

Lesson 1

**The Universal Spreading of Christ as the True Vine—  
the Organism of the Triune God in the Economy of God  
and the Universal Spreading of the Church as the Testimony of Jesus**

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-2, 4-5, 7-8, 12, 16-17; Gen 2:9; Col. 2:19; Rev. 1:11-12, 20

- I. **The organic increase and universal spreading of the church is the multiplication of Christ in the fruit-bearing of the branches of Christ, the true vine in the universe, as the organism of the Triune God in the economy of God—John 15:1-2, 4-5, 8, 16.**
- II. **As the true vine, Christ is the center of God's operation in the universe—v. 1; Col. 1:15-18; 2:9; 3:4, 11:**
  - A. The entire universe is a vineyard, and centered in this vineyard is the true vine, which is Christ the Son; everything that God the Father is and has is for this center, is embodied in this center, and is expressed through this center—John 15:1; 1:18; 3:35; 16:15; 17:10.
  - B. The true vine—the center of God's operation in the universe—is for the propagation and multiplication of life—15:5, 8, 16:
    1. To propagate life is to spread life widely, and to multiply life is to reproduce life—10:10; 12:24; 15:16.
    2. This propagation and multiplication of life is to express life for the glorification of the Father—v. 8.
  - C. The vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father, to have the intent, the content, the inner life, and the inner riches released and expressed from within—vv. 1, 4-5, 8:
    1. In verse 8 the word *glorified* means to have the intent, the content, the inner life, and the inner riches released and expressed.
    2. When the life of the vine is expressed through the branches in its propagation and multiplication, the Father is glorified, because what the Father is in the riches of His life is expressed in the propagation and multiplication of the vine; this is the glorification of the Father—vv. 4-5, 8.
  - D. As the organism of the Triune God in the economy of God, the true vine is for the multiplication and spread of the processed and consummated Triune God in millions of His chosen ones—17:20-21; Acts 2:42, 47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 16:5.
- III. **We need to be brought into a full realization of the fact that we all are branches of the universal vine—John 15:2, 4-5:**
  - A. We have become branches of the vine, members of Christ, by the branching out of the vine; when we believed in the Lord Jesus, He branched into us—3:15.
  - B. For us to be a branch means that Christ has become our life—Col. 3:4.
  - C. Christ as the vine does everything through His believers as the branches; without Him we can do nothing, and without us He can do nothing; we need Him, and He needs us—John 15:4-5.
  - D. As branches of the vine, we need to abide in the vine—v. 4:
    1. What we are, what we have, and what we do must be in the Lord and by the Lord in us—Phil. 4:13; 2 Tim. 2:1.
    2. If we would abide in the vine, we must first see the fact that we are branches in the vine, and then we need to maintain the fellowship between us and the Lord—John 15:2; 1 Cor. 1:9, 30; 1 John 1:7; 4:15.
  - E. Our destiny as branches of the universal vine is to bear fruit for the glorification of the Father; this God-appointed destiny is fulfilled by the practice of the God-ordained way to carry out God's New Testament economy—John 15:16.

- IV. For the universal spreading of the church as the testimony of Jesus, we need to experience and enjoy Christ as the tree of life and we need to grow Christ as the tree of life within us—Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; Col. 2:19; John 11:25; 15:1:**
- A. Christ as the embodiment of God is our tree of life, and this tree is growing in us—Col. 1:27; 2:9, 19; 3:4.
  - B. God in Christ has sown Himself into our spirit as the life seed to grow a tree, a miniature of the tree of life—Mark 4:2-8, 26-29.
  - C. In Genesis 2:9 the tree of life was unique, but today the tree of life grows in all of us, causing each one of us to be a small tree of life; as small trees of life, we need to grow in life—1 Cor. 3:6-7; Eph. 4:15-16; 2 Pet. 1:5-11.
- V. For the universal spreading of the church as the testimony of Jesus, we need to plant “church trees” for the corporate expression of the Triune God as life—John 5:26; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12; Rom. 8:2; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:11-12, 20:**
- A. In the eyes of God, the universal church, the Body of Christ, has been formed; now, after the formation of this universal church as a complete entity, there is the need for the spreading of the church—Acts 8:1; 9:31:
    1. The local churches are established, not formed; the apostle Paul could plant a church, and Apollos could water it, but it was God alone who formed it and gave it life, and it is God who gives it growth—1 Cor. 3:6-7.
    2. The way to spread the church and to establish a church is to bring it to a certain locality and plant it—Rom. 16:5a; Col. 4:15.
  - B. Although we cannot form the church, we have the position, the right, the opportunity, and even the commission to go to the uttermost part of the earth to establish local churches—Acts 1:8; 13:1-3; Gal. 1:2; Rev. 1:11.
  - C. What we are doing today is simply establishing churches in different localities by planting “church trees”; this planting of church trees is the establishing of the church—1 Cor. 1:1-2; 1 Thes. 1:1.
  - D. The local churches as church trees are golden lampstands, which are actually living, golden trees—Rev. 1:11-12, 20:
    1. The golden lampstands signify the local churches as the reproduction of Christ and the reprint of the Spirit—Exo. 25:31-40; Zech. 4:2, 6, 10; Rev. 5:6; 1:11, 20.
    2. In figure, the golden lampstand signifies the church as the embodiment and the expression of the Triune God—vv. 11-12.
    3. As saints in the local churches, we all are parts of a wonderful golden tree.
    4. The symbol of the golden lampstand indicates that the Triune God is a living tree, growing, budding, and blossoming, and the description of the lampstand conveys the idea of growth—Exo. 25:31-32; Eph. 4:14-16:
      - a. The lampstand is growing through the branches and within them; this indicates that Christ is growing in us—Col. 2:19; John 3:29a, 30a.
      - b. It is crucial for all the branches to give the lampstand a free way to grow in them and through them—Eph. 4:15-16.
    5. To plant a church tree is to establish a local church as a golden lampstand.
  - E. Our burden is to bring the church as a tree to every city, town, and village and plant a church there—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Col. 4:15-16:
    1. We all need to be faithful to carry out the burden to establish local churches by planting church trees—Rom. 16:16b; Gal. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2:14.
    2. The married couples should be like Prisca and Aquila, who planted a church tree wherever they went; wherever they were, they were willing to bear the burden of the practice of the church by opening up their home—Rom. 16:3-5a; 1 Cor. 16:19.
    3. If we all have the desire to establish churches by planting church trees, the establishing of the churches will be very fast and prevailing—Acts 19:20.

### **References and Further Reading:**

1. *The Ministry of the Word*, vol. 13, no. 8, August 2009, “Being One with the Lord in His Move for the Universal Spreading of the Church as the Testimony of Jesus,” chs. 2-3.
2. *Life-Study of John*, msg. 33.
3. *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, msg. 197.