

# TRUE BRANCHES OF CHRIST

By Marvin L. Weir

The fifteenth chapter of John portrays Christ as the true vine and individual Christians as the branches. One who obeys the gospel is a branch in Christ. Man-made denominations are not the branches spoken of by John as is made clear in verse five. The disciples who are followers of Christ are the branches under discussion. Each child of God has the responsibility to produce fruit as a branch in the kingdom.

Denominations teach that these "branches" are different "churches" in a futile attempt to justify denominationalism. The context, however, will not allow such an erroneous interpretation. It is individual people under consideration and not different religious groups. Man-made religious bodies are desperate to find New Testament Scripture to back up their existence but they will search in vain. There is only "*one body*" (Ephesians 4:4), and one does not mean many!

Only those who obey the gospel (Romans 1:16) are branches "*in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). One puts on Christ in the act of baptism (Galatians 3:27). A penitent believer who obeys the gospel plan of salvation is "*baptized into Christ*" (Romans 6:3) and "*raised*" to walk "*in newness of life*" (verse 4).

One who does not bear fruit is not maturing in Christ. The apostle Paul identifies the fruit that every child of God is to produce as being, "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, [and] self-control*" (Galatians 5:22-23). The Christian who is bearing fruit for the Master will continue to mature, as Peter demonstrates in saying, "*Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love*" (2 Peter 1:5-7). A Christian will also strive to teach others the gospel in planting and watering as the opportunity arises (1 Corinthians 3:6).

When the Word of God is proclaimed, the seed of the kingdom is sown (Luke 8:11). The gospel is still to this very day God's power to save souls from sin (Romans 1:16). No one has ever been saved by the wisdom of man (compare with 1 Corinthians 1:20-25), and this truth strikes a deathblow to all the gimmicks that are employed today by religious shysters to draw a crowd. A true follower of Christ who is bearing fruit for the Lord will preach the Word and be content to let God give the increase.

The Word of God has the ability to clean and make pure. The apostle Peter says to brethren, "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth*

*through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:22-23). It has already been noted that a person puts on Christ at the point of immersion into Christ (Galatians 3:27). One who is in Christ must choose to continue to abide in Christ (John 15:4). If one fails to "walk in the light as he is in the light" (1 John 1:7) or "goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ" (2 John 9), he does not "abide in the vine" (John 15:4) and cannot bear fruit. Many today pretend to be "branches" while refusing to do the Lord's will. Jesus notes this truth in saying, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:21-23). May we submit to the Master's commands so that we will not hear Him say at the judgment, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).*

John 15:6 says, *"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."* This makes it clear that Jesus is speaking of individuals and not "churches." One is obligated to remain in the vine. Whatever is required to do he must do or be purged from the vine. This shows that man can apostatize and lose his soul.

Different fruit does not come from the same vine. Religious division is contrary to Jesus' prayer (John 17:20-21). All "branches" in Christ are to produce the same fruit. In other words, each Christian is to *"...speak the same thing that there be no divisions and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* (1 Corinthians 1:10).

One cannot claim to follow Christ while refusing to obey His commands. A true branch of Christ abides in His Word and enjoys fellowship with the Father and the Son and all others who are content to abide in the teaching of Christ. May we strive to be true branches of Christ!           1272 Bonham St. Paris, TX 75460-4059

Edited and copied by Bill Richardson, with this note—thanks Bro. Weir for a good and sound lesson. God bless and Amen!