



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

The True Vine : Implications for Israel & Gaza

Bible Reading: John 15:1-8

SUMMARY: Does the Bible address the Israel/Gaza conflict? Most US Evangelicals support Israel, citing Abrahamic promises and unfulfilled prophecies. However, John & Paul's New Testament writings challenge this stance. In John 15, Jesus declares, "I am the true vine," signaling a paradigm shift. The vine & vineyard represented OT Israel in the Promised Land, linked with just adherence to Moses' Law. The Prophets condemned Israel's fruitlessness. In the New Testament, Jesus redefines Israel; he, with his followers, constitute a new Israel. Rejecting Jesus excludes one from true Israel which fulfills OT Israel's role. Do New Testament teachings support Standing with Israel today? According to John, the promised blessing to Abraham extends not to national Israel but to the 'true Israel,' Jesus and his followers. Thus, US Evangelicals' staunch support for the State of Israel seems misguided, as the blessing is directed to Jesus and his believers, not to ethnic Israel.

I. Jesus' True Vine Metaphor

A. The Center of Jesus' Farewell Discourse

B. Deeper than Devotional or Discipleship

- "John 15 can...[provide] a challenging devotional message about 'abiding in Christ.' But it has deeper levels of meaning & application than this!"—Colin Chapman

C. Jesus' Polemic: 'I am the True Vine' vs. False Vine(s)

D. The issue: Who is the True Vine? Who is the Genuine Israel?

- The question is: Who is the true vine? Who is the genuine Israel? The answer...is: only Jesus...solely."— E. Schweizer

II. The Vine & the Vineyard—OT Background (Ps. 80:8; Jer. 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Ezek. 15:1-4; Is. 5:1-7)

A. Israel's Story: The Vine (Israel) in the Vineyard (the Good/Promised Land) (Psalm 80:8-14)

B. 'The Land' denotes the 'Good/Promised Land' of Canaan – God's 'vineyard' (e.g., Jer. 12:10)

- C. OT Repeated references to the Vine (Israel) (Ps. 80:8; Jer. 2:21; Hos. 10:1; Ezek. 15:1-4; Is. 5:1-7)
- D. The Vine: Standard Symbol of Israel
- E. Every OT Prophetic reference involves Israel's Failure & Judgment

III. Jesus is the True Vine, the True Israel

- A. Christ's coming changes the Era (dispensation)
- B. The OT Types & Shadows are Fulfilled & Replaced by Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:13)
- C. Jesus – the True Israel — Displaces Ethnic, National Israel
- D. Invitation: Transfer your Trust/Loyalty from national, ethnic Israel to Jesus

IV. 'Israel' Redefined by Jesus

- A. John's Distinction between 'the Jews' & 'Israel' (Jn. 1:47)
- B. True Israel is defined by Faith in Jesus
- C. Those Rejecting Jesus Exclude themselves; e.g., Jewish leaders & Judas are 'withered branches' (15:6)
- D. The 'True Vine' is the New Israel, not the Church
- E. The 'Jew – Christian Separation/Divorce' Leaves Judaism's 'House' Empty
- "In the 'separation & divorce' between Christianity & Judaism, the 4th Evangelist has gone through their common home & claimed all the valuables for Christianity." — R. Alan Culpepper

V. God's 3 Covenants with National, Ethnic Israel are Nullified

VI. Abraham's Blessing: Does God Bless Those Who Bless the State of Israel? (Gen. 12:3; Num. 24:9)

- Does the Israel of God exist today?... [The NT] 'Israel of God' is not any modern nation-state &...it's not made up of one people group. *The Israel of God is Jesus Christ & all those...united to Him by faith alone.* —Robert Rothwell

VII. Israel in the Land – the Vine & Vineyard

- A. The OT Perspective: National, Ethnic Israel in the Promised Land
- B. Israel's Land-Possession & Prosperity contingent on Keeping Moses' Law
- C. Jesus Redefines both the Vine (Israel) & the Vineyard (the Promised Land)
- D. The NT Churches did not promote residence in the "Holy/Good Land"

VIII. Various Views on the Modern State of Israel in Biblical Prophecy

QUESTIONS:

1. Evangelical Christians in the US are among the strongest supporters of Israel. A few years ago, surveys reported that "A whopping **86%** of US white evangelicals said they felt warmly toward Israelis — more than any other Christian group. By comparison, only **58%** of US Black Protestants felt warmly toward Israelis (the same as those with 'No religion')."
 - a. If you are from (or aware of) other countries, how do you think the numbers in those places compare with the US?
 - b. What do you think are the underlying reasons for US evangelical Christians' strong support for Israel?
2. Consider the quotes from two leaders among US Evangelical Christians concerning Israel:
 - "For America to be on the right side of Israel is the same as being on the right side of history and the right side of God" — Robert Jeffress (First Baptist Church of Dallas TX., US)

- “Israel has a Bible mandate to own & possess the land of Israel forever. That mandate cannot be amended by the UN. It cannot be revoked by Hamas or Hezbollah...It cannot be amended by the President of the US... It belongs to the Jewish people now & forever.”—John Hagee (Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, TX., US)
 - How would you evaluate these claims in the light of the New Testament? Discuss.
3. Jesus’ assertion “I AM the true vine” (15:1) read against the OT symbols of Vine & vineyard, raises the questions: “*Who is the true vine? Who is the genuine Israel? The answer, by implication, is: only Jesus.*” In effect, Jesus is claiming “I am the true Israel.” What are the implications of this for
- a. Jesus’ disciples, like Nathaniel, “a true Israelite” (Jn. 1:47)?
 - b. for Jews considering Jesus’ claims, how can they join this new/true Israel?
 - c. For Jews like Judas Iscariot &/or Caiaphas the High Priest – what’s their destiny according to Jesus’ metaphor?
4. If Jesus is the “true Vine, the true Israel,” what about the Jewish nation/State of Israel? How should we view Israel:
- a. Are they the legitimate heirs to all God’s promises to Abraham & his descendants? What do John (& Paul) say?
 - b. Does the State of Israel have a Biblical warrant to possess the “Promised Land”?