

## Key Scripture: John 15

John 15:4 KJV

*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

To properly understand the scriptures, there are important things to note.

1. **The scriptures were not written to you, but they were written for you.** When the prophet wrote the prophesies, they wrote within the context of their audience then. This means that to understand the scriptures, we need to read within the context of the time it was written as well as the language used at the time it was written. Over time, the meaning of a word may change.

An example of such change in our day is the word “Amebo” used in the Benin language in Nigeria. Today this word refers to a person who gossips. Initially, however, the word was “avwebo” and this meant the favourite wife in a polygamous marriage. If a person today, reads a writing from years ago describing a woman as an avwebo, the reader will most likely misunderstand it, thinking the woman was a gossip rather than a favourite wife. For the Jews, Son meant one who was an heir, one who built and established his father’s house and fulfilled the Father’s will. This was why the Jews were angry with Christ in John 5:17. He was claiming to be equal with God and one who established the will of the Father, not just a male child.

2. **When the scriptures were written, they were not written in chapters and verses.** It was continuous writing. Chapters and verses were modern inventions added for scriptural referencing. Early Jews could not search the scriptures in verses and chapters since the scripture was written in scrolls. In today’s world, if you simply picked a chapter of a book from the middle, and read it, it would not be fair to conclude that you know what the book is about. You’d need to read in context (from the beginning). In a similar way, Contextual study is very important for biblical study. At least once a year, a believer should practice reading the entire bible. This will help you to see the consistency in the scriptures.

A style of writing at that time was that writers repeated one point in different analogies for ease of understanding. This was how Jesus spoke, especially when teaching parables. To understand His message and why He said a thing, one simply needed to read what he said prior to the parable or after.

3. **The Bible was not written in English - both the old and New Testament.** A Jew would not refer to Genesis – Malachi as “Old Testament”. In the Jewish mind, old means passing away or temporary while new means a renewal of something. That said, Genesis to Malachi is preaching the same message as Matthew to revelation not two different gospels. All that was written in Matthew – Revelations were from Genesis to Malachi, what Paul referred to as the Holy Scriptures. It is important to note that Genesis to Malachi was written in Hebrew and Matthew to Revelation was written in Greek. Therefore, having a concordance is necessary when studying.

4. **A word does not have the same meaning everywhere.** In natural languages as well, a word can mean different things depending on the context. One may wonder, why we have many translations. Sometimes, based on a translator's doctrinal bias, the words chosen as an interpretation to a text may vary.
  
5. **We have many manuscripts of the scripture.** This affects the translation of the scripture. There is a translation of the Old Testament in Greek. It is called the Septuagint. At a certain time, 12 Hebrew scholars used the oldest manuscript of the Hebrew text, at that time, to translate the scriptures (Genesis - Malachi). The Old Testament text we have in most translations now was from a manuscript written 1000 years after Christ, called the Masoretic text.

### **Why is the Septuagint important?**

Besides the fact that it was translated from the oldest manuscript, as mentioned earlier, the apostles did not write. Any new doctrine in their letters outside of what was written in the scriptures. Hence, we can do a direct comparison of the New Testament and old testament texts to know where the apostles got their teachings from.

An example is the word "Apostle" or evangelist. If you read the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi, you will not see the word "apostle" or "Apostolos" in Greek. However, this does not mean that you will not see what an apostle does. So, what is an apostle? One who delivers a message or one who comes as a delegate for the sender. This means whoever has been sent comes in the name and authority of the sender.

We have people who operated like this in the Old Testament. The Greek word for apostle is "Apostolos". Even though you do not see the Greek word 'Apostolos', we see the verb "apostello" when referring to Joseph. Apostello simply means to send, Joseph was functioning as an apostle to his brethren. God sent (apostello) him to bring deliverance to Israel. Moses was also one who was sent (apostello) to bring salvation to the people of Israel. This shows the importance of LXX.

Returning to John 15, based on what we stated above, we would need to get the context of this conversation to understand what Jesus was saying here. This conversation began in John 13.

John 13 starts with the idea of washing feet. What does this mean? Today, it is a weird practice for a 21st-century person to 'wash feet' and so a person reading now at face value may not understand the context, but a Jew will. For a Jew, this was huge. It meant reverence and honour. The Jewish roads were muddy and dusty and sometimes had animal dung and things like that on the road, so only servants washed feet. To us, this means no one is above service in the local church.

He went on to speak to them about His departure and they became sad. This was the context of Chapter 14. In Chapter 13, He had just spoken to them about his death and though his death was meant to be their deliverance from the bondage of sin, they did not understand, and they were

troubled.

Hence, Jesus began by saying

*John 14:1 KJVS Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

Next, He said something very interesting.

*John 14:2 KJVS In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

Again, Jesus was not speaking to you, a 21st-century believer, but to his disciples. For us, mansions are huge houses. But a Jewish man did not think this way. Recall that Jesus was not writing anything separate from what is written in the scriptures (Genesis to Malachi). With this knowledge, we can search the Old Testament with the LXX version, to see if there is a reference to the Father's house.

From this verse, we see a reference to a 'house', so we can search the Greek LXX to see where 'house' is used in the old testament. The word had many meanings one of which was related to the temple.

An example is in 2 Samuel 7:1-12 shows the reference to a house where God will abide. The reading speaks of a seed that will build the house of God. This seed in the scripture in a way speaks of Solomon, but the main emphasis was Jesus. Acts 7 shows this.

*Acts 7:45-49 KJVS Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; [46] Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. [47] But Solomon built him an house. [48] Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, [49] Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?*

The concepts of God's 'house' had been, right from Genesis to Malachi. Hence, when Jesus said, "In my Father's house," it meant where God resides. Going back to John 14, this means Mansions do not mean buildings, since God does not dwell in temples made by man. The only other place in all of scripture that uses the word "monē", translated as "Mansion" by the KJV is John 14:23 and there it was more accurately translated as 'abode'.

Returning to John 14:2, where it says, "I go to prepare a place for you," there is no Greek word for "for". The translator added 'for' because they thought of a physical place. The word there is 'hymīn', which means 'you'. This phrase should read: "I go to prepare a place, you." What Jesus was speaking of here, was a union between Himself and you.

Hence John 14:3 says, "Where I am, there you may be also." Another interesting thing in John 14:2 is the word 'place' (topos). For us today, place means a physical location. Yet, it could also be figurative of a condition. In 1 Corinthians 14:16 when Paul uses the phrase, "The place of the learned," 'place' is figurative of a condition. Yet in other verses like 1 Corinthians 14:23, it is used as a location.

The place Jesus is referring to in John 14:2 can be seen as we being his dwelling place, but more so, a condition of being one with Jesus. The original condition for this promise is to believe in Him. How do you become the dwelling place of Jesus? by believing in Him. Can we say that everyone who believes in Jesus is a dwelling place of God? Yes. The believer is God's address. Jesus' words and actions are seen in those that He resides in.

## What does it mean to Abide in Him?

### 1. To believe in Him.

We would consider various scriptures.

*John 5:38 says, "And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not."* From this verse, believing in Him means that His words abide in you.

*John 6:56 KJVS says, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."*

What does it mean to eat His flesh and drink His blood? John 6:35 KJVS, "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Jesus is the Word of God.

*John 12:46 KJVS*

*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. This verse shows that those who believe in Him abide in Him and abide in light.*

### 2. Abiding in Him means to Abide in His Love.

*John 14:15,20-23*

*If ye love me, keep my commandments. [20] At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. [21] He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. [22] Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? [23] Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

Now that the context has been established, we will return to John 15. When Jesus says "I am the true vine", the audience of that day was familiar with the vine, how it was planted and how they took care of it. To clearly understand what was meant, we need to know how they took care of a vine in that era.

*John 15:1-2 KJVS I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

Note that this branch that bears no fruits, in the above scripture, is in Him as opposed to John 15:6 where the branch is not in Him. In those days, if a person saw a branch that was connected to a branch

but was not bearing fruits, they will lift up the branch so more life and nutrients from the vine flowed to the branch so it can bear fruit.

For us, this means that when we see a brother who is in weakness, we do not cut him off, but we seek to restore and bring him back to where he can bear fruit, just like our Father will do. We also see that if the branch bears fruits, He purges.

How does He purge? John 15:3 says “ye are clean through the words I spoke to you”. Clean is an adjective that describes a noun, so John 15:3 says, ye are clean branches through the words I spoke to you. How does God purge the branches? It is through His Words. It is not that God brings adverse situations your way to cleanse you, it is His words that cleanse you. The WORD of God is His pruning scissors that cut off things that are dead so that the branch can flourish.

*John 15:4-5 KJV*

*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” The ‘nothing’ in this verse is the bearing of fruits. Men have created a lot of things without Christ, however, the fruit of the Holy Spirit cannot be produced without Christ.*

*John 15:6-8 KJV*

*If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. [7] If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. [8] Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

These verses of scripture mean that anything you are asking for is in the context of bearing fruits shall be done. John 13:35 also says that we are known as his disciples as we love, so the fruit we are to bear is Love.

*John 15:9-11 KJV*

*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue (abide or dwell) ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. [11] These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

Why did Jesus mention Joy here? Their hearts were troubled as seen in John 13. They did not understand that Jesus going away was for their good and so Jesus had to emphasize that He was coming to dwell in them and that this would ensure that their heart was full of Joy. This is the basis for a believer's joy.

*John 15:12 KJVS*

*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

This verse further emphasizes that the commandment spoken about in Verse 10 was to love. By believing in His love for you, you learn to love.

*John 15:12-14 KJVS*

*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. [13] Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. [14] Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. [17] These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

The emphasis here again is love. So, when the instruction comes to us that we are to abide in Him, it means belief in His love for us and in believing, we love others.

How did God love us? He died and laid down His life. Hence, John 15 says greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends. Love is service as we see in John 13 when Jesus spoke of washing the feet. Love is service. He served us by making us His house and so we can show Him forth to our brethren and others in the world by preaching the gospel.

To our brethren, our service and attitude are borne out of love. This means we forgive. To a Jew, forgiveness also meant deliverance from sin. This means that in forgiveness, you seek to lift the person out of sin and see them as they are in Christ. The watchword is to abide, which means to love. We are to, first of all, understand God's love and love our neighbour the same way God has loved us.

*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with your spirit. Amen.*