

Address
13800 S. 4080 Rd on Hwy
169 South of Oologah
P.O. Box 527 Oologah, OK
74053 (918) 443-2025

www.oologahcofc.org
oologahcofc@oologahcofc.org

facebook.com/oologahchurchofchrist
facebook.com/biblewaymedia.org
Instagram.com/biblewaymedia

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Service Times

Sunday

Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.
Worship: 10:30 A.M. & 5 P.M.
Sonshiners: 4:45pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7 P.M.

Preacher:

Russ Earl

AM Sermon:

Why I Believe...

Part 11 – what the Bible says about the
End of Time (**Rev 20:11-15**)

PM Sermon

Overwhelming Power
(Matthew 14:13-36, 15:29-39)

Sunday AM Bible Class:

Doyle Jackson

Wednesday Bible Class:

James 4 – Chuck Northrop

In SEARCH of the Lord's Way

On Channel 6-2 Sundays @ 7:30 am

The Gospel of Christ TV Program

on Saturday @ 7:30am on Channel 53

BibleWayMediaMedia.org

The Oologah church of Christ only uses
the **KJV, NKJV or ASV** translation of
the Bible in classes & sermons.

The Oologah Informer

March 15th, 2020

Thoughts from the Preacher

“Building the New”

In order to become a better Christian
one must not just leave the old life,
but also build the new life.

“The Vine, The Branches and Fruit Bearing”

By Tom Wacaster

The cross now casts its shadow over the late evening hours. Within 12 hours our Lord would be crucified. There is no doubt the Lord was fully aware of what awaited Him as the night begins to unfold. Yet He continues to reach out to comfort the disciples in their distress and uncertainty. This is part of what makes John 15:1-11 such a wonderful passage. It is yet another demonstration of the humility of Jesus and his concern for others. The sheer beauty of this chapter compels us to stop and linger, drinking deeply from the words of Jesus; almost smelling the aroma of the freshly cut branches and clusters of grapes as we, with the eye of faith, journey along that road from the upper room to the garden. The primary focus of this allegory has to do with the relationship of Jesus to the disciples. I see two distinct movements. First, there is the allegory itself, intertwined with the application, 15:1-6. This is followed by the blessings we have in Christ if we abide in Him, 15:7-11. Because of the beauty, and the simplicity of this passage, I stand amazed that this passage, as simple and plain forward as it is, has been abused and misused in multiple ways; even by some of our own brethren.

One major abuse of the passage is the doctrine that Jesus is the Vine, and the various denominations are the branches. The branches are not the various religious Protestant denominations. Jesus plainly says, “If a man abide not in me.” When Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and other pioneers of the restoration movement had launched their plea for a return to New Testament Christianity, they faced fierce opposition from the denominations. This particular passage was used by the denominations to justify their very existence. They would compare the church to a great tree with its many branches, and argue that the tree is the universal church, and the branches are the different denominations. Upon careful examination of this passage it becomes clear that their analogy creates a religious monstrosity that is nothing like what we read about in the New Testament.

It is evident that Jesus was not referring to the denominations for a number of reasons. First, as noted, Jesus plainly says, “If a man abide not in me.” Jesus is speaking of individuals, not denominational bodies. Second, His words are addressed to these eleven men. There is

not the slightest indication that Jesus said anything about the church, much less the various denominations created by the fertile imagination of men. Third, the church was not even in existence at the time these words were being spoken and would not come into existence for several more weeks. Fourth, if the branches are the various denominations, then it follows that the church was a branchless, fruitless, lifeless organization until such a time as the denominations came into existence more than fourteen centuries after the establishment of the church in Acts chapter two. Fifth, such a position produces a monstrosity of a plant that runs contrary to the simple law that says kind produces after its kind, and only after its kind. If the branches represent the various denominations, then each branch is producing different fruit, for each is different in its constitution, its character, and its nomenclature. It is equivalent to a single tree bearing apples, pears, peaches, plums, cherries, berries, nuts, melons, and pumpkins. Men laugh at such a notion, yet embrace precisely the same thing when it comes to the denominational concept of Christianity.

What, then, does the text mean? Christianity has always been described in terms of a personal and individual relationship with God. I fully recognize the corporate unity of every Christian in the body, the church. But the connection of every disciple to the Lord is personal and individual. Obedience to the gospel is an individual responsibility; the judgement will be personal (Rom. 2:5-6); and discipleship is an individual responsibility. This parable sets forth that same individualistic concept, with God as the husbandman, Christ as the vine, and each individual one of the branches.

Unfortunately, this beautiful passage has been used to bolster the position that the Holy Spirit has to operate directly upon the child of God to produce the fruit of which Jesus speaks. Focusing upon verse 5, it is sometimes affirmed that those outside of Christ, i.e. those not attached to the vine, cannot bear any of the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23. The specific phrase of interest right here is this: "apart from me ye can do nothing." What is the extent of the "nothing"? Was Jesus saying that they must abide in Him to exercise self-control? To show love? To have patience and longsuffering? Do not atheists demonstrate self-control from time to time? Who would argue that nonChristians are incapable of demonstrating love in their life? What kind of 'fruit' is it that a person cannot bear when separated from Christ? Jump ahead to verse eight and notice an identifying mark of the fruit under consideration. It is fruit that will "glorify God." The only way to bear fruit that will glorify God is to remain attached to the Vine. And the only way to truly glorify the Father is to demonstrate obedience to His will. This the denominations do not do, nor can they as long as they spew forth their false doctrine concerning the church, salvation, and what it means to be a "branch" attached to the True Vine.