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*God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.*

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## Ezekiel 15.

(2014)

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The Bible not only reveals God's eternal plans purposes and promises

But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Ezekiel 15.

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### Topics.

- The useless vine that grows amongst the forest.
- When fire has consumed the vine is it useful for anything?
- The LORD will set his face against the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
- Though Judah escapes from the fire, the fire will consume them.
- You will know that I am the LORD.

**Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel:** Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the LORD”. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God’s covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (ch. 37) is a classic picture of God’s ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

**NOTE:** Ezekiel’s message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

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### The Useless Vine that Grows amongst the Forest.

Ezekiel 15:1-3 ----- <sup>1</sup>And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? <sup>3</sup>Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it?

**Son of man:** is a title meaning mortal man.

Throughout the chapters of Ezekiel the destruction of Jerusalem is represented in many various types, images and expressions, (i.e., as of a siege and a sharp razor and here in this chapter as a useless vine only fit for the fire.

The vine branch that is among the trees of the forest refers to the vines that grow around trees these vines do not produce fruit and cannot be used for anything since its wood is too weak for building or for making any piece of furniture or domestic utensil and it is too soft to put a pin or nail in to hold up a picture or shelf. In contrast to this the wood of a tree in a forest is strong and can be used for all these things.

The answer to all the following three questions: -

1. Does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest?

2. Is wood taken from it to make anything?

3. Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it?

Is no, because its wood is too soft and weak to be used for making anything this is why the vine cannot surpass the trees of the forest since their wood is solid and used for multiple purposes.

### **When Fire has Consumed the Vine is it Useful for Anything?**

Ezekiel 15:4-5 ----- <sup>4</sup>Behold, it (the vine) is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? <sup>5</sup>Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything!

The vines only use is to be burnt on a fire for fuel for cooking or heating.

The answer to the following two questions: -

1. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything?
2. When the vine was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything!

Is of course no, since it has been reduced to ashes and only its charred middle remains. In this parable the vine is Israel and the trees of forest are all the other nations. Israel is likened to the vine of the forest because they are totally useless to the LORD they are so grossly corrupt that instead of being a witness to His good name and His glory they are bringing dis-honour and scorn. The LORD is saying if Israel is useless to me now how much more useless will they be when judgment comes upon them. The vine of the forest is a very fitting representation of the state of Judea at this time since they were grossly corrupt and extremely rebellious toward Ezekiel and toward God and therefore totally dis-qualified and of absolutely no use for any of the LORD'S priestly ministries, service or work.

This parable implies that there is no use or advantage to save the Jewish nation from destruction, because they had moved so far away from God's original design for them as a nation and His purpose for making them His people and had also moved totally away from promoting God's good name and glory among the surrounding nations there was no purpose for them to remain in the world as a nation called of God.

The implication in this parable is of Israel confessing to believe in God but living a lifestyle that makes them totally useless to God to be used for any purpose or for any work, and are therefore only fit to be destroyed. This is because instead of being a good testimony and a good reflection of the nature and character of God they are bringing dis-honour to Him. The worthlessness of the vine (especially when the vine is burnt) compared to the wood of a tree presents the image of the worthlessness and guilt of the Jews at this time amongst the nations of the world (the trees of the forest). Israel was called by God to be a light to all nations, but their gross wickedness and rebellion has completely extinguished any light their nation might have once had.

These words of Ezekiel shine a light upon the spiritual blindness that attaches to those who confess to believe in God, but live a lifestyle that totally neglects His ways and His will and by their corrupt behaviour and actions bring dis-honour to His name. This is exactly what the inhabitants of Jerusalem were doing at this time. Let us all be warned and beware of the dangers of living a corrupt Christian life and allow Christ words not only to richly abide in us but also do them.

### **The LORD will set His Face against the Inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

Ezekiel 15:6 ----- <sup>6</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The LORD'S words, "Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel," clearly show that the focus of this chapter is not vines that are cultivated and produce fruit, but the vines we see in forests that grow wildly around the trunks of the trees. God has given these vines so that instead of having to burn the good timber of the tree for fuel for cooking and heating the vines can be used since they are useless for any other purpose as is Israel at the time of this parable.

### **Though Judah Escape from the Fire, the Fire will Consume Them.**

Ezekiel 15:7-8 ----- <sup>7</sup>And I will set my face against them. Though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them, and you will know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them.  
<sup>8</sup>And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord GOD."

The LORD in these verses is saying: because the inhabitants of Jerusalem are like the wood of the vine which is only fit for fire He will destroy them because they are so degenerated, and grown so corrupt and wicked, that instead of being of great use to Him in the world and amongst the nations they are instead not only corrupting their own people but are also reflecting an extremely bad image of God to the nations around them and therefore only fit to be consumed. The prophetic words, "Though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them (v7) means though some may escape the sword, the famine or pestilence they will not escape the final judgment.

God used King Nebuchadnezzar as His servant to fulfil the following prophetic words, "I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, (v8). The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity. Later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods.

While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His Shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed.

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

**You will know that I am the LORD:** the LORD'S words to Ezekiel, "You will know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them" (v7) means that Ezekiel will know without doubt that all the words of judgment he has spoken to Israel were truly the words of the LORD because he will actually see all that he has spoken come to pass.