

A Study of the Christ Text

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The vine and the branches				15:1-17
The world would hate the disciples				15:18-16:4
The work of the Holy Spirit				16:5-16
Grief will be turned to joy				16:17-33

Overriding Principles

- A disciple's life is tied to Jesus for all things he or she needs.
- If we live like Jesus lived, the world will react to us as it did to Jesus—this will result in a general hatred from all those who do not want to come to the light.
- The Holy Spirit supplied all truth for all earthly time.
- The death of Jesus in His crucifixion led to great gain.
- True peace can come only from Jesus.

Commentary

The Vine and the Branches (Jn. 15:1-17)

- The imagery of vine and branches was common in the secular world as well as in the religious metaphors of Judaism (cf. Isa. 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; 12:10-13; Ezek. 15:1-8; 17:5-10; 19:10-14; Hos. 10:1-2; 14:7).
- Whereas in Israel's past they had commonly born bad fruit, Jesus was the true vine who produced what the nation had failed to produce (cf. Ps. 80:14-17).
- Jesus intends to establish an intimate relationship with all His followers (cf. Jn. 10).
- In Intertestament Judaism, the vine had become a symbol of wisdom.
- The significant rabbinic school of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai was known as the "vineyard."
- The Father is the "gardener," the one who tends the vineyard through all stages of development.
- "Pruning" would involve cutting the vine back in winter so that it might grow more rapidly in the spring. Additionally, the branches that did not produce would be removed to allow those producing to get more nourishment.
- One thing we learn from this is that unproductive Christians hold back the growth of the church.

- This entire process of spiritual growth in a disciple cannot occur unless the disciple and Jesus are closely linked together.
- Christians can be removed from Jesus if they are unfaithful (cf. Ezek. 15: 1-8; 19:12); we can fall from grace (Gal. 4).
- True joy is found only in Jesus (cf. Acts 13:52; Rom. 15: 13; II Tim. 1:4).
- The true test of friendship in the various cultures of Jesus day was said to be found in the giving of one's life for a friend.
- Jesus went beyond the accepted standard of love by dying for even His enemies (cf. Rom. 5:6-11).
- Jesus had a very practical way of defining His friends, they did what He said (cf. Jn. 14:15).
- Friendship goes beyond being a servant by adding a dimension to a relationship that is deeper and more satisfying—this allows for a greater degree of sharing.
- The choice of friendship with God is ultimately a matter of God's doing; apart from His grace there can be no relationship.
- With the privilege of friendship goes the responsibility of being productive.
- It is in the context of loving, knowledgeable service, God hears and answers our prayers.

The World Will Hate Jesus' Disciples (Jn. 15:18-16:4)

- Since the world will largely reject Christianity, it is imperative that Christians love each other.
- Early Christians were accused of being insurrectionists (claiming there is only one way), cannibals (eating the body and blood of Jesus at Communion), immoral (love feasts and the "holy" kiss), arsonists (teaching the world would be burned up), and disruptive in family relationships (when a family member became a Christian despite family opposition).
- The words of those who follow God are to bring a response similar to if God Himself had spoken (cf. I Sam. 8:7; Ezek. 3:7).
- Jesus' name would be preached in opposition to Roman Emperors (i.e. Domitian required being addressed as "*dominus et deus*," Lord and God.)
- Yet, there was no true cause for hating Jesus (cf. Ps. 69:4).
- The Helper, or Holy Spirit, would be sent to assist the Apostles in a special way as they stood up to those who would try to stop their message.
- They had no choice but to speak boldly for Jesus (cf. Acts 4:17-20).
- Jesus' comforting assurances to His Apostles would be especially helpful in the coming times of persecution.

- Discipleship, especially with such visible men as the Apostles, was a dangerous thing.
- The actions of the persecutors would be because they did not know God; this was particularly amazing when the persecutors were Jews.

The Work of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:5-16)

- The coming of the Spirit was strongly tied to the beginning of the Messianic Age (e.g. Isa. 11:1-10; 32:14-18; 42:1-4; 44:1-5; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 11:17-20; 36:24-27; 37:1-14; Joel 2:28-32; cf. Jn. 7:37-39).
- The teaching of the Jews at the time of Jesus evidences striking statements quite similar to Jesus' words, "And when He comes, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."
- The Spirit would convict of sin due to unbelief (possessing faith is the only way to find forgiveness in Jesus), of righteousness as it would reveal the manner in which Jesus had lived, and of judgment because Satan would be judged and found wanting.
- The final word on the subject of truth would come by the Spirit of Truth to the Apostles within the context of their first century ministry (cf. I Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-16).
- Additionally, the Spirit would reveal things yet to come.
- Death would not be the end of the Apostle's relationship with Jesus; through the ministry of the Spirit and because of the Resurrection, Jesus would renew His relationship with them.

The Grief of the Disciples would be Turned to Joy (Jn. 16:17-33)

- Mourning, in the Jewish context, was very loud and demonstrative.
- God alone is able to turn mourning into true joy (cf. Est. 9:22; Jer. 31:13; Isa. 61:2-3; Matt. 5:4).
- The Messianic fulfillment of the "Day of the Lord" was predicted to be a time of distress (Dan. 12:1).
- Intertestament Jews used a phrase, "the birth pangs of the Messiah," to describe the distress to come before the consummation of the Messianic Age.
- This language and concept are common to the New Testament (cf. Matt. 24:8, 21, 29; Rom. 2:9; Acts 14:22; I Cor. 7:26; II Cor. 4:17; Rev. 7:14).
- True rejoicing is only found in the Lord (cf. Ps. 33:21).
- Compare John 1:1, 14 with Isaiah 66:14 to see how Jesus was the embodiment of God's word.
- Jesus' ability to know answers to questions before they were asked was convicting to the Apostles that Jesus was from God.

- Jesus knew that all the Apostles would desert Him (cf. Zech. 13:7; Matt. 26:31).
- Even though the Apostles would never find peace in the tribulations of the world, they could be courageous and of good cheer because of the peace they would find in Jesus.
- Jesus was always straightforward with the Apostles, even when the truth was distressing.

Who is Jesus?

- He is the source of our strength and of all our success.
- He is the one who completely provides His followers with all they need.
- He offers unassailable peace.
- He brings joy in the midst of tribulation.
- He is totally honest and above board.
- He is our friend!