father, God the Son, and Jesus' disciples.

Verses 1-3

1. In the parable of the vine and branches, tell who is illustrated by each of the following, then support your answer by quoting a phrase that proves it.

Item	Represents	Proof
The vine		
The branches		
The husbandman		

2. List other passages that describe the "fruit" Christians should produce. List some of these fruits. (Think: What connection exists between bearing fruit for Christ and saving lost souls?)

3. How many branches must bear fruit? What happens to branches that do not bear fruit?

4. **Application:** What lessons should we learn about individual responsibility to God?

5. What happens to branches that do bear fruit, and what does this teach us? (Think: How does the Father cleanse or prune branches?)

As the husbandman God does the following things:

The husbandman removes unfruitful branches – vv 2,6.

He examines each branch and judges its fruitfulness. Those who do not bear fruit are "taken away" (v2) and "cast into the fire and burned" (v6).

To bear (Gk φέρω) means to bring forth. Fruit (Gk καρπος) here refers to the kind of characteristics and good works that God has commanded His disciples to produce (see notes on vv 5-8 below). Note that a Christian's fruit will **include** making converts for Jesus (John 4:35,36; Romans 1:13; Philippians 1:22; Proverbs 11:30). But that is just part of the fruit Jesus wants.

This is intended as a lesson warning us that, even as disciples of Christ, we can be lost. Note some other references where similar illustrations teach the same point.

Romans 11:20-22 — The branches of an olive tree are used to show that the Jews had been in covenant relationship with God, but they fell because of unbelief. Gentiles were saved, but likewise if they fall, God will not spare them. This illustrates the goodness and severity of God.

Luke 13:6-9 — A fig tree planted in a vineyard illustrates the fact that God expects fruit. He is patient and gives people a chance to produce fruit. But if still no fruit is born, he has them cut down.

This clearly defeats the doctrine of the "impossibility of apostasy." These branches are "in Christ," meaning they are disciples (vv 5,6). They are part of His spiritual body, attached to Him. They are people who have been forgiven of sins (cf. Galatians 3:26,27; 1 John 2:6). Yet, they

were cast into the fire, because they failed to accomplish the Father's will. This is illustrated by Judas' betrayal, which may still have been on Jesus' mind as He gave this warning.

These and many other verses clearly teach that a child of God can be eternally lost because of unfruitfulness. (See also Acts 8:12-24; Romans 6:12-18; 8:12-17; Galatians 5:1-4; 6:7-9; 1 Corinthians 9:25-10:12; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 5:8; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Hebrews 3:6,11-14; 4:9,11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2 Peter 1:8-11; 2:20-22.)

For further evidence that a child of God can so sin as to be eternally lost, see our article on our Bible Instruction web site at www.gospelway.com/instruct/.

The husbandman purges the fruitful branches – v2.

Even fruitful branches sometimes develop disease or some hindrance to fruit bearing. The husbandman prunes these away. ("Prune," Gk. καθαίρω, is translated "cleanse" in ASV, "purge" in KJV. See related word in 1 Timothy 1:5; 3:9; etc.)

So, Christians who are fruitful sometimes have a sin or weakness that hinders their usefulness to God. God tries, if possible, to remove this without destroying the whole branch. But if the disease spreads and cannot be cured, the whole branch must be destroyed.

Hebrews 12:5-11 gives another illustration comparing this to a father's chastisement of his child. God chastens His children because He loves us (v6), for our profit (v10). This causes us to yield the fruit of righteousness (v11).

God chastens by the teaching of His word (see v3).

Jesus states that the branches (disciples) have already been cleansed (purged, pruned), as in v2. How does God cleanse or prune us?

Hebrews 3:12,13 — So that we do not fall away, we need to be exhorted daily.

Hebrews 4:11,12 — That we might not be disobedient, the word of God pierces our soul like a two-edged sword.

Hebrews 10:23-25 — To help us hold fast, we need to attend when the church is assembling together so we can be exhorted.

God works through His word to prick our hearts and motivate us to correct problems in our lives.

God sometimes chastens by trials and tribulations.

Hebrews 12:5-11 describes God's chastisement of His people. But the context discusses problems caused by the hardships people were facing (10:32ff; 11:32-37; 12:2-4). The author encourages people that, instead of falling away in these times of suffering, they should realize that God can use the problems to chasten them.

James 1:2-4 — Trials prove our faith so we lack in nothing.

This is not to say that every problem comes from God or was caused by some specific sin. But God does allow suffering, knowing it will make us more fruitful in His service.

Verses 4,5

6. According to the illustration, why is it necessary for us to abide in Jesus? (Think: What does it mean to abide in Jesus? How do we do it?)

7. **Special Assignment:** Think of some things a vine does for branches and explain how Jesus does these things to make His disciples fruitful.

Jesus has now stated twice that He is the vine — vv 1,5. We (disciples) can bear fruit only if we "abide" in Jesus and He abides in us. Separated from Jesus we can accomplish nothing worthwhile. "Abiding" in Jesus, throughout this context, illustrates the concept of spiritual fellowship: a proper relationship that ties us to our Master (see below on vv 6-8; cf. John 17:20,21).

Philippians 4:19 — God supplies every need in Christ. The vine connects the branches to the roots so the branches are held in place and supplied with the necessities of life — water, nourishment, minerals, etc. Notice some things that, like a vine, Jesus supplies us:

The vine supplies strength.

Colossians 2:6,7 — Walk in Christ, rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith. The vine is rooted in the ground and holds the branches rooted and established in place, so they are not carried away and their fruitfulness destroyed. Likewise, Jesus roots and establishes us, so we can be fruitful.

Ephesians 3:17 — If Christ dwells in our hearts, we are rooted and grounded in love, and may be strong (v16 — cf. v20f). We will not be carried about by every wind of doctrine (4:14). [Philippians 4:13]

The vine supplies nourishment.

Ephesians 5:29 — A man should nourish and cherish his wife as he does his own body, just like the Lord does the church.

1 Timothy 4:16 — We are nourished in the words of faith and good doctrine. [1 Peter 2:2]

Psalms 1:3,4 — A righteous man is like a tree planted by a river, where all his needs are met so he brings forth fruit. An ungodly man is like chaff driven by the wind.

The vine supplies all spiritual blessings.

Ephesians 1:3 — We have all spiritual blessings in Christ.

2 Peter 1:3 — His divine power grants to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us. [2 Corinthians 9:8,10; Colossians 2:19; Philippians 1:11,19]

Branches cannot bear fruit alone. They must have a source of supply for their needs. So, we must bear fruit; but we cannot do it alone. We must have the blessings Jesus supplies.

Verses 6-8

8. What does the “fire” in v6 represent, and what does this teach us about whether or not a child of God can so sin as to be lost?

9. What did Jesus promise in v7? What must disciples do to receive this blessing?

10. How did Jesus describe the amount of fruit we should bear, and what does this teach us about zeal and diligence in God’s service?

11. **Case Study:** How would you answer people who claim that the branches represent denominations so this proves all the denominations are “in Christ”?

The branches illustrate disciples — vv 4-6,8. Some people think the branches are denominations, and all denominations are just different branches in Christ. This not only violates other Scripture, it also violates this context. Each branch is called “he,” “him,” “a man,” etc. — vv 5,6. They are disciples — v8.

Notice the lessons taught:

Branches must bear fruit — vv 2,4,5,8.

Why must we bear fruit?

Matthew 13:23 — In the parable of the sower, the good ground bears fruit. This is what distinguishes good ground from unacceptable ground — soils are not good when they are unfruitful (v22).

Luke 3:8,9 — John taught people to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire.

The purpose of every plant on a farm or tree in an orchard or vine in a vineyard is to **bear fruit**. This is the reason for its existence. If it is not productive, there is no reason for it to exist. Likewise, the purpose for Christians is to produce fruit for God. If we do not produce, He will not continue to consider us His.

John 15:8 — The Father is glorified if we bear much fruit. If you visit a farm and see fruitful, productive plants, this glorifies the farmer. But if you see all kinds of thistles and weeds, and the plants are not productive, this reflects unfavorably on him. So, a Christian must bear fruit to ac-

compish his purpose of existence and to glorify God. Church members who are not producing fruit are a disgrace to the Father.

(Matthew 5:16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Mark 11:12-14,20; Romans 11:17-24)

What kind of fruit must we bear?

John 15 does not really describe the fruit, but other passages do.

Colossians 1:10 — That you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. A godly, righteous life, with all the good works righteousness involves — that is the kind of fruit Jesus requires. (Philippians 1:9,10)

Galatians 5:22-24 — The fruits of the Spirit are listed. These are some of the qualities we must put on to be fruitful. To do this successfully, we must put to death the works of the flesh (vv 19-21) — these are the thorns and thistles we must remove.

2 Peter 1:5-8 — Here is another list of qualities Christians should add to our lives. If we have these, we are not barren or **unfruitful**. The fruits Christians must produce are the works of faith and obedience God has taught us in His word to develop in our lives.

(James 3:17,18; 2:20; Ephesians 5:7-11; John 4:36; Philippians 4:17; Hebrews 12:11; 13:15; Colossians 1:10; Titus 3:14; Matthew 7:16; Philippians 1:11; Matthew 13:1-9,18-23)

How do we produce this fruit?

We must **abide in** (Greek μένω) the vine. Without Him, we can do nothing (vv 4-6). What does it mean to abide in Jesus?

John 17:20-23 — To be “in the Father and Son” is to be **one** with them — in spiritual union or fellowship with them. To produce fruit, a vine must be securely fastened to the vine, not separated from it. So, we must be firmly in union with God to bear spiritual fruit.

Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3 — We come **into** Christ at the point when we are **baptized** into Him, after we have believed and repented. When we are baptized — not before — is when our fellowship or union with Christ begins.

Matthew 13:22 — We become unfruitful when we allow the cares of the world, riches, etc., to choke the word. Then we cease to abide in the vine, and are cast off and burned (John 15:2,5,6; Isaiah 59:1,2).

1 John 2:4-6; 3:24 — We know that we are in Him, if we keep His commands.

We come into Christ (His fellowship) when by faith we obey His word in baptism. We stay in Him by continued obedience to His word, bearing the fruits of good works He requires. When we let other things choke our good works, sin enters our lives. He works with us for a time to prune away that disease, hoping we will repent. If we do not repent, we are cut off. In the judgment, we will be cast out and burned. (See also 1 John 4:12,15,16; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 1:3-10.)

Every branch must bear fruit — vv 2,6

Every branch that does not bear fruit, He takes away.

Luke 3:9 — **Every** tree that does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down.

2 Corinthians 5:10 — All will be judged and **each** one will receive what He has done.

Fruit bearing is an individual responsibility. We cannot expect the husbandman to be pleased with us just because the branches around us are fruitful. (Ezekiel 18:20)

Each branch must bear much fruit — vv 5,8.

If we abide in Him we must bear **much** fruit, and the Father is glorified if we bear **much** fruit.

Philippians 1:11 — Be **filled** with the **fruits** of righteousness. The husbandman is not satisfied when a branch puts forth a little effort. He wants our best effort.

Colossians 1:10 — Walk worthily of the Lord in all pleasing, **bearing fruit in every good work**. You can't just pick out one or two good works and quit. You must have them all.

2 Peter 1:8 — If these qualities (vv 5-8) are in you and **abound**, then you are not unfruitful. Every person has different abilities, but we must work in every area God instructs us to, and we must strive to the best of our ability to produce the good works He wants.

Each branch must increase in bearing fruit — v2.

The husbandman prunes the branches so they bear **more** fruit. We must never be satisfied with the fruit born in the past, but must continually strive each day, month, year, to bear more fruit than in the past.

2 Corinthians 9:10 — God supplies us so we can **increase** the fruits of our righteousness.

Mark 4:8 — The good ground, in the parable of the sower, bore fruit and **increased**. A little plant cannot bear as much fruit as a big one. God expects us to grow so we can increase our production. (Philippians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:18)

When you cut down a tree, you can count a ring in the trunk for every year the tree lived, because every year the tree grew. The only tree that does not grow is a dead tree. God expects His plants to not only bear fruit, but to grow and increase their capacity to bear.

Jesus added that, if we ask whatever we will, it will be done for us. But this is true only if we “abide in Him” and His words abide in us. We fail to abide in Him when we make requests for the sake of fulfilling our own greed and lustful desires. And even things we think are best may yet be denied because God knows better than we (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). To abide in Jesus we must ask that His will be done.

Verses 9,10

12. To what did Jesus compare His love for the disciples (v9)?

13. How can we abide in His love? (Think: Where had He taught this earlier?)

To abide in Jesus' love, we must keep His commands.

Having given the basic teachings of the vine illustration, Jesus gives some related teachings, tying them in to previous teachings.

Jesus has shown that we must continue in this close fellowship, which He describes as “abiding in” Him. Here He shows that the result will be love for one another. All the individuals/groups involved love one another (cf. 14:15,21-24; 17:24,26; see note on 15:12). And again, we abide in love by keeping God’s commands, like Jesus kept His Father’s commands and abode in His love. See notes on 14:15,21-24, etc.

This does not mean that, if we sin, God ceases to love us. God loves all men, even those in sin (John 3:16; Romans 5). To abide in love means to continue in the relationship in such a way that we receive the benefits of love. To do this, we must act in harmony with love. If we do not obey, then **we** are not acting in love and hence the fellowship of love is broken. We are not “abiding in” love, not because God does not extend it, but because we have violated it.

Further Encouragement and Promise of the Spirit – 15:11-27

Verse 11

14. What reasons did He give why He said these things (v11)?

15. List other **passages** about the joy we have as disciples of Jesus.

16. **Special Assignment:** Explain how Jesus words would lead to joy.

The results of Jesus' teaching will be joy.

Jesus explained then that He spoke these things so we might receive the joy He has to offer and that joy may be full. True joy comes from serving Jesus (cf. 16:24; 17:13). This joy is full joy. Many people seek joy in physical achievements: wealth, pleasure, power, popularity, athletics, physical beauty, etc. But that joy is ultimately empty. The joy that is full is the joy Jesus gives.

This joy is not a constant emotional high. Nor is it the result of pleasant physical surroundings. This is proved by the fact that Jesus says He will give us His joy. What joy did He have on the very night before His betrayal, arrest, trials, and crucifixion? We will soon see Him deeply

distressed and troubled as He prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was not emotionally thrilled, nor did He face pleasant physical circumstances. Yet, He had joy.

The joy Jesus gives is an inner knowledge that we have God's blessings, that we are abiding in Him and in His love. This is the joy Jesus had, even as He faced the cross. This joy sustains us, even when our circumstances are unfavorable and our hearts saddened by those circumstances.

(See Matthew 13:44; 25:21,23; Luke 6:23; 10:20; Acts 5:41; 8:39; 13:52; 16:34; Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22; Philippians 2:17; 3:1; 4:4; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:16; 1 Peter 1:6,8; 4:13.)

Verses 12,13

17. What command did He repeat in v12, and where had He earlier given this command?

18. What is the greatest demonstration of love? How did Jesus Himself show this love?

Jesus commands us to love one another with the love that sacrifices even ones life.

Jesus then returned to the importance of love and repeated the command that we should love one another as He loved us. See notes on 13:34. Then He showed again that love is demonstrated by what we do. And the greatest love is that one would be willing to give his life for his friends (Greek φιλος — one who is loved).

This not only illustrates love, it defines it. Love is a willingness to give of oneself for the good or wellbeing of others. This concern for others will cause us to put their welfare ahead of our own. The greatest degree of that love, Jesus said, is that we be willing to give our lives for someone else. This connects to the love Jesus had for us (v12) because He was about to lay down His life for us. This proves His love and that He was treating us as friends (Romans 5:5-8; John 3:16; 1 John 4:10,11; Ephesians 2:4-6).

We in turn are to love others as He loved us. We should be willing to give our lives for Him and for one another (cf. Revelation 2:10). We do this, not just in physical death, but by using our lives every day in doing what is good for others (Romans 12:1; Matthew 16:24,25; 10:38,39; John 12:25; 2 Corinthians 8:5).

Hence, love is the power that moves us to keep God's commands, and Jesus' example shows us how to manifest love.

(See Ephesians 4:2,31-5:2; Philippians 2:2,3; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9,10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 3:8,9; 4:8; 1 John 2:7-11; 3:10-18,23; 4:8-5:3.)

Verses 14,15

19. How can we be Jesus' friends, and what application does this have to folks who say obedience is not necessary?

20. What distinction did Jesus make between friends and servants?

Jesus classes His disciples as friends, but shows that obedience is the requirement of this friendship.

Jesus had said that the greatest expression of love is to die for ones friends. But He was about to die for us in demonstration of His love, so He classes His disciples as His friends (Greek φιλος). Who are His friends? Those who do what He commands! He showed His love by dying for us. We respond by showing we love Him in obeying His commands.

In a sense, Jesus loves all men and wants to be friends with them all. He died to extend forgiveness to all. But we receive that forgiveness and the benefits of His death only if we obey His commands. Hence, we act like friends, and we receive the benefits He offers to His friends, only when we respond by obedience (Romans 6:3).

Because He died for His disciples, Jesus no longer called them servants (Greek δουλος — cf. Matthew 10:24; 12:13; Ephesians 6:5; 1 Timothy 6:1; etc.). A servant is a bondsman, a slave, a

man of servile condition (see Thayer). It is true that we still must obey Jesus. But our relationship is that, not merely of a slave, but of a friend. Our Master loves us. He holds us dear and works for our good. He does not just expect us to work for His good.

Jesus gave a specific example of this difference. A master does not bother to explain to a slave what his plans are. He just gives orders and the slave must obey. A friend, however, explains His requests and ideas. So, Jesus made known to them the will of the Father, like a friend would do for another.

Verses 16,17

21. For what purpose had Jesus chosen them?

Jesus chose the disciples that they might bear fruit.

Another evidence of Jesus' friendship is that He chose them. They did not choose Him. This is one of the "not ... but" phrases in Scripture, in which the "not" phrase is not intended to constitute a complete denial, but refers simply to something less important and less emphasized than the "but" phrase (see notes on 6:27; cf. Matthew 20:28). The disciples had chosen to serve Jesus; but much more importantly, He had chosen them and urged them to bear fruit.

In a sense, this statement is true of all disciples, in that all of us are God's elect. But this election depends on our willingness to choose to respond to the gospel. But here Jesus refers especially to these apostles. He had especially chosen them from among His disciples to do His special work (cf. 6:70; 13:18). The fruit they were to bear refers especially to their work in testifying of Him and preaching the gospel after He had gone.

Jesus then repeated the promise that God will give whatever they ask in Jesus' name, as in 14:13,14 (see notes there regarding asking "in Jesus' name") (cf. 15:7). Note that prayer is addressed to the Father in Jesus' name. Here this is expressly stated. Jesus is intimately involved in our prayers, since He serves as the mediator between us and God. But the prayers themselves are addressed to the Father (see Matthew 6:9; John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23,24,26; Ephesians 5:20; Romans 1:8; Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 2:5).

And again, Jesus repeated that He intended for all these instructions to lead them to love one another.

Verses 18,19

22. What comfort can we have when the world hates us (v18)?

23. List and explain at least two other passages showing Christians will be hated or persecuted.

The world hates Jesus' disciples even as it hates Him.

Jesus then discussed at some length the response the disciples can expect from the world when they do their work for Him, preaching the message of the gospel. They should have love for one another, but may as well expect no such favorable attitude from the world. See Matthew 5:10-12; 13:21; John 15:20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 5:3; 8:17-39; 2 Corinthians 1:4-10; 4:17; 7:4; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 10:32-36; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 3:14-18; 4:1,15-19; 5:10.

Scripture often uses "the world" to refer to people or society in general who live according to their own desires, rather than following God's will. As a result, "the world" becomes an expression for the unconverted, unspiritual mass of humanity, in contrast to the followers of Christ.

The world will hate us (especially the apostles), but when it happens we should remember it happened first to our Master. There is great comfort in knowing that others have the same problems we have (James 5:10,11).

But it is even more important to know that our Master was treated this way. When we suffer, we are just following His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21-24; Hebrews 12:1ff). We should not conclude that we are suffering because we have done something wrong, resulting in some strange, unexpected reaction (1 Peter 4:12ff). Rather, when we do right, persecution is sure to come to us just

as it did to Him. Further, we can know He assured us ahead of time it would happen, so don't be surprised. Realize it is just a fulfillment of the kinds of behavior men have shown for years.

The world hates us because we are not of (like) the world, but Jesus chose us out of the world. The world would actually love us, if we would be like them. The differences between the world and us are what cause worldly people to hate us.

The average human hates and resents excellence in others in many aspects of life. He may wish that he himself could excel, because of the exaltation it gives him. But he resents it when others excel him. This is true in many areas of life. Anything that is far above or far below "normal" is resented. The perfect illustration of this is that the world crucified Jesus with two thieves. The thieves were killed because they were too far below normal, and Jesus was killed because He was too far above normal! (Cf. John 7:7; 3:19-21; 17:14; 1 John 3:13.) This is what causes the basic antagonism between God and the world (1 John 2:15-17).

The world especially hates those who excel in moral or spiritual matters. Good people, by their very lives, rebuke the world for not living up to the same high standard. When nobody does right, sinners feel justified in their wrong: "See, nobody can do any better than I am." But when others **are** doing better, then the evil man has no excuse for his sins. So, he resents the one who does right. He may even attempt to cause the good person to stumble into sin or quit doing right. He may rejoice when sins are found in the lives of supposedly good people. If no sins are found, he makes up some false accusation to make it appear good people are not good. Then the sinner can again feel justified.

Note that Jesus assumes His followers will be different from the world. So few people in the world follow Jesus' teaching, and His teaching is so unique, that those who truly follow Him will stand out from others. But unfortunately, this is not always what happens among those who claim to follow Him. Far too often, professed Christians **are** like the world. There is so little difference that there is no reason for the world to hate these "good" people. In many cases they love us because we **are** part of them, and the world "loves its own." We need to examine to see whether perhaps we are too loved by the world, because we are not different from it as we should be (Romans 12:2; James 4:4).

Verses 20,21

24. What attitude will the world have toward Christians and why? (Think: How does the world in general view excellence, especially moral or spiritual excellence?)

25. **Special Assignment:** List other **passages** that teach Christians will be hated or persecuted. Explain what lessons we can learn.

26. Who has the highest position and how would this affect the world's treatment of disciples (v20)? (Think: Why is this true? What is the point?)

27. What further reason did Jesus give for the world's attitude toward disciples (v21)?

Disciples should expect treatment like the Lord received.

The evidence that the world will hate us, as Jesus had said, is that a servant is not greater than His master. This is admitted by all (cf. 13:16; Luke 6:40). If people have such brazen disrespect and outright hatred that they would even kill the Son of God, how can His followers expect any better treatment? If they will treat the great, respected leader in such a way, why would they hesitate to mistreat lowly servants?

They will no more obey the teachings of Jesus' followers than they would keep His own personal teachings. If they persecuted Him, they will do so to us (2 Timothy 3:12; Acts 14:22). In practice, of course, a minority did keep His word, and a minority will follow the teachings of the apostles. But the majority rejected Jesus when He was alive, and they will reject our teaching likewise. We see many examples of this in the book of Acts.

Why does the world so act? They killed Jesus because they did not know Jesus or Him who sent Him. Likewise, if we act in His name, they will so resent us. These people, like the Pharisees

and scribes, may claim to be religiously devout, but their conduct shows they are really concerned about pleasing themselves, maintaining their following among the people, etc. They did not properly respect Jesus, because they did not properly respect God. And they did not have a right relationship with God because they don't care enough about God.

This is the "bottom line." People reject Jesus and His teachings, not because they lack evidence that Jesus is from God, but because they lack commitment to serve God. Those who are truly devoted to God's service will investigate Jesus' claims seriously and will accept them. Those who reject His claims are those who would not serve God properly even without Jesus and His claims.

Note how this verse illustrates an important principle of Bible study. Jesus stated a general principle: A servant is not greater than his master. Then He applied it to the specific case: If they persecuted Jesus, they would persecute His followers. This kind of teaching is often done in Scripture. This concept is important to us, because the general principle will have more applications than just the one stated in the specific context. This kind of teaching occurs often in Scripture. We must be careful to make sure we know a principle is general, before we apply it in other cases. But the concept is very useful, if we use it properly.

Here is another example. Many passages say that we should follow God's word without changing it or accepting human changes to it (Matthew 15:9; Revelation 22:18,19; etc.). These statements are usually made in some specific context and application, so some people argue that we may apply them only to that specific case. But this is a general principle being applied in a specific case. One evidence this is true is the fact the principle is applied in Scripture to so many different cases. So, we may properly apply the principle to many other cases.

Verses 22-25

28. Explain vv 22-24 in your own words. (Think: In what sense is it true the world would not have sin if Jesus had not come? What "sin" is this?)

29. Why are people guilty of hating the Father if they hate Jesus?

30. What Old Testament passage did this fulfill and where is it found?

Jesus' coming leaves men without excuse for their sin.

Keep these verses in context with the persecution and hatred Jesus had been discussing. The "sin" referred to here is stated in vv 23-25 to be the specific sin of hating and rejecting Jesus (which sin would be repeated in the persecution of His followers, according to the context). Had Jesus not come, the people would surely have been guilty of sin, but not of this sin. But since He had come, they demonstrated hatred of Him, and in doing so demonstrated hatred of the Father.

His life made it obvious there was no excuse for their sins. His life proved without question that He was the Son of God. His miracles and fulfillment of prophecy should have convinced them He was from God. There was no excuse for their killing Him. But by rejecting Jesus even after seeing His miracles, they showed their hatred for Him. And in hating Him, they showed hatred for the Father who sent Him.

The passage is not saying that there would have been no guilt, no sin, and no punishment had Jesus not come. People were already guilty of sin (transgression of God's law), and that is the reason Jesus had to come! He came to solve the problem of guilt. But when He came and they rejected Him, they committed the greatest sin of all, and proved they were without excuse.

When they hated and rejected Jesus, they people again fulfilled prophecy that showed they would reject Him. (Psalm 35:19; 69:4). There was no real grounds for the hatred and punishment the Jews dealt to Jesus. They fabricated some reasons, but they were not valid.

Their hatred was groundless, yet it fulfilled prophecies in their own law, which had predicted all along (contrary to premillennial views) that Jesus would be hated and rejected.

Verse 26

31. What promise is repeated in v26, and where else have we read of this promise?
32. What would the Comforter do? (Think: How did He do this?)

The Holy Spirit would testify about Jesus.

Jesus then reminded them of the promise that the Holy Spirit would come (cf. 14:16,17,26). He would testify who Jesus really was (God's Son). Jesus was not an impostor. When the Spirit came (on Pentecost), He began to reveal the gospel that told who Jesus was; then He empowered the apostles to do miracles to confirm the word and to explain the prophecies Jesus fulfilled.

This is the means the apostles used repeatedly throughout Act to convince people Jesus was God's Son. Hence, the spirit bore witnesses through the teaching of the apostles (Acts 1:8).

Note again that the Spirit would be sent from the Father, and Jesus would join in sending Him. Such language necessarily implies that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate and distinct living Beings. All there are clearly identified here. The Holy Spirit was the One who would be sent, but He was sent by Jesus and proceeded from the Father.

Verse 27

33. What would the apostles also do (v27)?
34. List other **passages** showing that the apostles did do this work.
35. Explain how v27 proves these promises (especially the coming of the Holy Spirit) are addressed to apostles, not to people in general.

The apostles would also bear witness.

By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles would also bear witness [Gk. μαρτυρεω] of Jesus, because they had been with Him from the beginning. This proves without question that Jesus is here addressing the apostles. Here we see conclusive evidence that at least part of what Jesus teaches here applies only to the apostles, not to disciples in general. We have not been with Jesus from the beginning, nor was Jesus promising we would receive the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit as He here promised the apostles.

To be an apostle, one had to be an eyewitness of Jesus, especially that He was raised from the dead. He had to be able to personally bear this testimony of Jesus (see Acts 1:8,21,22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39,41; 13:31; Luke 24:48; John 19:35; 21:24; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 John 1:2,3; 4:14). We cannot bear this testimony, nor can anyone alive today. Hence, there are no apostles today, nor does anyone today have the direct guidance of the Spirit described here. Those gifts are not needed because we now have the word written by those inspired men (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

Note that Jesus here identifies two sources of testimony regarding Him, not just one source. Note the word "also." The Holy Spirit bore witness of Jesus and the apostles "also" bore witness, since they had seen all Jesus' works. The Holy Spirit gave testimony to Jesus (and to the apostles' message) by the miracles that the Spirit empowered them to do, fulfilled prophecy, etc. But the apostles "also" acted as witnesses in their own right, since they had personally seen the events that establish Jesus' claims to be true.

We believe the gospel message (both the teaching of Jesus and that of the apostles), because we believe Jesus was Divine and we believe the gospel writers were inspired by the Holy Spirit. But before anyone can believe these facts are true, he needs evidence. That evidence is based on the eyewitness testimony given by the apostles themselves and by others who recorded what they and Jesus did and taught (John 20:30,31).

It is important for us to realize that the apostles were qualified witnesses, additionally and even apart from the Divine guidance they received from the Holy Spirit. It is true that the Spirit assisted them to give their testimony most effectively, as described in context here (cf. Acts 1:8). But it is also true that they were eyewitnesses, and this eyewitness testimony is fundamental to

our faith. We believe in Jesus, because we believe the testimony of those who saw the miracles he did and who saw the evidence He had been raised from the dead. Then we believe the eyewitness testimony that He said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth and the eyewitness testimony that they did miracles to confirm their message. The testimony of eyewitnesses has the force of independent confirmation that convinces us these men were really inspired. After we are convinced of this, then we must believe every teaching they give as being the word of God.

Jesus was here arranging for the work that needed to be carried on after His death. The apostles would do the work guided by the Holy Spirit. All that was needed to provide for our salvation was well arranged, despite the fact Jesus was about to die. We should rejoice in what we received from the apostles even as they rejoiced in receiving and revealing it.

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