

The Grain of Wheat

A Bible Study on John 12:24

Part 1: The Key Text

New King James Version

John 12

24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Part 2: The Principle of Interpretation

The symbolism is very deep, but a correct understanding is extremely important.

We cannot and must not get lost in spiritual fantasies or in interpretations that are simply the product of a creative imagination, or in misinterpretations.

Sola Scriptura is our foundation.

The Scriptures interpret themselves, without the need for human speculation, spiritual fantasies, or theories born of the imagination, based on feelings and emotions and sensations...

Isaiah 8:20

NKJV:

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

— **John 12:24**

Part 3: The Popular View

Many erroneous interpretations have been made around this mini-parable of Jesus, and much correction and a correct understanding and interpretation are needed.

Popular view and thought:

A seed must die to bring forth abundant fruit...

The seed must be buried and die, so that it can be reborn and transform...

This erroneous popular view is then cross-referenced with some truth as a backup to support its line of theory.

Baptism: one must die first to be reborn as a new person in Christ Jesus.

As a person goes under water, it symbolizes the death and resurrection of that person.

And so the confusion is created, and a popular erroneous understanding is perpetuated through the mouths and writings of many religious leaders and followers.

Part 4: Testing Every Teaching by the Scriptures

"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews."

Acts 17:10

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

"Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men."

Acts 17:12

The Bereans listened eagerly, but they did not simply accept what Paul said. They checked it against the Scriptures every day, and because his teaching agreed with the Word, many of them believed. In practice, this is what Isaiah 8:20 teaches.

- "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1
- "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." Acts 17:11
- "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be rejected." Galatians 1:8

Part 5: Christ's Mission

Christ was on a mission; His life had one purpose: to save humanity from the clutches, terror, and destruction of the devil.

He came down from heaven, took on human flesh, became a human being, and was given a new name for that mission. The name was Jesus, the human being, the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. From the first day of sin, the plan of redemption was put into action, into motion. Jesus dying on the cross was the culmination of that process, of that plan.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 6:23

The wages of sin is death, and He, Jesus Christ the human being, took on all sins, so that we can be forgiven, pardoned, and saved. Without that death, He would remain in heaven alone, far from earth, far from humanity. We humans would also be alone, cut off and separated from the bond and love of heaven.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27

The wisdom in the words of Jesus is so remarkable and profound that unless you study the Scriptures and meditate on them, you will be lost and deprived of the shining light of knowledge that opens the mind and the eyes of understanding.

Part 6: The Plenitude of Understanding: His Mission, and Today Our Mission

- Destroying the works of the devil: 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14-15
- The Word became flesh: John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-8
- The name Jesus and His mission: Matthew 1:21 ("thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins")
- The Lamb of God: John 1:29
- The plan from the first sin: Genesis 3:15; Revelation 13:8
- The wages of sin: Romans 6:23
- He bore our sins: Isaiah 53:5-6; 1 Peter 2:24
- Light and understanding: Psalm 119:105, 130; Ephesians 1:18

Part 7: Breaking Down the Sentence

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

— **John 12:24**

Let's break down the structure of the sentence:

7.1 "Verily, verily, I say unto you"

Verily, verily, I say unto you =

A very important announcement; pay close attention...

The repetition of the words "Verily, verily" =

Added importance and added value and attention to the message or communication that follows the announcement.

"This is an important message for you."

7.2 "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die"

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die =

A seed of wheat needs to be placed in the soil and die...

Literal: a grain of wheat that is not sown stays one grain. When it is sown, it produces many grains. This is simply what happens in the field.

Spiritual (or metaphorical): Christ is the grain. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, He did not remain alone but drew many to Himself.

The literal picture is what makes the spiritual meaning clear. Jesus took something everyone could see in daily life and used it to explain something they could not yet see.

Sola Scriptura principle: not every passage has both levels. Some are plain history or direct commands, and some are clearly figurative. But Scripture usually shows us when it is speaking in a figure. Jesus often explains His own parables, as He does with the Sower in Luke 8:11-15, and in John 12:33 the Gospel itself explains the meaning: "This he said, signifying what death he should die." So we don't need to guess. The Bible tells us where the spiritual meaning is.

Part 8: A Living Seed, Not a Dead Seed

A living seed does not die when it is planted. It sprouts.

In fact, if a seed really died, it would produce no plant at all. A dead seed stays dead. Only a living seed sprouts and bears fruit.

So, from a botanical point of view, the statement:

"The seed must die in order to bear fruit"

is not accurate.

This raises an interesting question: why does John 12:24 use the language of "dying"?

Jesus was not making a botanical statement at all. He was speaking metaphorically about His coming death. In the immediate context, Jesus announces that "the hour has come" for His glorification through the cross. The grain of wheat serves as an illustration that points to Himself.

If the seed is identified elsewhere with the Word of God (Luke 8:11), then the image of the seed naturally highlights life, not death.

One could therefore argue the following:

The key event is not the seed's death but its sowing.

Hidden in the earth, the life already present inside the seed begins to develop, multiply, and bear fruit.

From this perspective, what people see as disappearance, loss, or death is actually the beginning of manifestation and growth.

A thoughtful way to express this idea:

"The seed does not die to bear fruit. Rather, the life contained in the seed is released when it is sown in the right environment. The Word of God is a living seed. When it is received in the heart, it sprouts, grows, and produces an abundant harvest."

This interpretation puts the emphasis on life producing life, an idea that fits fully with the broader biblical theme that the Word of God is living, active, and life-giving.

Yes, the seed represents Christ's sacrifice. He had to die and be buried, and then come back to life through the resurrection. Through His testimony, He draws many to His message, to His words of life and salvation.

In this interpretation, "death" applies mainly to Christ Himself, not to the biological seed. The grain of wheat serves as a metaphor for Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The fruit does not come because a literal seed dies, but because Christ gave His life and rose again, drawing people to the message of salvation.

For a more refined theological wording, one could also write:

Yes, the seed represents Christ's sacrifice. The grain of wheat points to His death, burial, and resurrection. Through His victorious life and His testimony, He draws many to Himself and to His message of life, truth, and salvation. 🌱✝️🙏

A biological seed is not dead but alive. Precisely because it is alive and full of life, when it is placed in the ground it sprouts and so bears much fruit.

If the seed were dead, it would stay dead no matter where it was placed.

Part 9: The Grain, the Bread, and the Living Word

We have clarified an important point: a biological seed does not die when it is planted in the ground. On the contrary, it sprouts and bears fruit precisely because it is alive. A dead seed stays dead.

Therefore, the "death" mentioned in John 12:24 should not be understood as a botanical description. Rather, the grain of wheat serves as a metaphor that points to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The fruit comes from the life that follows, not from the end of life itself.

It is no accident that Christ chose the grain of wheat as His example.

Wheat gives flour; flour gives bread, a symbol of the Word of God.

| *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."*

References:

Deuteronomy 8:3

Matthew 4:4

Luke 4:4

| *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Reference:

John 1:1

| *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*

Reference:

John 1:14

| *"The seed is the word of God."*

Reference:

Luke 8:11

Therefore, the living seed points not only to Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, but also to the life-giving power of the Word of God. Just as a living seed sprouts and bears much fruit when it is sown in good soil, so the Word of God, when it is received in the heart, produces spiritual life, growth, and an abundant harvest.

Supporting references:

- Luke 8:11-15 (the seed as the Word of God bearing fruit)

- Isaiah 55:10-11 (God's Word accomplishes its purpose like the seed and the rain)
- Hebrews 4:12 ("The word of God is living and active")
- 1 Peter 1:23 ("Born again... through the living and abiding word of God")
- Colossians 1:5-6 (the Gospel growing and bearing fruit)

A particularly meaningful biblical chain is:

John 12:24 → Luke 8:11 → John 1:1 → John 1:14 → Hebrews 4:12

This connects:

1. The grain of wheat.
2. The seed as the Word of God.
3. The Word as God.
4. The Word made flesh in Christ.
5. The Word as living and active.

This creates a coherent theological argument centered on life, growth, fruitfulness, and the living Word of God.

Part 10: The Soil: Those Who Hear His Words

In the parable of the Sower, Jesus identifies the soil with the people who hear the message of salvation, who hear His words.

So, to be accurate, Jesus, the grain of wheat, is placed in the soil, that is, He dwells among the people who hear His words. He had to die for them so that they could inherit eternal life.

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Part 11: The Passage in Context

John 12:23

23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much

grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

Part 12: The Voice from Heaven

In the Gospels, the Father speaks from heaven three times during Jesus' earthly ministry:

1. At His baptism, at the beginning of His ministry:

"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Matthew 3:17 (also Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22)

2. At the transfiguration, on the mountain with Peter, James, and John:

"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'"

Matthew 17:5 (also Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; Peter recalls it in 2 Peter 1:17-18)

3. Before the cross, in Jerusalem:

"'Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'"

John 12:28

The three voices mark the beginning of His ministry, a point along the way, and the moment just before His death. Each time, the Father confirms the Son. In John 12, Jesus also tells us why the voice came: "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake" (John 12:30). It was a testimony for the people, at the very hour He spoke of the grain of wheat.

Part 13: Is the Father Boastful in Glorifying His Name?

"Father, glorify Your name."

"I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

1. It is the truth, and we need it. If God's name is His character, then revealing it means showing us who He really is: merciful, gracious, and forgiving. Knowing Him is life itself:

"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

John 17:3

When God reveals His glory, He is not taking something from us. He is giving us something we cannot live without.

2. His glory is His love, so revealing it is an act of giving. At the cross, God was glorified by giving His Son for the world, not by receiving honor:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3:16

3. The Father and the Son do not glorify themselves. They glorify each other. In John 12:28, the Father speaks in answer to the Son's prayer, "Father, glorify Your name." Jesus says:

"If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me."

John 8:54

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You."

John 17:1

The Son seeks the Father's glory, and the Father honors the Son. That is the opposite of boasting.

God Himself tells us what is worth glorying in:

"But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD."

Jeremiah 9:24

Part 14: What It Means to Glorify the Father's Name

In the Bible, God's name is His character. When Moses asked to see God's glory, God answered by proclaiming His name:

"And he said, 'Please, show me Your glory.' Then He said, 'I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you.'"

Exodus 33:18-19

"And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...'"

Exodus 34:6-7

So God's glory is His goodness, and His name is who He is: merciful, gracious, patient, full of goodness and truth, and forgiving.

To glorify the Father's name means to reveal His character so that people can see it and know Him as He truly is. This is what Jesus came to do:

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world."

John 17:6

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father."

John 14:9

John 17:26 reads like an echo of John 12:28, with the same past and future:

"And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

John 17:26

"I have glorified it" means the Father's character had already been shown through the life of Jesus. "I will glorify it again" means it would be revealed once more, and most fully, at the cross, where God's love, mercy, and forgiveness toward sinners were shown as never before.

Part 15: His Peace and His Love

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27

- "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love." John 15:9

- "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16:33

Abilio Brito