**God’s Vineyard**

Isaiah told the kingdom of Judah a parable about a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-2). In the parable, one Isaiah calls “my beloved” planted a vineyard on a fertile hill. He dug it all around, removed its stones and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in the middle of it and hewed out a wine vat. When His work was complete, His reasonable expectation was that His vine would produce good grapes. Instead, it yielded only worthless grapes.

In verse 3 God takes over the conversation and appeals to the men of Jerusalem and Judah to judge between Him and His vineyard. You see, God Himself was the vineyard owner in the story and Judah was the vineyard. He asks, “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones?”

The fact is that God had provided everything for Judah’s physical and spiritual success. He had made of them a great nation, rescued them from Egyptian slavery and given them a Law, a priesthood and prophets to guide them. He had given them a land flowing with milk and honey and blessed them beyond reason. All He asked in return was their love for Him and for their fellow man. Instead all He got for His effort was worthless grapes. In time, His longsuffering patience ran out and He resolved to use the Babylonians to destroy their homeland and to take them away.

2 Peter 1:3 tells us that God’s divine power has “granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” Considering we are the people of God in our day, we should take heed to the parable of Isaiah and reflect on the myriad of provisions He has made for a fruitful vineyard.

God recorded for us His dealings with mankind in ages past so we can understand His character and His expectations. He made of the seed of Israel an earthly kingdom that, in many ways, foreshadowed the kingdom of Christ and made those lessons available to us. He sent His Son to teach us His ways, demonstrate true humility, devotion and submission and, ultimately, to give His life as a ransom for the sins we have committed. He raised Jesus on the third day to serve as the first-fruits of the resurrection and He now intercedes as our High Priest before the throne of the Father.

God sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth and to confirm their teaching and writings with signs and wonders. Through His providence, He has preserved their writings containing the saving gospel and all the instructions we need to thoroughly furnish ourselves unto every good work.

The question remains for us: In light of everything God has done for us, what kind of fruit should He reasonably expect from His vine and vineyard? He is perfectly within His rights to ask, “What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?”

Jesus told a parable of a man who had looked for fruit on the fig tree in his vineyard for three years and found none. His first inclination was to cut the tree down but his vineyard-keeper convinced him to give it one more year of loving care and fertilizer. The spiritual message is clear. God is loving and longsuffering but plants that fail to bear good fruit will be burned. If your heart and life are yielding worthless grapes, ask yourself: Who’s fault is that? Take advantage of God’s patience, make the needed changes and turn those sour grapes into sweet ones that glorify Him.

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