

Chapter 7

Trees and Plants

The all-wise Creator knew what He was doing when He covered the world with vegetation (plant life). Look in Genesis chapter 1 and find out on which day plants and trees were created. DAY _____. Why was plant life so important to man and beast (see Genesis 1:29-30 and keep in mind that the word "meat" in these two verses means "food")?

Think about the things you ate yesterday (for breakfast, lunch or supper). What kinds of plants or fruits did you eat?

Could you live and survive without eating and breathing? _____ We depend upon plants for food and we even depend upon green plants for the good air that we breathe (green plants and trees fill the air with fresh oxygen supplies through a process called photosynthesis). Even if a person eats mostly steak, milk, bacon and eggs, he still depends upon plants for his food. What kind of food do cattle, pigs and chickens eat?

_____ Even the animals we eat depend on plants for survival.

In this chapter we want to think about some of the important trees and plants that are mentioned in the Bible.

TREES

Trees have played an important part in the history of mankind. Was a tree involved in man's ruin and fall (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-6)? _____ Was a tree involved in man's salvation (1 Peter 2:24; Acts 5:30)? _____ Will there be a tree with its fruits in the new earth (Revelation 22:2)?

When you think of a fruit tree, what kind of a tree do you think of? An apple tree? An orange tree? A pear tree? A peach tree? If you were living in Bible times and if someone were to ask you this same question, you would probably think of an olive tree or a fig tree. These were the most important fruit trees for those who lived in Palestine. Let's find out why this was so.

The Olive Tree

God promised that the land of Palestine would be a land of wheat and barley and vines and _____ and pomegranates; a land of _____ and honey" (Deuteronomy 8:8).

The fruit of the olive tree is the olive! Have you ever eaten an olive (either green or black)? The people who lived in Bible times would eat olives too, but the most important part of the olive was the **OIL**.

Today one of the most valuable things in the world is OIL (not olive oil but fuel oil or petroleum). The richest countries are those countries that have an abundance of oil. In Bible times one of the most valuable things in the world was OIL (not fuel oil but olive oil). Wealthy King Solomon gave King Hiram _____ baths of olive oil (one bath equals about 7½ gallons) -- see 2 Chronicles 2:10.

Usually the olives would be crushed by a stone wheel so that the oil would come out. One olive tree could produce as much as 20 gallons of oil. The olive tree is known for its **longevity** (it can live and bear fruit for a long time). An olive tree can live and bear fruit for centuries. Does God want His children to be fruitful day after day, week after week, year after year (Colossians 1:10; Titus 3:14)? _____

What was olive oil used for and why was it so valuable? Probably the most important use of oil was its use as fuel in lamps. These oil lamps were very important in Bible times. Remember, people did not have electric lights or flashlights in those days. No oil meant no light (see Matthew 25:1-9).

Also, olive oil took the place of butter. Think of all the things you like to spread butter on. If you were living in the days of Peter and Paul, you would use olive oil instead of butter. Olive oil was also used in cooking or frying. Today we might put some butter or animal fat in our frying pan but in Bible times olive oil was used. Of course, olive oil can still be used today for cooking and as a substitute for butter, and many health experts believe it is a very healthy oil.

Olive oil was also used when a person was anointed to an important office (this was usually done by pouring oil over the head of the person who was being anointed). In 1 Kings 19:16 a **PROPHET** was anointed (Elisha). In Leviticus 8:12 a **PRIEST** was anointed (Aaron). In 1 Samuel 16:13 a **KING** was anointed (David).

The Lord Jesus is called **THE CHRIST** or **THE MESSIAH**. Both of these words mean "THE ANOINTED ONE." He is the *perfect* **PROPHET**, **PRIEST** and **KING**:

1. _____ PROPHET	A. Hebrews 3:1
2. _____ PRIEST	B. Revelation 19:16
3. _____ KING	C. Matthew 21:11; John 6:14

Did you know that if you are a believer, God has anointed you? The moment a person is saved, God anoints him, not with olive oil, but with **HIS HOLY SPIRIT** (see 1 John 2:20,27 -- the word "unction" in verse 20 means "anointing" as in verse 27). God has poured out His Spirit upon the believer (Titus 3:5-6 and Romans 5:5). Just as oil was used to light the lamps so that men could see in the dark, so the Holy Spirit provides light so that believers can see and understand the truth.

Before you open your Bible, do you ask God to give you light and teach you and help you to see?

The Fig Tree

The fig tree is one of the first trees mentioned in the Bible. Can you find a verse in Genesis chapter 3 which speaks of the leaves of a fig tree? Verse _____

Figs (usually dried figs) were one of the favorite foods of those living in Palestine. Today we might say our favorite food is pizza or something else, but in Bible times people would probably put figs near the top of their list of favorite foods. The fig tree meant as much to them as the pizza restaurant means to us. See 1 Samuel 25:18 and 30:12.

In Mark 11:12-14 we read about the time when Jesus cursed the fig tree. To understand this we need to know that usually the fruit (figs) began to form on the tree as soon as the leaves would appear. Thus, when people would see the leaves they would expect to see the fruit also. The leaves carried this message: "We are the fig leaves and if you come closer you will see the figs!" But the fig tree Jesus cursed had nothing but _____ (Mark 11:13). It had no fruit! This tree was a hypocrite. It pretended to have fruit but it really did not.

Many people are hypocrites just like that tree. They say that they are Christians and that they love the Lord, but as you look closely at their lives (the way they act and speak) there is no fruit. They say they are believers but they do not act as believers. The Jews living at the time of Jesus hailed Him as their King (Mark 11:9-10) but a few days later they yelled, "C _____ H _____" (Mark 15:13-14). Were they like the fig tree Jesus cursed? If someone were to look closely at your life, would he see fruit or just leaves? Do you just say that you love Jesus or do you also show that you love Jesus?

The Cedar Tree

Not only is the fruit of trees very valuable to man, but also the wood. Even today wood (lumber) is a very important building material. Is there a lumber yard near where you live? How many things in your home are made from wood?

In Bible times the best trees for lumber were cedar trees and the best cedars grew in a forest or mountain range north of Palestine known as LEBANON. What kind of wood did Solomon use when he built the great temple (1 Kings 6:9)? _____ What kind of wood did Solomon use when he built his own house (1 Kings 7:1-2)? _____

These trees were great evergreens and would often reach the height of 120 feet. To those living in this part of the world, the cedar of Lebanon was known as "the king of trees." The Creator made this tree to be strong and tall.

God wants every believer to grow strong and tall, but this growth does not happen overnight. A mushroom may grow overnight but is a mushroom strong and tall? _____ Will a mushroom be around for a long time? _____ Does a cedar tree grow to a height of 120 feet in one year?

Real growth takes time! You cannot go from the sixth grade to the seventh grade in one week or one month. Spiritual growth takes time too. If a believer stays healthy he will grow slowly and gradually. He will slowly but steadily become stronger and stronger. How many years of growth

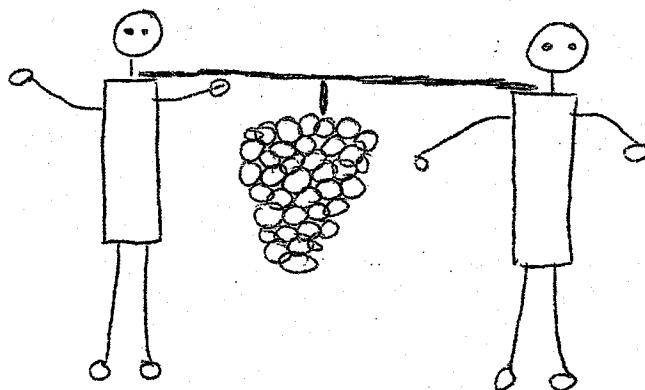
did Moses need in the wilderness before he was ready to be the man God could use to bring the people out of Egypt (Acts 7:30)? _____ After these years, Moses was no mushroom; he was like a mighty cedar! Are you growing spiritually? Are you growing slowly but surely? Are you making upward progress? Are you a stronger believer now than you were a year ago?

PLANTS

The Vine

The grape vine was one of the most important plants in Bible times. When there are many grapevines located in one place it is called a VINEYARD (see Isaiah 5:1-2 and Matthew 21:33). Often a vineyard was located on a hillside.

Southern Palestine is a favorite place for vineyards. Some of the grapes grow to be very large. It has been reported that one kind of grape grown in the vicinity of Hebron (in Southern Palestine) develops fruit so that one bunch may weigh more than 20 pounds. This reminds us of the large bunch of grapes described in Numbers 13:23. How many men carried this cluster of grapes?



A vineyard requires much care and attention. What will happen to the vineyard of a lazy man (Proverbs 24:30-31)? _____ A good farmer will prune the vineyard before springtime. This means he will cut off every branch that is sickly or feeble. The sap will then be able to flow into the healthy branches so that they will produce better fruit. The farmer prunes because he wants more fruit. Jesus spoke about pruning in John 15:2. God wants believers to bring forth M _____ fruit (John 15:2 and M _____ fruit (John 15:8). What kind of fruit does God want believers to bear?

John 15:12 – L _____

John 15:11 – J _____

See Galatians 5:22

John 14:27 – P _____

What did people do with grapes? The fresh ripe grapes were eaten and enjoyed as one of the favorite foods in Bible lands. Do you enjoy fresh grapes? Sun dried grapes were also eaten and these were called raisins (see 1 Samuel 25:18). Do you enjoy raisins? They are good for you--

packed with IRON, although they are also very sweet. The juice was pressed out of grapes and made a delicious drink. Do you enjoy grape juice?

Pressing the juice out of grapes was usually done by having people tread or step on the grapes with their bare feet. Sometimes a whole family (men, women and children) would work together doing this. The place where this is done was called a winepress and the color of the juice was "blood-red."

Someday God will step on the grapes when He judges and punishes wicked men (Isaiah 63:3; Revelation 19:13,15). This terrible winepress is described in Revelation 14:18-20. This winepress will not be filled with grape juice but it will be filled with human blood (verse 20). This does not mean that God will literally step on wicked people and squeeze out their blood. This is a figurative way to describe the awesome judgment that will fall upon those who reject Christ at the end of the age, resulting in much bloodshed. Those who reject Christ as their Saviour must someday meet Him as their Judge. What a terrible day that will be!

When grape juice sits around for awhile it begins to change. This is called fermentation. The sugar in the grape juice changes into alcohol and the Bible calls this WINE. Too much wine will make a person DRUNK and the person who gets drunk is not W_____ (Proverbs 20:1). God says, "Be not _____ with _____ wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

Can you think of three serious problems that drunkenness causes in our society today?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Can you think of three reasons why you should not drink alcoholic beverages (such as wine or beer)?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The Papyrus Plant

The Papyrus plant is a water plant that grows abundantly in the land of Egypt. This plant was **very** important to people who lived in ancient times because paper was made from the fibers of this plant. In fact our word PAPER comes from the word *PAPYRUS*.

The paper made from this plant was a pale yellow color. Rolls of paper would be made from 10 to 30 feet long and the rolls would be about nine and a half inches high. Ancient books did not look like the books we see in the library today. This kind of book is called a scroll (consisting of paper that is rolled up). This was the kind of book Jesus read from as in Luke 4:17. How do you think Jesus opened and closed the book (Luke 4:17,20)?

Flowers Of The Field

People living in Bible times did not have flower gardens like we do today. They merely had fields to farm and to grow their crops in. Also they did not usually have plants in their houses (they did not have large windows for the sun to come in). There were, however, beautiful wild flowers that grew in the fields.

Jesus mentioned these wild flowers in Matthew 6:28-30. King Solomon must have been dressed in a beautiful robe. Does God give even more beautiful garments and colors to the flowers?

_____ Which are more valuable to God--flowers which are here today and gone tomorrow **or** people who have eternal souls? _____ If God takes care of flowers and clothes them, will He also take care of us? _____ Should we worry? _____

Some flowers have a pleasing and wonderful smell and other plants stink. (Have you ever smelled SKUNK CABBAGE?) God wants the believer to send forth a sweet and pleasing odor or smell (2 Corinthians 2:14-15 – **savour** means **odor** or **smell**).

Have you ever been in a place where the room was filled with cigarette smoke? Later after you leave that place your clothes and your hair still smell like cigarette smoke. People can tell where you have been because the smell remains on you.

The believer should give forth a spiritual fragrance. As we spend time with God (in prayer and Bible reading) we pick up a heavenly smell. After we leave our time of devotions that smell should still be with us [this smell is called "the *savour* (odor, aroma) of His (God's) knowledge" -- 2 Corinthians 2:14]. People should be able to tell where we have been. They should know that we have been in God's presence. Could the unsaved Jews tell where Peter and John had been (Acts 4:13)? _____ Where had they been? _____

What kind of odor is your life sending forth? Are you like a flower for the Lord with a pleasing aroma? Don't be a spiritual SKUNK!

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 6:28-30)