

## TAMED AND CULTIVATED BY THE HAND OF GOD

God spoke to Israel through the prophet Jeremiah: “I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? Although you wash yourself...and use an abundance of soap, the stain of your guilt (deeply ingrained patterns of iniquity) is still before me...How can you say I am not defiled; I have not run after the Baals (idols, other gods)...consider what you have done. You are a swift, she-camel running here and there (after idols), a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing (inhales, devours) the WIND (Holy Spirit) in her craving - in her heat, who can RESTRAIN HER?...you said, It’s no use! I love foreign gods, and I must go after them”. Jeremiah wept because God’s people had forsaken Him to go their own way. He addressed their condition by describing them as “corrupt (strange, foreign or wild) vines, donkeys and camels; see Jeremiah 2:21-25; Isaiah 5:2.

We know that Jesus Himself is the “True Vine”, and the Father is the Gardener; John 15:1. How does a vineyard that was once planted with a noble, choice vine of pure “Seed”, become a degenerate plant of a strange vine? Answer: by allowing that which grows WILD from the GROUND (the flesh, worldly methods), to overtake the cultivated, tended, patient work of the Holy Spirit. Why would a camel and a donkey (which carried valuable cargo, including kings and dignitaries) be fitting examples of Israel’s behavior? The answer: “MY FEAR IS NOT IN THEE (they were ruled by stubborn, self-will)”; Jer. 2:19. And He adds: thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Israel resembled a wandering, female camel, and an unshod, wild donkey who were accustomed to the valley (a lower existence) in the wilderness, not the heights of Zion. These have not been “tamed” (were restless and impulsive); these have not been “shod” (they need “shoes”- a proven walk); their throats were dry (but not thirsty for Him); Jeremiah 2:25. Yes, the Master has need of the lowly donkey; but first, he must be loosed, “cut off” from the ties of his natural inclinations. Only then will he be able to carry the presence of a King as he walks; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:2-7.

In a similar vein, a “corrupt vine” has not yielded to the corrective hand of the Gardener, which cuts away all that is dead or inconsistent with God’s nature, the true Vine. Israel’s chief sin was a longing for “worship” on her own terms. Many are ambitious in their pursuit of “ministry” (works, events, conferences), but not in pursuing union with Jesus Himself, which is only obtained through the execution of self: carrying the cross. God’s people were enticed by the “scent of another male”, and were engaging in a “union” with the wrong mate! The vines, donkeys and camels all had something in common: they were unrestrained, self-willed, uncircumcised and directed by natural desires. Those who are seduced by the “scent” of other lovers, “males at mating time”, will not be turned away (there are many available suitors!); Jer. 2:24. God can only reproduce His life and ministry through an individual who cuts off the old patterns, learned behaviors, worldly methods and self-will (the old beast nature). Any departure from complete surrender and obedience to Jehovah God and His ways, can lead to bondage. When the Fear of the Lord is present in our lives, we can gain the victory over soulish impulses. Is your life and ministry being fashioned according to your natural desires and religious tradition, or is it being tamed and cultivated by the Hand of God?

