

What Is the “Fruit of the Vine?”

The question in our title does not have reference to “what is meant by” or “what does the fruit of the vine symbolize.” We will assume that every Christian who may read this tract will understand the institution and observance of the Lord’s Supper upon the first day of every week. The question of our study centers upon the liquid that is imbibed when we partake of “the cup which we bless” (and drink, 1 Corinthians 10:16). Our interest comes down to this question: does it really matter what we drink when we drink the cup of the Lord? By this we mean, should the “fruit of the vine” be juice or alcoholic wine?

Brethren, let us answer this question forthrightly and follow the answer with our reasons for so concluding. We **ought not** to use fermented, alcoholic wine as the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper. There is something incongruous in remembering the blood that was shed to purchase us for God (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18,19) by using that which the Bible teaches is sinful to drink even “socially.”

Now, we do not have the space to

go into all the questions regarding the use of beverage alcohol, but suffice it to say just here that those who contend for it (and especially its use on the Lord’s table) can make no sound argument for it from Scripture. Thus, we are convinced that not only is its use not expedient, it is not authorized in any fashion.

Antitype of Passover

Let us here know and understand that, as the Passover was a type of the sacrifice of Christ, there was absolutely **no wine** associated with its institution or observance until many, many centuries after this feast was commanded by God. An interesting reference to Christ as our Passover is made in First Corinthians five. The context deals with church discipline and the matter of a brother who was committing the grossest of fornication (see verse 1). Paul’s prescription was for the church to remove that sinning brother, thus remove that “leaven.” His “leaven” would be a bad influence upon the Lord’s people. Why remove it? So that they could be a “new (clean) lump.” We as Christians are to be “unleavened” (free from outside influences and

impurities). Therefore, leaven is seen as unwanted pollutants. Why would God forbid a leavening influence in the church (the Body of Christ) and yet permit it in the bread (the body of Christ) or the fruit of the vine (the blood of Christ) as we “keep the feast” in the unleavened manner of sincerity and truth (verse 8)? Since the Jews today use wine in their “Passover” feast, we must not conclude that we may do so in “our Passover” remembrance of Christ. Such a conclusion is without any foundation whatsoever.

“Wine” Never Used

Again, when we look to the New Testament, the advocates for fermented wine on the Lord’s table find no solace. There are two main Greek words translated “wine.” The first (oinos) is the usual word for intoxicating wine. The other (gleukos) is a word found only one time (Acts 2:13) and referred to fresh-squeezed juice. It was sometimes called “new wine.” To say that this must have been an intoxicant from Acts 2:13 misses the point of why the accusation was hurled at the apostles. Notice what was going on: “*But*

others *MOCKING* said, *They are filled with new wine (gleukos)*” (Acts 2:13). The behavior of the apostles was so strikingly different from any ordinary drunkenness precipitated the crowd in saying they were filled with “new wine,” something impossible upon which to become drunk.

“Offspring” of the Vine

Perhaps the most convincing evidence is our Lord’s “total abstinence” (so to speak) in using **any** words that may become misconstrued in meaning with reference to His memorial supper. He did not even allude to “wine,” fermented or not! He simply made mention of “the fruit of the vine.” It is more than interesting to note that the word He used for “fruit” is not the ordinary word that refers to produce. Rather, He used a word also translated “offspring,” as was used when He rebuked the unbelieving people of His day saying, “*Ye OFFSPRING of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (Matthew 12:34).* And again, “*Ye serpents, ye OFFSPRING of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of*

hell?” (Matthew 23:33). This word is related to “that which is generated or begotten.” The only thing from a vine that is generated or begotten is its berry or the juice from its berry—*not alcohol*. That is something that is produced as a by-product through a process.

Therefore we conclude that the use of fermented, intoxicating wine on the Lord’s table is not authorized and is therefore sinful for these reasons:

- ▶ there is no precedence for its use in the Old Testament;
- ▶ neither word for “wine” in the New Testament is associated with the Lord’s Supper; and
- ▶ the “fruit” of the vine is specifically that which is generated on the vine (the berry), not alcohol.

Brethren, let us not pollute the Supper with any form of leaven (or yeast) in the bread which we eat nor in the juice which we drink. ■

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