Sent: Wednesday, May 06, 2015 9:06 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study

In last nite's MOB session, covering John 15:1-1-25, we saw how Jesus used the metaphor of the "vine and the branches" to explain how the disciples--and all of His would-be followers--would be enabled to carry out the mission to which He had called them!  He said that "he who abides in Me and I in Him would bear much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing!"  Note the continuation of the "in" terminology discussed in Kostenberger's book, and illustrated in last week's lesson--that special and intimate connection and relationship that Jesus had with His Father and envisioned with His disciples (and would-be followers) when He promised to send "another Helper"--the Spirit of Truth--who would "abide with them and be in them!

By being connected to Jesus, the Life-giver, and by "abiding" with Him as the "true vine," the disciples could be expected to "bear fruit"--and "fruit that would remain"!  The production of that fruit would serve as evidence that they were really connected to the vine and thus "true believers"!

Jesus also made reference to branches that would "not bear fruit"--that "would not abide in Him" (vs. 6)--and that "would be taken away...and cast into the fire...."  John later wrote in his epistle: "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they are not of us" (I John 2:19).  This passage, and also our text in John 15, seems to focus on the plight of Judas Iscariot first and foremost but, as John MacArthur notes, "extends to all those who make a profession of faith but do not actually possess salvation"!

Of course, this passage has raised debate among theologians over the years, as it did last nite, about whether the branches that Jesus described--and particularly since He referred to them as "branches in Me" (vs. 2)--were possibly believers who had somehow "fallen from grace" or those who simply never produced "fruit."  The idea of falling from grace, however, would seem to conflict with much of Scripture, including the words Jesus in John 10:27, where He said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no man will snatch them out of My hand."

It's also interesting that when Jesus referred to "abiding in Me and I in you," He further described it as "you abiding in Me and My words abiding in you..." (vs. 7)--thus highlighting the role of the divinely inspired Scripture in the "abiding process."  As part of His "high priestly prayer," which we'll be looking at in an upcoming lesson, Jesus also prayed that His Father would "sanctify them in the truth; Your is truth" (John 17:17).  In that same context, as we studied last week, He promised that the Holy Spirit, whom He said the Father would send in His name, would "teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all that He said to them"--explaining how the disciples later would be enabled to write the inerrant and divinely-inspired and Scripture!  As well as how the Holy Spirit would "illumine" the hearts and minds of all believers, enabling them to "abide" in Him and "persevere" in the faith!

Well, there was more to our lesson in John 15, as you probably will recall--including Jesus' statement that He had spoken these things "so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full!"  He also reminded His disciples of His commandment that they should "love one another, just as I have loved you!"  And He left them a warning that "the world would hate them, just as it has hated Him!  And they thus would need His "abiding presence"!

Lots of great stuff!

Next week, more on the Holy Spirit!

Have a great week, men!

Lowell