

## What Kind of Bread and Fruit of the Vine Are We to Use?

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The first reaction many have to an article on this topic is that it is too picky. After all, they reason, what difference does it make if we use leavened or unleavened bread, wine or grape juice? The important thing is that we take the Lord's Supper. The details are unimportant.

I find it especially odd when I get comments like this from Baptists. Concerning the ordinance of baptism, Baptists are concerned about such "details" as who is baptized and by what mode (immersion only). And this concern is right and proper. So why do so many Baptists balk at the idea of being concerned about the details of the ordinance of communion? It just does not make sense.

Of course, what really matters is whether God is concerned with such details. So, before getting into my main points, I am going to show you that God is concerned with details.

### **A God of Details**

Those who denigrate details have apparently not noticed that God is a God of details. Think of the Creation. From the vast expanse of the universe to a butterfly sitting on a flower, to the scales on that butterfly's wings, right down to the sub-atomic level, God is a God of details. He has woven every minute detail together to work perfectly.

God is the same God of details in the Bible. When God showed Moses the pattern for the tabernacle, He said, "And let them [the Israelites] make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" (Exodus 25:8-9). God said it was to be made "according to all that I shew thee." Moses was not to gloss over or compromise with the details. And there were details, many of them. In the verses and chapters that follow, God told Moses the measurements, the materials things should be made from, what they were to look like, and precisely where things were to be placed.

Were these details important? Of course they were! Would the great Creator God of the universe have given Moses these details if they were not important? One of these details concerned exactly how the Ark of the Covenant was to be carried. When, centuries later, David ignored that detail, it cost a man named Uzzah his life (see 2 Samuel 6).

God also gave details in the Pentateuch for exactly how the children of Israel were to worship Him. When Nadab and Abihu decided they could ignore such details and worship God their own way, "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (see Leviticus 10:1-2). The details are important, and the Bible is full of details.

When I was a young man and had no understanding of the Bible, I tried reading it from cover to cover. I got as far as the details of the sacrifices in the first few chapters of Leviticus. I kept falling asleep trying to read these details, closed the Bible, and gave up reading it for a couple of years. But, do you know, Jesus Christ is in those sacrifices. They picture in intricate detail various aspects of His sacrifice. The details are important.

Maybe you think that such details are just Old Testament stuff; the New Testament is not so detailed. Think again. In fact, read the New Testament again, this time thinking in terms of details. Notice the dates, the timing of events, the numbers, the places, the meaning of the names mentioned, the types of diseases Jesus healed, the context of the miracles, who Jesus was talking to when He said certain things, the place settings in which Jesus said certain things, and so on. These details have meaning, and are part of God's intricate composition.

This small article is, of course, not the place to discuss all of these details. We are concerned here with only two details, the two elements Jesus instituted for the Lord's Supper.

### **The Bread**

The Bible clearly tells us that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper when He and His disciples were gathered to eat the Passover. Matthew 26:17 and 26 tell us, "Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?... And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." At this time in

history, the terms Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread were often used interchangeably. As Baptist scholar A. T. Robertson wrote, "The Passover was expanded to mean the entire feast that followed, and vice versa."

So, as Matthew says, this was the "first day of the feast of unleavened bread." Mark 14:12 agrees: "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?" Luke 22:7-8 gives this account: "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat."

In Exodus 12:18-20, God gives this command concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread."

No leavened bread would have been found in the house in which Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover. Obviously, then, the bread Jesus used had to have been unleavened. But is this just a matter of circumstance, or is the fact that Jesus used unleavened bread to represent His body a detail of importance?

### ***The Symbolism of Unleavened Bread***

In the Old Testament festival, the Passover lamb was killed, roasted, and eaten. This was symbolic of the substitutionary atonement made by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, for the sins of His people. As part of this Old Testament type of the reality that came with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Israelites were to not eat leavened bread for the remainder of the week of this festival. This was a symbol or type of the feast that Christians now live each day in Christ. Paul explains the symbolism when writing to the Corinthian church, which had been allowing a member to live openly in sin: "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the

leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Paul uses the Old Testament symbolism of putting out leaven to tell the Corinthians to put the sinner out of their midst. He likens leavening with malice and wickedness, and unleavened bread with sincerity and truth. He tells them that they are unleavened because "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Christ has taken away our sins. Therefore, we are sinless in God's eyes.

From this, we see that leavening in the Bible usually represents sin. In Matthew 16:6 and 12, we see that Jesus used leavening to represent the wrong and sinful teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. In Leviticus 2:11, we find that leaven was almost entirely forbidden in the offerings: "No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire." These sacrifices represented the sinless Jesus Christ, and it would have been improper to use leavening, which was a type of sin: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28).

### ***The Significance of the Unleavened Bread in the Lord's Supper***

The elements of the Lord's Supper are symbols. Paul says of Jesus' introduction of the bread in the Lord's Supper, "And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). The bread represents Jesus' body broken for us.

I think that no Christian would say that Jesus was sinful. To be a sacrifice acceptable to God, to be our substitutionary atonement, Jesus had to be sinless. He could not pay for our sins if He had His own sins. Speaking of Jesus Christ, our High Priest, Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

We have learned that, in the Bible, leavening typifies sin. Unleavened bread, then, typifies sinlessness. Leavened bread was never used in the Old Testament offerings that typified Christ. And Jesus Himself used unleavened bread when introducing the Lord's Supper.

What, then, must we conclude? Only unleavened bread, picturing the sinless body of our Lord Jesus Christ can properly be used as an element in the Lord's Supper. Although this may sound distastefully strong to some, to use leavened bread in the Lord's Supper is to not discern the sinlessness of the Lord's body, and, since that is inherent of the Lord's body, it is to not discern the Lord's body. Of course, many do this in complete ignorance, and I am certainly not setting myself up as anyone's judge. But once someone has this knowledge, I believe he or she should act on it.

### **The Fruit of the Vine**

Paul's account of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11 gives no indication of what is in the cup. But Mark and Luke note that Jesus called it the fruit of the vine. Mark 14:23-25, for example, says: "And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Matthew 26:27-29 says "this fruit of the vine," instead of "the fruit of the vine": "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Obviously, the fruit of the vine Jesus referred to was liquid, but was it grape juice or wine?

#### ***The Questions***

There are several questions that must be answered to determine whether the fruit of the vine Jesus used was wine or grape juice. These are:

##### **1. Is wine inherently evil?**

There are many who believe that wine that contains alcohol is evil, and Jesus would never have used it. They say that positive references to wine in the Bible are actually referring to non-alcoholic wine, or grape juice. If the Bible contains an exception to what these people say, their argument falls apart.

In Numbers 28 we find such an exception. Here is a positive reference to wine that, without any doubt, must contain alcohol. It is called "strong wine." In verses 2-8 we read, "And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD."

The Hebrew word translated "strong wine" here is *shekar*. The *Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Lexicon* says this word means, "strong drink, intoxicating drink, fermented or intoxicating liquor." Yet, it was wine. We know this because this sacrifice is referring to the same sacrifice described in Exodus 29:38-41. But in that text, the word used for wine is the ordinary Hebrew word for wine, *yayin*. This is the same word that so many advocates for grape juice say means unfermented, nonalcoholic wine when used in a positive sense. But, obviously, it cannot mean this in this text because its parallel text calls it "strong wine." The word *yayin* comes from a root word meaning to effervesce because of the bubbling that takes place during fermentation. So, even the word *yayin* implies fermented wine, not unfermented grape juice.

By the way, this sacrifice was not just occasional. It was the continual burnt offering, offered every day in the morning and again in the evening. As should be obvious, the lamb pictured the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. And the wine poured out—the strong, fermented, alcoholic wine—pictured His blood shed for us. Here is proof from the Bible that alcoholic, fermented wine pictured the blood of Jesus Christ. And think about this: God did not give the Israelites a choice about the liquid that was to be poured out in the sacrifice. It had to be strong wine. If the priests performing the sacrifice had chosen to use grape juice instead, they would have been guilty of disobeying God. God would have rejected the offering, and He may have punished them for their innovation as He had Nadab and Abihu.

It is significant that, when Jesus, referring to the contents of the cup at the Lord's Supper, said it was "shed for many," all three synoptic Gospels use the Greek word *ekchunō* for the word translated in the King James Version as "shed." This word can also be translated "poured out," just as the strong wine in the daily sacrifice was poured out.

This example devastates the position that the Bible never mentions alcoholic wine positively. It also shows that there is good reason to believe that other positive references to wine (Heb. *yayin*), including those where it is used in other offerings picturing Jesus' sacrifice, also refer to fermented, alcoholic wine. Wine is not inherently evil; only its misuse is a sin.

## 2. Could the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper have been grape juice?

As mentioned earlier, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover. This feast was celebrated in the first month, sometimes called Abib and sometimes Nisan. Hebrew months do not exactly correspond to the months on our calendar, but Abib/Nisan occurs in the spring, around March–April. Grapes are harvested in summer. At the time Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, no fresh grape juice would have been available.

But could not grape juice from the last summer's harvest have been preserved until spring?

The proponents of grape juice for the Lord's Supper insist that the ancients knew how to preserve grape juice, but the evidence they present is flawed. There is often a reference to the Roman statesman, Cato, saying in *De Agri Cultura* CXX, "If you wish to have must [grape-juice] all year, put grape-juice in an amphora and seal the cork with pitch; sink it in a fishpond. After 30 days take it out. It will be grape-juice for a whole year." But Cato's *De Agri Cultura* is not the inerrant Bible. In CLX of this same book, we can read how to cure any dislocation: "Any kind of dislocation may be cured by the following charm: Take a green reed four or five feet long and split it down the middle, and let two men hold it to your hips. Begin to chant: '*motas uaeta daries dardares astataries dissunapiter*' and continue until they meet. Brandish a knife over them, and when the reeds meet so that one touches the other, grasp with the hand and cut right and left. If the pieces are applied to the dislocation or the fracture, it will heal. And none the less chant every day, and, in the case of a dislocation, in this manner, if you

wish: *'huat haut haut istasis tarsis ardannabou dannaustra.'*" (See [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cato/De\\_Agricultura/L\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cato/De_Agricultura/L*.html).) Is Cato truly a source to be trusted?

Several other ancient methods of being able to have unfermented grape juice are usually given, such as making juice from raisins or from boiled-down concentrate. Perhaps some of these methods would have some success. But does the Bible give us any reason to believe that Jesus was using raisin juice or reconstituted concentrate or a drink made from any of the other methods? No. As we have already seen, wine—even strong wine—is what pictured Jesus' blood in the Old Testament sacrifices. The extra-biblical data cited by the advocates of grape juice for the Lord's Supper simply cannot stand up to the plain biblical evidence.

Critics also say that grape juice, and not wine, must be the fruit of the vine because wine is too many steps distant from the vine to be called its fruit. These critics should then criticize God for inspiring Psalm 104:14-15, which says, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Does bread come directly from the earth? No. There are several steps of processing by humans between the grain harvest and the loaf of bread. Yet, these verses say that food and wine and oil and bread are brought forth out of the earth. If God can say this in Psalm 104, why cannot Jesus call wine the fruit of the vine?

Deuteronomy 7:13 is similar: "And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee." Notice that wine is specifically listed as one of the fruits of the land.

For some reason, the proponents of grape juice in the Lord's Supper usually assert that the bottled wines available today are much stronger than the fermented wines of Bible times. They usually wind up saying or hinting that modern wines are fortified. The facts about wine are easily found both in print and electronically (on the Internet, for example, see the Wikipedia articles on wine [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wine>] and fortified wine [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortified\\_wine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortified_wine)]), but some people have continued to perpetuate this myth. Fortified wines are wines to which

additional alcohol has been added. This raises the level of alcohol in these wines to 14 to 20%. These are, however, specialty dessert, liqueur, apéritif, or appetizer wines. These include sherry, port, marsala, Madeira, vermouth, and muscatel, as well as such cheap wines as Ripple and Thunderbird. But the vast majority of wines, the common red and white table wines, are naturally fermented without fortification. Their alcohol content is from 8 to 15.5%, but is usually in the range of 10 to 14%. Since these wines are naturally fermented, they are not much different from the naturally fermented wines that have been made for millennia.

Objections to the use of wine in the Lord's Supper are almost unheard of before the nineteenth century. Dr. Benjamin Rush (b. 1745 d. 1813), a Founding Father of the United States, might be said to be the father of the American temperance movement. Rush had many ideas that we would never accept today. For example: He advocated bleeding for almost any illness long after it had lost popularity with other physicians, he concocted laxatives that he made with more than 50% mercury, his favorite method of psychiatric treatment was to tie the patient to a board and rapidly spin it until the blood went to the head, and he believed that being black was a hereditary illness that he called "negroidism." But he had one idea that caught on. Rush started the idea of addiction, and he believed that abstinence is the only cure for addiction. Influenced by Rush's ideas, temperance movements began to spring up around the United States.

The temperance movement was especially popular among feminists and Methodists (feminists, because they saw women as the victims of violence and broken homes caused by drunkenness; Methodists, because they saw alcohol as a temptation hindering people from attaining what they call "entire sanctification" or "Christian perfection," a completely unbiblical idea).

One such Methodist was Thomas Bramwell Welch (b. 1825 d. 1903). Welch was a physician and dentist in Vineland, New Jersey. He was also the communion steward in his church. In 1869, Welch developed what he called "unfermented sacramental wine," and was, in fact, the first person to successfully pasteurize grape juice for commercial purposes. His work was based on that of Louis Pasteur (b. 1822 d. 1895).

Four years before, Pasteur had found that wine fermentation was the result of the activity of yeast (before this, it had been thought to be the result of purely chemical processes). He showed that it was the

yeast microorganisms that collected on the skin of the grapes as they grew that then caused the fermentation when the grapes were crushed. If the grapes were grown under wraps, or if the juice was drawn out of the skins with sterile needles, the juice would not ferment. Also, if juice that had been sterilized with heat was put into a flask with a swan-shaped neck, so that air could get to it, but not dust, it would not ferment. But when the flask was tipped so that some of the juice went into the neck and picked up some dust and was then allowed to drip back into the flask, the juice began to ferment (see the article <http://pyramid.spd.louisville.edu/~eri/fos/interest1.html> ).

What Welch did was to quickly heat the grape juice to kill the yeast cells in it, and then vacuum bottle it to prevent any more yeast from getting to it. His son, Charles E. Welch, who was also a dentist, successfully promoted "Dr. Welch's Unfermented Wine" to other churches. Charles promoted the product at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. He is quoted as saying that unfermented grape juice was born "out of a passion to serve God by helping his church to give its communion 'the fruit of the vine' instead of the 'cup of devils'" (Michael M. Homan and Mark A. Gstohl, "Jesus the Teetotaler: How Dr. Welch put the Lord on the wagon," *Bible Review* 18 [April 2002] 29). Besides keeping the "cup of devils" out of the church, the Welches may have had additional motives. Their home town of Vineland, New Jersey, had been started as a utopian community by Charles K. Landis, who outlawed the sale of alcohol but encouraged grape farming. But what to do with all the grapes? Thank you, Dr. Welch, for inventing "unfermented sacramental wine"! Eventually, Welch's Grape Juice was also sold as a general beverage.

One reason I point out this information about Rush, Pasteur, Welch, and the temperance movement is to show that the questioning of wine in the Lord's Supper is indeed the result of an eighteenth-century medical theory (addiction and, hence, abstinence) and a nineteenth century social movement, is not soundly based on the Bible, and was only able to be put into practice because of scientific advancements in microbiology. I will address another reason below.

### *3. Which is purer, grape juice or wine, and is grape juice a proper picture of Jesus' blood?*

Advocates of grape juice in the Lord's Supper maintain that, because it does not contain yeast, grape juice is purer than wine and, therefore, is the more fitting symbol of our Savior's blood in the Lord's Supper. Is this so?

Before continuing, I want to say that I do not know of anything in the Bible that indicates that the presence or absence of yeast in the fruit of the vine Jesus used is of any significance. God told the Israelites to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He said nothing of unleavened drink, and the Bible does not even say that a drink can be considered leavened or unleavened. Remember, there is no real sin inherent in yeast. We are dealing with symbols that God instituted. One such symbol is leavened bread. Leavened bread symbolized the sin in our lives. Unleavened bread indicated sinlessness. In Bible times, bread was made by the sourdough method, so leavening was not thought of apart from its effects upon dough and bread. The children of Israel knew nothing of yeast, which, by the way, is a microbe that is all around us all the time. Since God did not introduce symbols of leavened or unleavened drink, then we need not be concerned about these nonexistent symbols. A drink with yeast in it would have no symbolic significance because God did not give us a symbol concerning it. Nevertheless, because some people on both sides of the issue think the question is significant, I will address it.

The information I gave above about the work of Pasteur and Welch show that the idea that grape juice is purer than wine is wrong. Yeast cells are in the air all the time and settle on the skins of grapes as they grow on the vine. Freshly squeezed grape juice has these yeast cells in it. When the grape juice is pasteurized and bottled, the yeast cells are killed. So, grape juice is not inherently pure, but when it is bottled, it is sterile.

What about wine? Again, when the grapes are crushed, the yeast enters the juice. The yeast then causes fermentation. Alcohol is produced as a result of this fermentation. But when the alcohol content reaches about 10 to 14%, the yeast cells are killed and the fermentation stops. The dead yeast cells settle to the bottom as lees, and the clear wine is drawn off and bottled. If there were still live yeast in bottles of table wine, the bottles would blow their corks because of the gases given off in fermentation.

So, the question of whether grape juice or wine is pure is answered as follows: Unpasteurized, unfermented grape juice contains yeast. The same is true of juice made from raisins as raisins also have yeast on their skins. On the other hand, pasteurized grape juice and wine are both free of live yeast, and are, in that sense, pure.

What is most important, however, is what the Bible says or does not say. God never forbade the use of wine during the Passover season. If God considered it to be leavened with yeast, it would have been forbidden at this time. But the Bible does not forbid it. Wine was a perfectly acceptable drink during this festival and, hence, has God's stamp of approval.

Although, as I pointed out, the question may not even have real significance, we have now settled that grape juice and wine are both "pure." Next, we will ask which of them properly pictures Jesus' blood. The answer to this question is found in the Bible.

I have already pointed out that the drink offering of Numbers 28 and Exodus 29 pictured Jesus' shed blood and was undoubtedly fermented, alcoholic wine. In Numbers 28, God specifically orders it to be "strong wine." God also commanded wine to be used in other offerings (see, for example, Leviticus 23:13 and Numbers 15:5, 7, and 10), where it also pictures the blood of Jesus.

I think we would all agree that the color of the fruit of the vine in the cup of the New Testament in Jesus' blood was red. No other color would do in representing Jesus' blood. But is color the only link between the liquid and Jesus' blood?

Read Isaiah 25:6-8: "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it."

The definition of "lees" in *Unger's Bible Dictionary* says, "'Wines on the lees' are wines which have been left to stand upon their lees after the first fermentation is over, which have thus thoroughly fermented, and have been kept a long time, and which are then filtered before drinking; hence wine both strong and clear; in which case it was used figuratively for the full enjoyment of blessedness in the perfected kingdom of God (Isa. 25:6)."

Earlier, in another connection, I quoted Psalm 104:14-15. It says, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that

maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Can we not see here the oil representative of the Holy Spirit, the bread a figure of the body of Christ, and the blood symbolic of the blood of Christ? As wine in moderation physically gladdens the heart (I am not at all here speaking of drunkenness), so the blood of Christ shed for our sins is to gladden us.

We know that King David was a type of Jesus Christ. At David's coronation, the celebration included "...wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel" (1 Chronicles 12:40).

In John 6:53-55, Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

In John 2, we read of the marriage in Cana of Galilee. A full explanation of this, the first of Jesus' miracles, would need its own article. But I want to point out that it was a marriage feast, and the guests attended by special invitation (vv. 1-2). This should remind us of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), which is attended only by God's elect. The wine at the marriage in Cana was not sufficient; they needed wine (John 2:3). The elect need Christ's sacrifice, His shed blood. Jesus orders that waterpots—significantly, the type used for purifying—be filled with water. They are filled to the brim, indicating sufficiency. He tells the servants to draw some out of the pots and bring it to the governor of the feast. It is now wine. The Greek word *oinos*, which means wine, is used. Water could not picture what was needed here. The strength of wine, picturing the powerful blood of Jesus Christ, was needed. The governor of the feast then calls the bridegroom and tells him, "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now" (v. 10). The Old Testament types of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ could not really remove sin; they were inferior to the real thing, the blood of Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 10:4, 14). The good wine, the blood of Jesus, came after the Old Testament types and shadows.

Those who argue that Jesus would not have made the water into wine because so much wine would have made the guests drunk are arguing from ignorance. The Bible does not say how many guests were there,

and it does not say how long the feast lasted. Such feasts could sometimes last for days.

I do not want to belabor this point, and I do not want to turn this article into an article on what the Bible says about the proper use of wine. That is another topic. But if you will search the Scriptures, you will find wine used in connection with joy, gladness, abundance, prosperity, and communion. The very fact of its potency makes it the proper symbol of the power of Jesus' blood to cleanse us from unrighteousness. Calvin, in his Genevan Catechism, wrote in answer to why the blood of the Lord is figured by wine, "As by wine the hearts of men are gladdened, their strength recruited, and the whole man strengthened, so by the blood of our Lord the same benefits are received by our souls." To those who still want to do away with wine in the Lord's Supper because of its potential abuse, I'll quote Luther: "Do not suppose that abuses are eliminated by destroying the object that is abused. Men can go wrong with wine and women. Shall we prohibit and abolish women?" (as quoted on this page: <http://www.allsaintspresbyterian.com/WineStudy.htm>). Even better, I will point you to 1 Corinthians 11:18-34. Paul heard that some in the Corinthian church were getting drunk when the church came together to eat the Lord's Supper. He chastens them for their sinful behavior, but he does not tell them to stop using wine.

### ***But What About the Alcoholic in the Church?***

When this topic is discussed, the question will always be asked, What about the alcoholic in the church? Should we not use grape juice for his sake?

Certainly, we should be concerned about every member of the church. Nonetheless, this difficulty is based on an entirely unbiblical view of the condition of the person in question.

The Bible knows nothing of alcoholism. It never says how to treat alcoholics and never even uses the word. Why? Because alcoholism is a relatively modern invention (the word was coined in 1860) that is in complete contrast with the biblical view of drunkenness.

As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Benjamin Rush came up with the ideas of addiction and of abstinence as the proper treatment. He considered excessive drinking to be a disease. Today, although there is still debate, alcoholism is generally seen as an addiction and often as a disease. The causes that are suggested for the disease are a chemical

or nutritional imbalance, a neurological problem, a genetic predisposition, or a combination of one or more of these. Various and sundry treatments have been devised for this disease. Almost all of them involve complete abstinence. By calling excessive drinking an addiction and a disease, modern medicine has placed it beyond our moral control.

Almost as if the world were trying to make a *reductio ad absurdum* argument (disproof of a proposition by showing an absurdity to which it leads when carried to its logical conclusion), we now hear of food addiction, sexual addiction, violence addiction, speed addiction, video game addiction, text messaging addiction, and so on. These are promoted as being beyond the person's moral control. (Interestingly, it is the therapists who "treat" these "addictions" who lobby their professional associations and the insurance companies to get them to recognize them as official "addictions" and pay for their treatment!)

In contrast, the Bible speaks of sin and teaches that its roots are in our depraved, evil hearts. Instead of the disease of alcoholism, the Bible talks about drunkenness and condemns it as sin. It is not beyond our control, especially when we call upon the power of the Lord to help us (Philippians 4:13). And, of course, we should help each other. The church should be supportive of those who are weak, but not at the cost of changing the elements of the Lord's Supper.

Romans 14 is often given as grounds for using grape juice for the Lord's Supper. In this chapter, Paul instructs us how not to judge and offend a weak brother. In verse 20, he says, "All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence." Are we to then say that the symbol Christ instituted for the Lord's Supper is evil because someone is offended by it? God forbid! The problem with using Romans 14 in this case is that Paul is not addressing the specific issue of the ordinances.

Since I have already in this article introduced the idea of *reductio ad absurdum*, let us try it here. Suppose a professing believer had a phobia to being dunked under water? Should the church change the ordinance of baptism for him, even for just one instance? Suppose there is a brother who will not drink not only wine, but also grape juice? He says it looks too much like wine and might send him on a binge. Now what? Do we substitute cherry Kool-Aid? But that, too, looks like wine. Are we to consider using water instead? Where do we draw the line? As this entire article has shown, we draw the line right at the beginning and dare not change the symbols Jesus gave us.

We worry about offending the so-called "alcoholic," but why do some churches not care about offending those who want to do as Jesus told us? We have our priorities topsy-turvy if we think that changing the elements of the Lord's Supper is the way to help a weak brother. Doing so does nothing to strengthen the brother while it introduces unbiblical innovation in worship. I sometimes wonder what would happen in these churches if a member came to understand the proper elements of the Lord's Supper and insisted that those elements alone be used. Would he be put out of the church? How could the church justify doing so if they justify using grape juice on the grounds of not offending one or two so-called "alcoholics"? How do such churches choose whom to give in to? Would they put Jesus out if He insisted on the proper elements? Have they done so already?

When asked what to do when someone could not take the wine in the Lord's Supper, Martin Luther replied that the person should not take communion at all "in order that no innovation may be made or introduced." I agree because the Bible agrees. Someone who cannot partake of the wine in the Lord's Supper lacks faith. Changing the element does him no favor; it only keeps him in his weakness. Paul gives us instructions in 1 Corinthians 11: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (verses 27-30).

If someone is so lacking in faith that he cannot take a tiny amount of wine that symbolizes the blood of His Savior who died to give him the precious gifts of forgiveness and eternal life, that person ought not take the Lord's Supper at all. Instead of changing what the Lord instituted, we ought to pray for and with the weak brother, hold him accountable for his actions, and, as long as he allows the church's help and stays out of gross sin, the members should encourage and help him as a brother. But if he continues to fall into drunkenness, he needs church discipline. Also, if someone who is known to have had a problem with drunkenness takes the Lord's Supper, someone should stay with him the rest of the day to make sure he does not fall into sin.

We are indeed in great danger when we think that we know better than our Lord Jesus Christ, who knew men and their weaknesses

better than any of us, and who instituted the Lord's Supper with wine. To do so makes us the epitome of legalistic pharisaism, and sets us up as judging God Himself! Are we more moral than He? Whether it has been through ignorance or not, it is time to repent of such arrogance and return to the elements of the Lord's Supper as they were given to us by the Lord.