

EZEKIEL

Chapter 15

Jerusalem, a Useless Vine

And the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? 3 Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it? 4 Behold, it 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? 5 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! 6 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. 7 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. 8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord GOD.”

Ch 15 Ezekiel uses an extended metaphor, similar to a parable. (TLSB)

15:2–5 Series of rhetorical questions. (TLSB)

15:2 *the wood of the vine.* Grapevine. (TLSB)

surpass any wood. Sarcastic. Of course, its wood is far inferior to wood from any other source. (TLSB)

The vineyard and grapevine are common biblical images for the church in both Testaments—for Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem in the OT, and for Christ and Christians in the NT. (CC)

15:3 *Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it?* See Isa 22:23–25. (CSB)

Two questions illustrate the vine’s inferiority. (TLSB)

15:4–5 If the vine was nearly useless to begin with, it will be totally useless after being reduced to ashes or a half-burned stick. Aph: “Its two branches are the two kingdoms, and its inward part which is laid waste is Jerusalem” (NPNF 2 13:360). (TLSB)

15:4 *is it useful for anything?* Whereas Isaiah (5:1–7) and Jeremiah (2:21) express divine disappointment over Israel’s failure to produce good fruit, Ezekiel typically laments her total uselessness. (CSB)

15:6 As God has given the vine for burning, the inhabitants of Jerusalem face the same destiny. Both are givens, things that are a certain way and cannot be changed. (TLSB)

15:7 *they escape from the fire.* A reference to the siege of Jerusalem in 597 B.C., which resulted in the exile of which Ezekiel was a part (see 1:2; 2Ki 24:10–16). (CSB)

the fire shall yet consume them ... I am the LORD. Metaphor is abandoned now for straight pronouncement of judgment. Even if they have escaped the first deportation, they should not think that they will escape the major destruction coming shortly. (TLSB)

Prophecy threatening another and more devastating siege—Ezekiel’s main message before 586 (see 5:2, 4; 10:2, 7). (CSB)

The conflagration of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. with fire, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7), serves as a type of the final judgment of all unbelievers at the end of the world, pictured as the burning of the city “Babylon” in Rev 18:8. Many Scripture passages depict that eternal judgment as by fire. (CC)

15:8 Using some of the same vocabulary, this verse links ch 15 with the previous chapter (cf 14:13–16). (TLSB)

Ch 15 Jerusalem is a vine that is good for nothing but burning, a vivid illustration of the city’s fall in 587 BC. By this catastrophe, the Lord prepares the way for restoration and salvation. In Christ, the true vine, we can bear much fruit (Jn 15:1–11). • Spare us, O Lord, as inhabitants of the new Jerusalem, from the defection and destruction of the old Jerusalem that in Christ we may finally enter the Jerusalem above. Amen. (TLSB)