

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
October 6, 2016

Ezekiel 14:1–15:8. The unfruitful vine.
Revelation 5:1–14. The scroll and the Lamb.
Job 33:29–33. The redeeming Angel.

COMMENTS.

Ezekiel 14:1–15:8. Outline: Denunciation of idolatrous leaders, **14:1-11**; Jerusalem’s certain doom, **14:12-23**; Jerusalem, depicted as a useless *vine* (**15:1-8**). **Chapter 15** begins a series of “action sermons” to God’s people who rendered themselves deaf to the Word of God. These sermons are filled with vivid and arresting vocabulary and intriguing imagery. In these three messages, Ezekiel spoke about a vine, an unfaithful wife, and three shoots from a tree. These pictures and parables not only describe the sins of the nation of Israel, but they also declare her terrible judgment.

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love. The vine is an image found frequently in Scripture. Jesus compared Himself to a vine and His disciples to branches in the vine, because we depend wholly on Him for life and fruitfulness (John 15). Without Him, we can do nothing! Those of us who are branches in Jesus Christ, the true vine, need to take this lesson to heart. If we fail to abide in Christ, we lose our capacity for the spiritual life, wither, and fail to be productive for His glory. The fruitless branch is tossed aside and eventually burned, John 15:6 *“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”* This burning does not mean condemnation in the lake of fire, for no true believer can be condemned for sins for which Jesus died (John 6:37; 10:27–29; Rom. 8:1). The image of the burning branch is that of a worthless life, a life useless to God. Moreover, abiding in the vine should not be reduced to just going through the motions and being in some confessed up circle. Living in abiding in the Vine is a living and active second personal relationship with God. As we noted in our last Bible class, all personal love is very relational, which, of course, requires internal integration and mutual sharing of interests and ideas. This Christ-centered life is a very rich contemplative life wherein Christ is the most important relationship of each day. Personal love for Christ just is the most powerful force for integration of our higher order desires around the good of God. Once again, the reason we were created and the point of our lives is to walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love.*

Revelation 5:1–14. As God sits on His heavenly throne, He holds in His right hand a sealed scroll. Written on this scroll is all that is to happen on earth. It is seven-times sealed—and only the Lamb is worthy to open and read it. And then John sees the Lamb. This is Jesus who was crucified and raised, the perfect and accepted sacrifice, now at the very center of God’s throne. The entire host of heaven worships Him. He is the ‘Lion of the Tribe of Judah’—the pride of the Jews. He has seven horns and seven eyes—that is, He has the power, wisdom and insight of God’s Spirit. By His utmost commitment to God and creation, He has won the right to unseal the scroll and unfold the meaning of history. What a burst of worship! as all the angels and every creature in the universe joined together to worship the Redeemer. What a cascade of harmony! In this hymn, they stated those things that Jesus Christ deserved to receive because of His sacrificial death on the cross. When He was on earth, people did not ascribe these things to Him; for many of these things He deliberately laid aside in His humiliation. He was born in weakness and He died in weakness; but He is the recipient of all power. He became the poorest of the poor (2 Cor. 8:9), and yet He owns all the riches of heaven and earth. Men laughed at Him and called Him a fool; yet He is the very wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:3). He shared in the sinless weaknesses of humanity as He hungered, thirsted, and became weary. Today in glory, He possesses all strength. On earth, He experienced humiliation and shame as sinners ridiculed and reviled Him. They laughed at His kingship and attired Him in a mock robe, crown, and scepter. But all of that is changed now! He has received all honor and glory! And blessing! He became a curse for us on the cross (Gal. 3:13), so that we can never be under the curse of the broken Law. He is worthy of all praise! The worship service climaxed with all of the universe praising the Lamb of God and the Father seated on the throne! And there was even a loud “Amen!” from the four living creatures! In heaven, we are permitted to say “Amen!”

Life in Christ by proper knowledge and by proper love. Keep in mind that all of this praise centered on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. It is not Christ the Teacher, but Christ the Savior, who is the theme of their worship. Likewise, when we walk in Christ *by proper knowledge and by proper love* in a deep contemplative life on the riches of Christ, we will find our hearts filled with gratitude and wonder at His amazing, loving grace.

Job 33:29–33. According to Elihu, God often brings dreams and illness (both bad experiences) to man—“twice, even three times.” Again, Elihu stated why: negatively, to divert people from death/pit, and positively, to help them enjoy life more than before. Though illness may seem to be leading to death, God can use it to deter a person from death (30) and to give him a more fruitful life, 31–33. Again the new spokesman asked Job to bear with him, by hearing him out . . . but if not, Elihu would continue. “Listen and be silent” (31) are repeated in verse 33. Job has previously asked for an “umpire” to bring him and God together for a trial (Job 9:33), a heavenly “witness” to argue his case before God (16:19), a “Redeemer” who would vindicate him even after his death (19:25). Elihu makes reference to the ministry of an Angel as an act of God’s grace (33:24). This resembles the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both our Mediator and our Ransom (1 Tim. 2:5–6). The concept of “the ransom” is woven into the fabric of biblical theology. The Hebrew word means “to atone for sin by the offering of a substitute.” The condemned sinner can’t be set free by the paying of some cheap price such as money (Ps. 49:7–9), good works, or good intentions. It must be a ransom that God will accept, and God asks for the shedding of blood (Lev. 16–17). Job didn’t ask his three friends to ransom him because he knew they

couldn't (Job 6:21–23). Only God can provide the ransom, and He did. If God has provided a ransom for lost sinners about to go down into the pit, how foolish of them not to receive it! Elihu promised Job that God would radically alter his situation if only he would humble himself. It would be like a “new birth”! (33:25) He would once more enjoy prayer and fellowship with God (Job 33:26). He would confess his sins and admit that God had punished him far less than he deserved (33:27). Job would move out of the darkness into the light and gladly bear witness of God's redemption (33:28)—so thought Elihu!

Life in the Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love. The last two verses of this section suggest that Elihu wanted Job's response, but at the same time Elihu wanted Job to keep quiet! Elihu was filled to the brim with his subject and didn't want to stop talking. But Job didn't reply because he was waiting for God to speak. Job had already stated his case and thrown down the gauntlet. What Elihu thought about him or said to him made little difference to Job. Job had taken his case to a much higher court; and when Elihu finishes speaking, the Judge will appear. The more we walk with the Lord *by proper knowledge and by proper love* the less we will be concerned with what others think of us. And the contrary is also true: the more we are concerned with others, the less we will be concerned with pleasing the Lord, Galatians 1:10, *Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.*

Life in God by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don