

Why “Wine in the Bible”?

Occasionally we have visitors to our congregation who are surprised to find that we use real wine in the Lord's Supper. Although the wine is diluted with water, the thought that a Christian would ever drink wine, if only in the Lord's Supper, offends some people. This purpose of this document is to explain the Bible's teaching on wine and its use in the Lord's Supper.

To be clear, the author does not drink alcoholic beverages at any time except for the tablespoon or so of highly diluted wine used at the Lord's Supper. This document should not be used to condone the drinking of alcohol or to argue against the policies of any Pastor or Church leader who commands a total abstinence from alcoholic beverages.

About the Author



Mike Prevost is 36 years old and has been serving the Lord for 19 years. His most important obligations are being a good husband to his wonderful wife Maleah and a good father to his three children Drew, Mikayla and Joshua.

Brother Prevost is also the adult Sunday school teacher at Bethel Apostolic Church in Huntsville, Alabama, where he teaches from the Word of God each Sunday morning. His Pastor is David Brown.

Brother Prevost can be reached by email at “mprevost@DoActs238.org”. He can also be found on the Apostolic Doctrine Discussion group at “<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/apostolicdoctrine>”.

Postal correspondence may be sent to the Church at the following address.

Bethel Apostolic Church
P.O. Box 7231
Huntsville, AL 35807

Wine in the Bible



Mike R. Prevost

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the left side and a straight edge on the right. There is no text or other markings on the page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has rounded corners on the left side and a straight edge on the right. There is no text or other markings on the page.

Table of Contents

Wine in the Bible



Mike R. Prevost

Table of Contents	i
Forward	ii
Preface.....	iii
Introduction	1
Being Led by the Spirit.....	2
Ancient Wine Production	5
Harvest.....	5
The Wine Press	6
Fermentation	7
Wine in the Old Testament.....	9
Old Testament Words for Wine	9
YAYIN.....	11
TIYROSH.....	14
SHEKAR.....	16
Use of Wine in the Old Testament.....	18
Prohibitions against Wine in the Old Testament.....	22
Warnings against Drunkenness in the Old Testament.....	25
Wine in the New Testament	28
New Testament Words for Wine.....	28
OINOS.....	28
GLEUKOS	29
SIKERA.....	31
Use of Wine in the New Testament.....	31
Dilution of Wine	31
Wine in the Parables of Jesus	33
Wine Used in Festive Occasions.....	35
Wine Used Medicinally	37
Did Jesus drink Wine?	39
Warnings Against Drunkenness in the New Testament	40
Wine in the Lord's Supper.....	46
What was in the Cup?	46
Wine or Grape Juice?.....	46
Water and Wine.....	47
Lord's Supper and Passover.....	48
Evidence from the Gospels and the Law	49
Historical References Regarding the Passover.....	52
Why Did Jesus Say "Fruit of the Vine"?	54
The "Cup After Supper"	56
The "Cup of Blessing" in the Early Church.....	57
Must We Use Wine in the Lord's Supper Today?.....	58
Following the Example of Scripture	59
The Symbolism of Wine.....	60
The History of Grape Juice in the Lord's Supper	65
Does Using Grape Juice Invalidate the Lord's Supper?.....	66
Should Christians Drink Wine Today?.....	67
Conclusion.....	68
References	69

Forward

By Pastor David A. Brown

Sincere Christian leaders have come to a wide diversity of conclusions regarding the meaning of the Lord's Supper and the particulars of its observance. Yet, when rightly divided, the Bible provides a single, consistent perspective. There is one God and one invariable truth. That truth is knowable to those who will search it out because God's Spirit leads us into all truth. The challenge, therefore, to each of us is to interpret the Word of God, prayerfully and accurately.

While this study regarding wine in the Bible addresses only a narrow aspect of the Lord's Supper, it effectively fills a void in Christian literature. The author has superbly researched Biblical and extra-Biblical resources and compiled a valuable tool that effectively cuts through controversy, methodically outlines the issues at hand, and persuasively reaches sound conclusions.

A software engineer by trade, Mike Prevost brings sound logic and disciplined methodology to every Bible study. His teaching has been a wonderful blessing to our congregation for many years now. He is a family man, a churchman, and a good friend, principled and committed to the pursuit of truth.

You will most certainly find this book to be a great addition to your reference library.

Enjoy!

David A. Brown, Pastor
Bethel Apostolic Church
Huntsville, Alabama
www.DoActs238.org

Preface

By the Author

Why “Wine in the Bible”?

Occasionally we have visitors to our congregation who are surprised to find that we use real wine in the Lord's Supper. Although the wine is diluted with water, the thought that a Christian would ever drink wine, if only in the Lord's Supper, offends some people. This purpose of this document is to explain the Bible's teaching on wine and its use in the Lord's Supper.

To be clear, the author does not drink alcoholic beverages at any time except for the tablespoon or so of highly diluted wine used at the Lord's Supper. This document should not be used to condone the drinking of alcohol or to argue against the policies of any Pastor or Church leader who commands a total abstinence from alcoholic beverages.

Many Thanks

This document was intended to be a small article, but it grew into a larger work. It underwent a review process lasting several months that involved many people including my wife, Maleah Prevost, my Pastor, David A. Brown, and many well respected ministers in different parts of the country. I am grateful for the time, effort and detailed consideration given by each of the reviewers. The feedback received during the review process was invaluable and has served to greatly improve the quality of this work.

Introduction

Do the scriptures command a total prohibition against wine and other alcoholic beverages? This topic has been of great controversy among God's people throughout the years, especially in the context of the Lord's Supper. For this reason, it is recognized that many will not agree with the position set forth here.

Many Christians, including the author, have chosen to forgo all alcoholic beverages in order to present a stronger witness for Christ in these last days. But should we use the scriptures to support this abstinence? Should we defend our abstinence by trying to prove that God has made a firm prohibition against wine in the scriptures? Should we abstain from wine even in the Lord's Supper?

The purpose of this document is to examine what the Bible says on the topic of wine while focusing on its use in the Lord's Supper. The author shows that

- contrary to modern beliefs, there is no firm prohibition against wine in the Bible,
- the Bible does include grave warnings and regulations against habitual drunkenness,
- wine was originally used in the cup of the Lord's Supper, and
- we should still use wine in the Lord's Supper today.

A large part of this document focuses on whether or not there is a strict prohibition against wine in the scriptures. This is because modern prohibitionism is by far the most frequently given reason for the use of substances other than wine in the Lord's Supper.

Being Led by the Spirit

As times, cultures and technologies change, so do the various taboos of the Church. This is necessary, good and ordained of God. Consider Mat 16:13-19.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (14) And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. (15) He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. (17) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (18) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (19) And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mat 16:13-19)

This is a fascinating scripture with far reaching implications and one that is very pertinent to this study. Here, Christ gave Peter authority in the Church. He later gave the same authority to the rest of the twelve disciples in the context of Church government (Mat 18:15-18). In both instances, the specific authority given is that of “*binding*” and “*loosing*”. Please understand that the meaning here is not “binding the devil” as is often taught. “*Binding*” and “*loosing*” were Jewish terms for the making of rules. To “*bind*” meant to restrict a certain behavior or to command that something must be done in a prescribed way. To “*loose*” meant to declare that a given activity is permitted, optional, or up to individual discretion.

This is illustrated again in Christ's rebuke to the Pharisees in Mat 23:2-4:

"Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: (3) All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. (4) For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Mat 23:2-4)

Notice that Christ gave authority to Peter on the basis of spiritual discernment: "*for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven*". Christ rebuked the Pharisees because they were proud, self-righteous hypocrites and because they were "*many masters*" and not the servants they should have been (see Mat 23:5-12).

So we see that God has placed the leadership of the Church in "*Moses seat*" with the authority to "*bind*" and "*loose*" and that God recognizes the rules and prohibitions they institute. In every age and every culture, the Church needs leaders with spiritual discernment to regulate the behavior of the Church so that the light of God's righteousness, holiness, and love may shine forth as brightly as possible.

Therefore, the Church's rules on wine today are not necessarily the same as they were in the first century. We are equally bound to obey our Church leaders, but the direction we get from those leaders may not be the same throughout time. Even in our time, the Church's rules governing various behaviors are different in various parts of the world.

Serious problems can arise, however, when we attempt to justify an otherwise appropriate restriction by forcing the scriptures to say something that they do not say. We should never try to make the scriptures say anything except what they say. The word of God does not change with time. "*Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*" (Psa 119:89). However,

"the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Thank God for a ministry that is busy perfecting the saints by applying the word of God to all cultures and all times according to the leading of the Spirit!

Ancient Wine Production

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. (21) For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Pet 1:20-21)

2 Pet 1:20-21 is the “first” principle of Bible study: “*knowing this first*”. The message of the scriptures is not of “*any private interpretation*”, meaning that there is not one meaning for you and another for me. Also, there is not one meaning for the original audience, and a different meaning for us today. That is, the message of scripture is the same today as when it was written. This fact forces us to consider the historical and cultural context of the people to whom a given passage of scripture was written. It is for this reason we will now give some consideration to the history of wine making and usage in ancient Palestine.

Harvest

In Israel, the grape harvest is in the late summer or early fall, often starting in June.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Barley		X							
Vetch		X	X						
Peas		X	X						
Lentils		X	X						
Oats			X						
Wheat			X						
Chickpeas				X					
Grapes				X	X	X	X		
Sesame					X				
Flax					X				
Millet					X	X			
Figs						X	X		
Pomegranates						X	X		
Olives							X	X	X

Figure 1: Harvest times for various crops in Israel

That the wine harvest is in the summer is substantiated in scripture in Jer 40:10 which says “... *gather ye wine, and*

summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels ...” (Jer 40:10, see also verse 12).

The grape harvest is a joyous occasion when God’s blessings are recognized and celebrated. The grapes are allowed to remain on the vine until they are at a peak of ripeness and flavor. When that time arrives, they must be picked immediately or the heat of the Palestinian climate will cause them to rot on the vine. At this time, the families erect booths, or tents, in the vineyard and work from dawn to dusk gathering grapes. The clusters are carefully cut from the vines and carried in baskets to the wine press.

The Wine Press

The wine press was formed of two chambers which were usually hewn out of the bedrock. One chamber was elevated higher than the other and connected to the lower chamber by a channel or a pipe. In the upper chamber, the grapes were piled up in heaps. The workers crushed the grapes with their feet by walking on them. This “treading the winepress” is often spoken of in scripture as symbolic of the judgment of God crushing the unrighteous (Isa 63:3, Lam 1:15, Rev 14:20). The grape harvest, however, was a joyful celebration of God’s blessing. “Treading the winepress” was more like dancing in the winepress. After the grapes were trodden by foot, the remains of the grapes were pressed with beams of wood laden with the weight of stones so that all the grape juice was extracted. The juice of the grapes, technically called “must”, flowed through a channel or pipe from the upper chamber of the winepress into the lower chamber and was left there for the initial fermentation.

It is interesting to note that while the grapes were being heaped up, before they were trodden or pressed, the weight of the grapes would crush the grapes on the bottom of the heap. This initial flow of juice was deemed of much higher quality than that which was trodden or pressed. This initial “voluntary”

flow of juice was carefully separated from the trodden and pressed juices. It is believed that the term “sweet wine” refers to the wine produced from this initial flow of juice. One reason for this is that the ripest grapes, which contain more natural sugar, are more easily crushed. (Isa 49:26, Amo 9:13, Mic 6:15, and Acts 2:13).

Fermentation

In modern times, we know that yeast, a form of bacteria, actually causes the fermentation. Grapes naturally have a milky dusting of yeast on the outside of the grape skin. No external supply of yeast is necessary for fermentation. When the grape is crushed, the yeast comes in contact with the sweet grape juice. The yeasts immediately begin to consume the sugar in the grape juice and turn it into alcohol and carbon dioxide gas. As the yeasts rapidly reproduce, the fermentation process accelerates and becomes very noticeable. The production of carbon dioxide gas causes the bubbling or foaming that is the tell-tale sign that the fermentation process is underway. Eventually, the yeasts die either because they consume all the sugar or because they are killed by the antiseptic properties of the alcohol they produce. When the wine is finished, all the yeast is dead. The dead yeast, along with small fragments of the grape skins settles to the bottom of the vessel and are called the “dregs”. The dregs are usually filtered out and discarded before the wine is used.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE) states

“In the climate of Palestine fermentation begins almost immediately, frequently on the same day for juice pressed out in the morning, but never later than the next day. At first a slight foam appears on the surface of the liquid, and from that moment, according to Jewish tradition, it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Maaseroth* 1 7). The action rapidly becomes more violent, and while it is in progress the liquid must be

kept in jars or in a vat, for it would burst even the newest and strongest of wine-skins (Job 32:19). Within about a week this violent fermentation subsides, and the wine is transferred to other jars or strong wine-skins (Mar 2:22 and parallel's), in which it undergoes the secondary fermentation. At the bottom of the receptacles collects the heavier matter or “lees” (*shemarim*, Psa 75:8 (“dregs”); Jer 48:11; Zep 1:12 in Isa 25:6 the word is used for the wine as well), from which the “wines on the lees” gather strength and flavor. At the end of 40 days it was regarded as properly “wine” and could be offered as a drink offering (*Edhuyyoth* 6 1).” (ISBE, “Wine, Winepress”)

Wine in the Old Testament

Old Testament Words for Wine

There are many Hebrew words corresponding to the word “wine” in the Old Testament. To be thorough, the following quotation from *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* by M.G. Easton is included to briefly explain each Hebrew word related to wine. The most important of these are examined in greater detail.

- “(1.) *Ashishah* (2Sa 6:19; 1Ch 16:3; Son 2:5; Hos 3:1), which, however, rather denotes a solid cake of pressed grapes, or, as in the Revised Version, a cake of raisins.
- (2.) *‘Asis*, “sweet wine,” or “new wine,” the product of the same year (Son 8:2; Isa 49:26; Joe 1:5; Joe 3:18; Amo 9:13), from a root meaning “to tread,” hence juice trodden out or pressed out, thus referring to the method by which the juice is obtained. The power of intoxication is ascribed to it.
- (3.) *Hometz*. See VINEGAR.
- (4.) *Hemer*, Deu 32:14 (rendered “blood of the grape”) Isa 27:2 (“red wine”), Ezr 6:9; Ezr 7:22; Dan 5:1, Dan 5:2, Dan 5:4. This word conveys the idea of “foaming,” as in the process of fermentation, or when poured out. It is derived from the root *hamar*, meaning “to boil up,” and also “to be red,” from the idea of boiling or becoming inflamed.
- (5.) *‘Enabh*, a grape (Deu 32:14). The last clause of this verse should be rendered as in the Revised Version, “and of the blood of the grape [*enabh*] thou drankest wine [*hemcr*].” In Hos 3:1 the phrase in Authorized Version, “flagons of wine,” is in the Revised Version correctly “cakes of raisins.” (Compare Gen 49:11; Num 6:3; Deu 23:24, etc.,

where this Hebrew word is rendered in the plural “grapes.”)

- (6.) *Mesekh*, properly a mixture of wine and water with spices that increase its stimulating properties (Isa 5:22). Psa 75:8, “The wine [*yayin*] is red; it is full of mixture [*mesekh*];” Pro 23:30, “mixed wine;” Isa 65:11, “drink offering” (R.V., “mingled wine”).
- (7.) *Tirosh*, properly “must,” translated “wine” (Deu 28:51); “new wine” (Pro 3:10); “sweet wine” (Mic 6:15; R.V., “vintage”). This Hebrew word has been traced to a root meaning “to take possession of” and hence it is supposed that *tirosh* is so designated because in intoxicating it takes possession of the brain. Among the blessings promised to Esau (Gen 27:28) mention is made of “plenty of corn and *tirosh*.” Palestine is called “a land of corn and *tirosh*” (Deu 33:28; compare Isa 36:17). See also Deu 28:51; 2Ch 32:28; Joe 2:19; Hos 4:11, (“wine [*yayin*] and new wine [*tirosh*] take away the heart”).
- (8.) *Sobhe* (root meaning “to drink to excess,” “to suck up,” “absorb”), found only in Isa 1:22, Hos 4:18 (“their drink;” Gesen. And marg. Of R.V., “their carouse”), and Nah 1:10 (“drunken as drunkards;” lit., “soaked according to their drink;” R.V., “drenched, as it were, in their drink”, i.e., according to their *sobhe*).
- (9.) *Shekar*, “strong drink,” any intoxicating liquor; from a root meaning “to drink deeply,” “to be drunken”, a generic term applied to all fermented liquors, however obtained. Num 28:7, “strong wine” (R.V., “strong drink”). It is sometimes distinguished from wine, c.g., Lev 10:9, “Do not drink wine [*yayin*] nor strong drink [*shekar*];” Num 6:3; Jdg 13:4, Jdg 13:7; Isa 28:7 (in all these places rendered “strong drink”). Translated “strong drink” also in Isa 5:11; Isa 24:9; Isa 29:9; Isa 56:12; Pro 20:1; Pro 31:6; Mic 2:11.

- (10.) *Yekebh* (Deu 16:13, but in R.V. correctly “wine-press”), a vat into which the new wine flowed from the press. Joe 2:24, “their vats;” Joe 3:13, “the fats;” Pro 3:10, “Thy presses shall burst out with new wine [*tirosh*];” Hag 2:16; Jer 48:33, “wine-presses;” 2Ki 6:27; Job 24:11.
- (11.) *Shemarim* (only in plural), “lees” or “dregs” of wine. In Isa 25:6 it is rendered “wines on the lees”, i.e., wine that has been kept on the lees, and therefore old wine.
- (12.) *Mesek*, “a mixture,” mixed or spiced wine, not diluted with water, but mixed with drugs and spices to increase its strength, or, as some think, mingled with the lees by being shaken (Psa 75:8; Pro 23:30). In Acts 2:13 the word *gleukos*, rendered “new wine,” denotes properly “sweet wine.” It must have been intoxicating.”

The most important of these words are now examined in greater detail.

YAYIN

The Hebrew word YAYIN (Strong’s #3196) is the word most often used for wine and refers to fermented grape juice. It occurs 140 times in the Old Testament. According to both *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions*, YAYIN is derived from an unusual root word meaning “to effervesce” or “to foam”. This is due to the foaming or effervescence caused by the action of the yeast during the fermentation process.

The first occurrence of YAYIN in the Bible is in Gen 9:21:

“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: (21) And he drank of the wine,

and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.” (Gen 9:20-21)

This verse is interesting for at least two reasons. First, it shows that YAYIN definitely contains alcohol since Noah became drunken. Second, “*Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God*” (Gen 6:9) and God called Noah “*righteous*” (Gen 7:1). Noah has a pretty impressive resume.

- He saw first hand the wickedness of the antediluvian civilization.
- He maintained his righteousness and his relationship with God for 600 years while living in an exceedingly wicked culture.
- He was the head of the only family saved from the flood.
- He talked directly with God.
- He was charged with repopulating the Earth.

Admittedly, the fact that Noah was righteous before he got on the ark does not necessitate that he remained so after he got off the ark. But, it is hard to imagine that someone with Noah’s credentials would suddenly and consciously decide to do something he thought was displeasing to his omnipotent Creator who had just destroyed the whole Earth in the flood.

In addition, planting a vineyard requires years of preparation as grape vines do not usually produce grapes until the third year after planting. If there was a firm prohibition against alcoholic beverages, Noah would have committed premeditated sin. It is doubtful that righteous Noah committed a premeditated sin by planting a vineyard to produce YAYIN. The Bible does not say anything about Noah’s motives, but it is most likely that his becoming drunken and uncovered in his tent was an accident caused by drinking too much of his wine. We have no reason to believe that Noah was a habitual drunkard.

After the story of Noah, the next time the word YAYIN appears in the Bible is in the account of Abraham and Melchizedek.

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.”
(Gen 14:18)

This verse is significant because it describes a solemn spiritual encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek, the priest of the most high God. There are many theories about Melchizedek, but we at least know what is said of him in Hebrews.

“For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; (2) To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; (3) Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.” (Heb 7:1-3)

Whether or not Melchizedek was a man, or a “theophany”, or a vision, or an angel, or something else, we know that he was “*without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God*” and that he brought out bread and YAYIN, the same drink that caused Noah to become drunken. Did Melchizedek who was “*the priest of the most high God*” commit sin by drinking YAYIN with Abraham? Of course not. In fact, Christ, who is “*a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek*” (Heb 5:5-7), led a similar ceremony when he “*... took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; (28) For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*” (Mat 26:27-28).

There are many other occurrences of YAYIN in the Old Testament and we need not examine all of them to show that YAYIN is definitely used to refer to fermented wine. However, the vast majority of verses where YAYIN and TIYROSH are used are in relation with God’s blessing or judgment. Often, when the scriptures speak of times of blessing, it is mentioned that the corn and the wine and the oil are plentiful. In times of judgment, the corn, the wine and the oil either do not come forth or they are stolen by the enemy.

TIYROSH

According to both *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions*, the Hebrew word TIYROSH (Strong’s #8492) refers to freshly pressed grape juice, which is also termed “must”. TIYROSH occurs 38 times in the Old Testament. It is derived from the Hebrew root YARASH (Strong’s #3423) which, in this context, means “expulsion” as in “squeezing” or “extraction”. TIYROSH references the crushing of the grape to remove its juice and is used in reference to the product of the winepress. So, TIYROSH is freshly pressed grape juice. Isa 65:8 says “*the new wine [TIYROSH] is found in the cluster*” calling the grape juice TIYROSH even before the grape is crushed.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* describes TIYROSH as follows:

“(3) *tirosh*. Properly this is the fresh grape juice (called also *mishreh*, Num 6:3), even when still in the grape (Isa 65:8). But unfermented grape juice is a very difficult thing to keep without the aid of modern antiseptic precautions, and its preservation in the warm and not over-cleanly conditions of ancient Palestine was impossible. Consequently, *tirosh* came to mean wine that was not fully aged (although with full intoxicating properties (Jdg 9:13; Hos 4:11; compare Acts 11:13)) or wine when considered

specifically as the product of grapes (Deu 12:17; Deu 18:4, etc.).”

TIYROSH is often used when describing God’s blessing on the harvest in passages such as Deu 11:13-15 (part of the “Shema”).

“And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, (14) That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. (15) And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.” (Deu 11:13-15)

TIYROSH here is used in the context of the harvest (“*gather in*”). The grapes that were gathered in were put into the winepress and crushed into TIYROSH. In 24 hours or less, as the naturally occurring yeast started the fermentation process, the TIYROSH quickly started becoming YAYIN. This is clearly seen from Mic 6:15 and Pro 3:10.

“So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine [TIYROSH].” (Pro 3:10)

“Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine [TIYROSH], but shalt not drink wine [YAYIN].” (Mic 6:15)

Mic 6:15 makes the relationship between TIYROSH and YAYIN very clear: TIYROSH was tread in the winepress for the purpose of making YAYIN.

Since TIYROSH (freshly pressed grape juice) ferments so rapidly in Palestine, it can also, like YAYIN, be intoxicating as is seen in Hos 4:11.

“Whoredom and wine [YAYIN] and new wine [TIYROSH] take away the heart.” (Hos 4:11)

Since TIYROSH was made from crushing the grapes during the wine harvest, it was considered the first fruits of the grape harvest. As a result, the scriptures say that TIYROSH was given in the wine tithe.

“Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine [TIYROSH] and the oil unto the treasuries.” (Neh 13:12)

SHEKAR

According to both *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* and *Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions*, the Hebrew word SHEKAR (Strong’s #7941) refers to “an intoxicant, that is, intensely alcoholic liquor”. SHEKAR occurs 20 times in the Old Testament. It is derived from the Hebrew root SHAKAR (Strong’s #7937) which means “to become drunken” (BDB) or “to become tipsy” (Strong’s).

The use of SHEKAR contrasts with YAYIN in an interesting way. For example, consider the following two passages:

“Do not drink wine [YAYIN] nor strong drink [SHEKAR], thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.” (Lev 10:9)

“He shall separate himself from wine [YAYIN] and strong drink [SHEKAR], and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.” (Num 6:3)

These are two examples that show that SHEKAR and YAYIN generally refer to two different types of beverages. SHEKAR is usually used to refer to intoxicating beverages that are made from something other than grape juice. However, consider the following passages.

“And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine [YAYIN] for a drink offering.” (Exo 29:40)

“And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of a hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine [SHEKAR] to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering.” (Num 28:7)

Both passages institute the same ordinance, the drink offering made with the morning and evening sacrifices. In every case, when instructions for performing a drink offering are given, YAYIN is prescribed. From Exo 29:40, we know that the drink offering that accompanies the morning and evening sacrifices was YAYIN. However, it is called SHEKAR in Num 28:7 (and only there). In *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Dr. Gill explains this odd usage of SHEKAR as follows:

“the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem interpret it of old choice wine, old wine being reckoned best, see Luk 5:39, and though this wine was poured out on the altar, and not properly drank by any, yet it was to be the strongest, best, and choicest that could be got, as it was reasonable it should; since it was poured out as a libation or drink offering to the Lord.”

In Albert Barnes' *Notes on the Bible*, Barnes explains “*strong wine*” in Num 28:7 as follows.

“The original of the word “strong wine” *shekar* is a term usually employed to describe strong drink other than wine (Lev 10:9 note). The Israelites in the

wilderness had, in their lack of wine, substituted shechar made from barley for it. They had thus observed the spirit, though not the letter of the ordinance.”

Gill's explanation not only is rooted in his detailed knowledge of the ancient writings, but is also more in keeping with the rest of scripture since Exo 29:40 and all other drink offering instructions prescribe YAYIN. Another possibility is that SHEKAR was used here to reference undiluted wine, but this is unlikely because the practice of diluting wine came at a much later time period.

For the purposes of this document, the most important inference in these two passages is that YAYIN is a type of SHEKAR and is therefore an intoxicating beverage.

Use of Wine in the Old Testament

The consumption of fermented wine was a normal part of life among God's people in Old Testament times. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* describes the use of wine in Old Testament times as follows.

“Throughout the Old Testament, wine is regarded as a necessity of life and in no way as a mere luxury. It was a necessary part of even the simplest meal (Gen 14:18; Jdg 19:19; 1Sa 16:20; Isa 55:1, etc.), was an indispensable provision for a fortress (2Ch 11:11), and was drunk by all classes and all ages, even by the very young (Lam 2:12; Zec 9:17). “Wine” is bracketed with “grain” as a basic staple (Gen 27:28, etc.), and the failure of the winecrop or its destruction by foreigners was a terrible calamity (Deu 28:30, Deu 28:39; Isa 62:8; Isa 65:21; Mic 6:15; Zep 1:13, etc.). On the other hand, abundance of wine was a special token of God's blessing (Gen 27:28; Deu 7:13; Amo 9:14, etc.), and extraordinary abundance would be a token of the

Messianic age (Amo 9:13; Joe 3:18; Zec 9:17). A moderate “gladdening of the heart” through wine was not looked upon as at all reprehensible (2Sa 13:28; Est 1:10; Psa 104:15; Ecc 9:7; Ecc 10:19; Zec 9:15; Zec 10:7), and while Jdg 9:13 represented a mere verbal remnant of a long-obsolete concept, yet the idea contained in the verse was not thought shocking.”

Despite the claims of the ISBE, however, fermented wine was not a necessity of survival in ancient times. There are several instances of people who went without wine their whole lives. Sampson was a Nazarite from birth (Jdg 13:5) and remained so until he gave into Delila’s enticements. The Rechabites did not drink wine for generations (Jer 35:5-6). The ISBE may be indicating that the use of fermented wine was so universal that no one would consider having a meal without it, except in certain, very specific circumstances.

That fermented wine was commonplace is evidenced by the fact that it is included in some of the meals described in the scripture.

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine [YAYIN]: and he was the priest of the most high God.” (Gen 14:18)

“And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou biddest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. [...] (25)And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son’s venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine [YAYIN], and he drank.” (Gen 27:19-25, this is the solemn occasion where the promise of Abraham was passed from Isaac to Jacob)

“Yet there is both straw and provender for our asses; and there is bread and wine [YAYIN] also for me, and

for thy handmaid, and for the young man which is with thy servants: there is no want of any thing.” (Jdg 19:19)

“And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine [YAYIN], and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.” (1Sa 16:20)

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine [YAYIN] and milk without money and without price.” (Isa 55:1, figurative of God’s free and plentiful provisions of grace and mercy in salvation)

Fermented wine was included in the list of reserves that were commonly kept in military fortresses. Wine was useful in this context because it does not spoil easily.

“And he fortified the strongholds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine [YAYIN].” (2Ch 11:11)

Fermented wine was even commonly consumed by the very young.

“Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city. (12) They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine [YAYIN]? When they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers’ bosom.” (Lam 2:11-12)

Another evidence of the common use of fermented wine is the requirement that wine be included in the tithe. Here, TIYROSH is used because the tithe was to be given shortly after the grapes had been pressed.

“Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine [TIYROSH], or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand” (Deu 12:17)

That fermented wine was a part of every day life is also seen in the fact that wine was commanded as the drink offering that accompanied the daily morning and evening sacrifices.

“And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine [YAYIN] for a drink offering.” (Exo 29:40)

In fact, fermented wine was commanded for all other drink offerings as well. 1 Chr 9:29 describes how an inventory of wine, oil, flour and other items needed for these sacrifices were stored at the temple.

“Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine [YAYIN], and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices.” (1 Chr 9:29)

If there was a strict prohibition against fermented wine in the Old Testament, surely God would not have used the abundance of wine as a sign of God’s blessing and commanded that fermented wine be used in sacrifices and temple worship.

So, it is clear that in Old Testament times, fermented wine was in common use and there was no general prohibition against it. Rather, the Law of God commanded its production and use.

Prohibitions against Wine in the Old Testament

Although wine was a common drink at meals in Old Testament times, there were situations where it was forbidden. For example, the Levitical priests were forbidden from drinking wine or strong drink while performing their priestly duties.

“Do not drink wine [YAYIN] nor strong drink [SHEKAR], thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations:” (Lev 10:9)

“Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court.” (Eze 44:21)

A simple reading of the plain words of scripture clearly shows that this command is not that the Levites should never drink wine at any time, but that they should not drink it “*when [they] go into the tabernacle of the congregation*”. Since the prohibition was specifically during the time of their priestly service, we ascertain that they were under no such prohibition when they were not performing their priestly duties. That the Levites drank fermented wine and strong drink when they were not serving in the tabernacle is shown in the law concerning what the Jews call the “Second Tithe”.

“Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. (23) And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. (24) And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: (25) Then shalt thou turn

it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: (26) And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine [YAYIN], or for strong drink [SHEKAR], or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, (27) And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee.” (Deu 14:22-27)

The Israelites were instructed to take a tenth of their seed (fruit of the ground, not including livestock) to the temple and to eat it in celebration before the Lord. They were permitted to drink fermented wine and even strong drink if they desired. They were also instructed to bring the Levites that lived near them along for this celebration.

Furthermore, if there were a firm prohibition against the consumption of alcoholic beverages in the scripture, then surely God would not explicitly permit fermented wine (YAYIN) and strong drink (SHEKAR) to be consumed at a mandatory religious celebration.

Another instance where wine and strong drink was forbidden is during the period of a Nazarite vow.

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD: (3) He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. (4) All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. (5) All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days

be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. (6) All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body. (7) He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. (8) All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD.” (Num 6:2-8)

Although Sampson was a Nazarite from birth, the Nazarite vow was usually for a short duration of purification. Paul purified himself in this way before becoming imprisoned in Jerusalem in Acts 21:23-26.

The prohibition of alcohol for the Nazarite is interesting and relevant because, during the duration of the vow, he was not permitted to do things that he normally was permitted to do. It was a type of fasting where he should be concentrating on spiritual things and not on fleshly pleasures. He normally was permitted to drink wine, but for the period of his vow he could not. In fact, it was not that the Nazarite didn't cut his hair that was particularly strange. Rather, the primary identifying mark of the Nazarite was that he didn't drink wine.

“And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? Saith the LORD. (12) But ye gave the Nazarites wine [YAYIN] to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not.” (Amo 2:11-12)

“And the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD: this is holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine [YAYIN].” (Num 6:20)

Num 6:20 specifically states that after the Nazarite vow is completed that “*the Nazarite may drink wine*”. This is very

plain and clear language. There was no firm prohibition against the drinking of wine in the Old Testament.

Warnings against Drunkenness in the Old Testament

Although the Old Testament scriptures do not contain a prohibition against wine (or even strong drink) and even associate wine with God's blessing, there are also many passages of grave warning against drunkenness.

The book of Proverbs contains some of the early warnings against the abuse of wine.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." (Pro 20:1)

"He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." (Pro 21:17)

"Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? (30) They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. (31) Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. (32) At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." (Pro 23:29-32)

"It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: (5) Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. (6) Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. (7) Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." (Pro 31:4-7)

However, even Solomon, the writer of these verses, acknowledged that there were appropriate uses for wine and strong drink in Pro 31:6-7, above. In fact, many scholars believe that Pro 31:6, "*Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish*", is the reason that those at the foot of the cross tried to give Christ wine mixed with myrrh to ease his suffering (Mar 15:23). He refused the wine because it was His suffering that paid the penalty of our sin.

Isaiah prophesied against the unprincipled, indulgent rulers of the people whose sins were compounded because of their drunkenness. Wine and wealth have always accompanied each other and feasting, gluttony and intemperance have always been a hallmark of those who have wealth without wisdom.

"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! (12) And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands." (Isa 5:11-12)

"Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (22) Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: (23) Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Isa 5:21-23)

"Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!" (Isa 28:1)

"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in

judgment. (8) For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.” (Isa 28:7-8)

Hos 4:11 is interesting because it shows that both YAYIN and TIYROSH can be intoxicating.

“Whoredom and wine [YAYIN] and new wine [TIYROSH] take away the heart.” (Hos 4:11)

Habakkuk also prophesied against those who use wine inappropriately.

“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. (5) Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:” (Hab 2:4-5)

“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” (Hab 2:15)

Wine in the New Testament

New Testament Words for Wine

OINOS

The Greek word OINOS (Strong’s #3631) is the word most often used for wine and refers to fermented grape juice. OINOS occurs 25 times in the New Testament. Both *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* and *Thayer’s Greek Definitions* define OINOS simply as “wine”.

In the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, OINOS is used for the Hebrew words YAYIN and TIYROSH. Therefore, some prohibitionists, who insist that TIYROSH is always unfermented, make the argument that, in the New Testament, OINOS could reference unfermented, freshly pressed grape juice. This argument is highly contrived for several reasons. First, TIYROSH begins to ferment so quickly that it is intoxicating after just a few days. That YAYIN and TIYROSH are both intoxicating is clearly seen in Hos 4:11.

“Whoredom and wine [YAYIN] and new wine [TIYROSH] take away the heart.” (Hos 4:11)

In the New Testament, the fact that OINOS certainly refers to fermented wine can be seen through its connection with the word METHUO, which, according to *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, means “From another form of G3178; to *drink to intoxication*, that is, *get drunk*: - drink well, make (be) drunk (-en).”

“And be not drunk [METHUO] with wine [OINOS], wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” (Eph 5:18)

“With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been

made drunk [METHUO] with the wine [OINOS] of her fornication.” (Rev 17:2)

GLEUKOS

The Greek word GLEUKOS (Strong’s #1098) is translated “new wine” in the KJV. GLEUKOS occurs 1 times in the New Testament in Acts 2:13.

“Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine [GLEUKOS]. (14) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: (15) For these are not drunken [METHUO], as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.” (Acts 2:13-15)

The meaning of GLEUKOS in the New Testament is less clear than that of OINOS.

- According to *Thayer’s Greek Definitions* GLEUKOS means “the sweet juice pressed the grape, sweet wine”.
- *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* defines GLEUKOS as “Akin to G1099; *sweet* wine, that is, (properly) *must* (fresh juice), but used of the more saccharine (and therefore highly inebriating) fermented *wine*: - new wine.”
- *Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament* has this comment on “new wine” in Acts 2:13: “(*gleukous*). Sweet wine, but intoxicating. Sweet wine kept a year was very intoxicating. Genitive case here after *memestomenoi eisin* (periphrastic perfect passive indicative), old verb *mestoo*, only here in the N.T. Tanked up with new wine, state of Passover.”
- Vincent’s Word Studies has this comment on “new wine” in Acts 2:13: “Lit., “*sweet* wine.” Of course intoxicating.”

- Young’s literal translation of Acts 2:13 reads “and others mocking said, --“They are full of sweet wine””.

What is meant by GLEUKOS is probably fermented wine that is from the first flow of grape juice that was produced, not from pressing or treading the grapes, but from the grapes that were crushed by their own weight as they were heaped into the winepress. This first flow was the sweetest and was considered of the highest grade. One reason GLEUKOS was reckoned to be more intoxicating is that it may have contained a higher sugar content, which served not only to make the wine sweet to the taste (hence the name GLEUKOS, meaning “sweet”), but this also may have made the product have a higher alcohol content since there was more food for the yeasts in the fermentation process. “Sweet wine” is also referenced in Isa 49:26 and Mic 6:15. It is entirely possible that they had fermented GLEUKOS in Acts 2:13 because the feast of Pentecost was held around the time of the grape harvest.

That GLEUKOS is intoxicating is evidenced by two observations. First, the word Peter used for “*drunken*” in Acts 2:15 is METHUO, which, according to *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, means “From another form of G3178; to *drink* to *intoxication*, that is, *get drunk*: - drink well, make (be) drunk (-en).” Second, the mockers who accused the disciples of being drunken did so on the basis of their unintelligible speech, a symptom of acute drunkenness. Such an accusation was made by Eli of Hannah in 1 Sam 1:12-15.

“And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. (13) Now Hannah, she spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. (14) And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee. (15) And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk

neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.” (1 Sam 1:12-15)

SIKERA

The Greek word SIKERA (Strong’s #4608) is never translated “wine”, but we include it here because it is an alcoholic beverage. SIKERA occurs 1 time in the New Testament in Luk 1:15.

“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. (14) And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. (15) For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine [OINOS] nor strong drink [SIKERA]; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb.” (Luk 1:13-15)

“For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.” (Luk 7:33)

John was evidently a Nazarite from birth. The most peculiar aspect of the Nazarite was not that they did not cut their hair, but that they didn’t drink wine or strong drink.

Use of Wine in the New Testament

Dilution of Wine

The use of wine among God’s people has evidently changed somewhat over time. Before the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, the dilution of wine was not desirable.

“How is the faithful city become a harlot! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. (22) Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:” (Isa 1:21-22)

However, later, the attitude toward wine shifted. After the Babylonian captivity, there was a resurgence of zeal among the Jews. It was during this time that the ultra-conservative Pharisees emerged. This religious conservatism, in combination with the Greco-Roman ideals of moderation and self control, made temperance in all things a highly valued virtue.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says the following regarding the practice of diluting wine.

“In Old Testament times wine was drunk undiluted, and wine mixed with water was thought to be ruined (Isa 1:22). The “mixed” or “mingled wines” (see I, 1, (5), above) were prepared with aromatic herbs of various sorts and some of these compounds, used throughout the ancient world, were highly intoxicating (Isa 5:22). Wine mixed with myrrh was stupefying and an anesthetic (Mar 15:23). At a later period, however, the Greek use of diluted wines had attained such sway that the writer of 2 Maccabees speaks (15:39) of undiluted wine as “distasteful” (*polemion*). This dilution is so normal in the following centuries that the Mishna can take it for granted and, indeed, R. Eliezer even forbade saying the table-blessing over undiluted wine (*Berakhoth* 7 5). The proportion of water was large, only one-third or one-fourth of the total mixture being wine (*Niddah* 2 7; *Pesahim* 108b).” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “wine”)

An excerpt from Robert H. Stein’s article in the June 20, 1975 issue of *Christianity Today* contains further evidence for the dilution of wine.

“In the Talmud, which contains the oral traditions of Judaism from about 200 BC to AD 200, there are several tractates in which the mixture of water and wine is discussed. One tractate (Shabbath 77a) states that wine that does not carry three parts water is not wine. The normal mixture is said to consist of two parts water to one part wine. In a most important reference (Pesachim 108b) it is stated that the four cups every Jew was to drink during the Passover ritual were to be mixed in a ratio of three parts water to one part wine. From this we can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that the fruit of the vine used at the institution of the Lord’s Supper was a mixture of three parts water to one part wine. In another Jewish reference from around 60 BC, we read, “It is harmful to drink wine alone, or again, to drink water alone, while wine mixed with water is sweet and delicious and enhances one’s enjoyment” (II Maccabees 15:39).” (Robert H. Stein in June 20, 1975 of *Christianity Today*)

In addition, the Jewish Talmud, also states that “A blessing is not said over the wine until water is put in it” (Berakoth 50).

So, the use of wine in New Testament times was different than in Old Testament times. The substance itself was no different, but the manner in which it was consumed was different. It was highly diluted with water and therefore was much less intoxicating.

Wine in the Parables of Jesus

In the New Testament, wine was used the same way as it was in the Old Testament. It was an ordinary, everyday part of life and accompanied most meals. This is evidenced by Jesus’ uses of it in His parables.

“And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine vat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. (2) And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.” (Mar 12:1-2)

In Mar 12:1-2, a man planted a vineyard for the purpose of making wine. This is evidenced by the fact that he dug a “*wine vat*”, that is, a “wine press”, which was usually hewn out of the bedrock. “*At the season*” probably means, “after a few years” since it takes newly established grape vines about three years to produce the first harvest. The “*fruit of the vineyard*” could mean the actual grape clusters, but it is more likely that it was the wine that was referenced because a vineyard is planted primarily for the production of wine.

“And no man putteth new [NEOS] wine [OINOS] into old bottles; else the new [NEOS] wine [OINOS] will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. (38) But new [NEOS] wine [OINOS] must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. (39) No man also having drunk old [PALAIOS] *wine* straightway desireth new [NEOS]: for he saith, The old is better.” (Luk 5:37-39)

In Luk 5:37-39, Jesus is referencing the fermentation process. As the yeasts that naturally occur on the skin of the grape consume the sugar in the grape juice, they produce both alcohol and carbon dioxide gas. The emission of this gas is what causes the wineskin to bloat and burst. This phenomenon is also referenced by Job.

“Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.” (Job 32:19)

It is interesting that “*new wine*” in Luk 5:37-39 is “NEOS OINOS”. This would be called TIYROSH in the Old Testament.

Wine Used in Festive Occasions

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: (2) And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. (3) And when they wanted wine [OINOS], the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine [OINOS]. (4) Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. (5) His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. (6) And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. (7) Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. (8) And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. (9) When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine [OINOS], and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, (10) And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine [OINOS]; and when men have well drunk [METHUO], then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine [OINOS] until now. (11) This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.” (Joh 2:1-11)

The marriage at Cana is where Jesus turned water into wine. This event helps to show Jesus’ (and thus God’s) attitude toward wine.

The pots that contained the water that was turned to wine held two or three firkins each. Some scholars say that a firkin is about 7.5 gallons and others say that it is 9 gallons. By these measures, each pot would have contained between 15

gallons and 27 gallons for a total amount between 90 and 162 gallons of wine. It doesn’t really matter which estimate is correct because, either way, this was a lot of wine – even for a seven day wedding feast. This indicates the abundant quantity of Christ’s provision.

Another interesting thing in this passage is the response of the ruler of the feast. The wine that Jesus made was of noticeably higher quality than that which had been served previously. This indicates the quality of Christ’s provision. It also indicates that Jesus knew the difference between wine of good quality and wine of poor quality.

Even more interesting are the words chosen by the ruler of the feast. “*When men have well drunk*” does not mean “when they have had their fill”. The word for drunk is METHUO which means “to *drink* to *intoxication*, that is, *get drunk*: - drink well, make (be) drunk (-en)” (Strong) or “to be drunken” (Thayer). METHUO is used 6 other times in the New Testament (Mat 24:49, Acts 2:15, 1 Cor 11:21, 1 The 5:7, Rev 17:2, Rev 17:6). Each time it indicates intoxication and is never used to indicate “satisfaction” or “satiation”. In addition, there are other words that the ruler of the feast could have used had he wished to indicate mere “drinking” rather than “drinking to intoxication”. In fact, Jesus made a very similar statement in Luk 5:39.

“No man also having drunk [PINO] old wine [OINOS] straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.” (Luk 5:39)

In Luk 5:39, the word is PINO, not METHUO. PINO (Strong’s #4095) means simply “to drink”.

So did Jesus condone getting drunk? One thing we know is that Jesus does not condone drunkenness. Jesus was not “giving a drunk a drink”. However, it was considered within the bounds of temperance to achieve a “merry heart” by wine during festive occasions.

Also, Jesus didn't use the power of God to accomplish some menial task. Rather, this miracle also was full of symbolic content and shows that his role as Messiah was very much on his mind at the time.

The marriage at Cana shows that Jesus' attitude toward consuming wine was evidently similar to David's as expressed in Psalm 104:15.

"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; (15) And wine [YAYIN] that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." (Psa 104:14-15)

That is, wine is given as a blessing from God that "*maketh glad the heart of man*" and remains a blessing when used temperately.

Wine Used Medicinally

Wine was not just a staple part of the New Testament diet, but it was also used medicinally. Encarta Encyclopedia says the following.

"The practice of making wine is as old as our most ancient civilizations, and wine has played a central role in human culture for more than 8,000 years. In contrast to most foods and beverages that spoil quickly or that can spread disease, wine does not spoil if stored properly. The alcohol in wine, called ethanol, is present in sufficient concentrations to kill disease-causing microorganisms, and throughout history, wine was often safer to drink than water or milk. This property was so significant that before the connection between microorganisms, poor sanitation, and disease was

understood, ancient civilizations regarded wine as a gift from the gods because it protected against disease."

(DISCLAIMER: *Encarta is definitely not a Bible encyclopedia. It is used here only as a historical reference. Mankind has not existed for 8,000 years and "there is none other God but One" (1 Cor 8:4.)*)

There are some examples of wine being used medicinally in the New Testament.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, (34) And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine [OINOS], and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luk 10:33-34)

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus gives evidence that wine has medicinal value. Here, wine is used as an antiseptic because of its alcohol content. The oil was used because of its soothing and moisturizing properties.

"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure. (23) Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." (1 Tim 5:22-23)

In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul is instructing Timothy to use wine medicinally. It is likely that Timothy did not drink wine at all in order to set an example of purity and soberness to his congregation. However, Timothy evidently had stomach problems and other frequent illnesses that could be prevented by the antiseptic properties of wine.

Notice that in verse 22, Paul had just instructed Timothy not to "*be partaker of other men's sins*" and told him to "*keep thyself pure*". In the very next verse, Paul told him to "*use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities*". Implicit in

these two verses is the undeniable fact that the medicinal use of wine is not a sin and does not make one impure.

Furthermore, Paul did not tell Timothy to use wine once to remedy a specific ailment, but to use a little wine “often”, that is, on a regular basis, “for [...] thine often infirmities”. Given the cultural practices of the day, Timothy probably understood this to mean, “Mix a little wine with your water”. The alcohol in the wine would kill the pathogenic organisms in the water and prevent Timothy from getting ill. In this period of time, wine was almost always highly diluted with water.

Did Jesus drink Wine?

Well, if we believe that Jesus drank wine in the Lord’s Supper, then Jesus obviously drank wine. However, we can see that Jesus drank wine from one or two other passages of scripture.

“For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. (34) The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” (Luk 7:33-34)

The Pharisees and lawyers were intent on trying to discredit both John and Jesus. They indicated that John was demon possessed because of his radical consecration to his God-given task. Jesus was saying that the Pharisees were childish, inconsistent, and could not be pleased.

John the Baptist was evidently a Nazarite from birth because he was to “*drink neither wine nor strong drink*” (Luk 1:15). In contrasting Himself with John the Baptist, Jesus indicates that John the Baptist did not eat bread like everyone else, but He (Jesus) did eat bread like everyone else. John ate “*locusts and wild honey*” (Mat 3:4). Jesus indicates that John did not drink wine like everyone else, but that He (Jesus) did drink wine like everyone else.

This shocking assertion is further substantiated by the Pharisees’ claims that Jesus was a “*gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*”. The Greek word for “winebibber” is OINOPOTES which is derived from OINOS, the word for “wine”, and “PINO”, the word for “drink”. OINOPOTES means “a tippler: - winebibber” (Strong) or “a winebibber, given to wine, a wino” (Thayer). It would make no sense to call Jesus a winebibber if He didn’t drink wine. They didn’t make this claim against John because John didn’t drink wine.

We can also glean some information about Jesus’ attitude toward wine from his first miracle at the Marriage of Cana. While the story does not explicitly say that Jesus drank wine, we can infer from the fact that He turned the water into fermented wine (OINOS), that He at least thought that drinking wine was a permissible thing to do.

So, we see that Jesus conducted Himself in keeping with the cultural and religious taboos of his day. “*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.*” (Heb 4:15) Jesus had to keep his flesh from its natural desires toward intemperance just like any other human being. This is a central part in his role as the perfect mediator (1 Tim 2:5).

Warnings Against Drunkenness in the New Testament

Although there are several warnings against drunkenness in the New Testament, there are no absolute prohibitions against wine. There are a few verses that, when taken out of context, appear to command an absolute prohibition, but when rightly divided, they do not.

“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” (Rom 14:21)

If Romans 14:21 is quoted alone, it seems to be saying that it is good for us never to eat flesh or to drink wine. The prohibitionists use this verse to teach just that. However, they are not being intellectually honest because, although the prohibitionist does not drink wine, he probably does eat flesh (unless he is also a vegetarian). It is quite obvious that if this verse absolutely prohibits the drinking of wine, then it also absolutely prohibits the eating of flesh (a sign of false doctrine according to 1 Tim 4:3). When examined in its proper context, it is quite evident that Rom 14:21 does not forbid the drinking of wine.

“Let not then your good be evil spoken of: (17) For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (18) For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. (19) Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (20) For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense. (21) It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. (22) Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. (23) And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom 14:16-23)

Rom 14 concerns our treatment of those who are weak in the faith. That is, there are those who would be violating their conscience to eat meat or drink wine because it may be considered ceremonially unclean or in violation of some dietary regulation according to the Law of Moses. Paul is telling us

that we should not tempt our weaker brother to do something that violates his conscience because in doing so he will have sinned. That is, even though a given act is not sinful in God's eyes, God treats it as such if we do something that is sinful in our own eyes: “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*” (vs. 23). It is in this context that Paul tells us that “*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth*”. Paul goes on to say “*Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*” That is, you may eat flesh and drink wine in private so that your weaker brother is not tempted to join you and thereby commit the sin of violating his conscience. The same issue is also covered in 1 Cor 10:25-29.

Another instance where there may seem to be an absolute prohibition against drinking wine is in Eph 5:18.

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” (Eph 5:18)

The purpose of this verse is to contrast drunkenness with being filled with the Spirit. That is, the source of our joy is not to be “*wine that maketh glad the heart of man*” (Psa 104:15), but the Holy Spirit who is our “*comforter*” (Joh 14:26).

The word used for “*excess*” is ASOTIA, which is rare in the New Testament. It occurs 3 other times in the New Testament where it is always translated “riot” as a noun and “riotous” as an adverb.

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot [ASOTIA] or unruly.” (Titus 1:6)

“Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot [ASOTIA], speaking evil of you” (1 Pet 4:4)

“And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous [ASOTOS] living.” (Luk 15:13)

In Eph 5:18, the phrase “*wherein is excess*” does not mean “wherein is too much”, but rather “wherein is riot”. In other words, being “*drunk with wine*” leads to “riotous living” and should be avoided. The danger is not the wine, but the drunkenness that leads to riotous living. This interpretation is consistent with the other scriptural warnings regarding drunkenness.

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; (3) Not given to wine [PARAOINON], no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;” (1 Tim 3:2-3)

“For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine [PARAOINON], no striker, not given to filthy lucre;” (Tit 1:7)

In these two passages, the word for “*given to wine*” is the Greek word [PARAOINON]. It only occurs in these two passages.

- *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* defines it as “staying near wine, that is, *tippling* (a *toper*): - given to wine”.
- *Thayer's Greek Definitions* defines PARAOINOS as “given to wine, drunken”.
- Robertson's *Word Pictures In the New Testament* says “No brawler (me paroinon). Later word for the earlier paroinios, one who sits long at (beside, para) his wine.”
- *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown says “Not given to wine — The *Greek* includes *besides* this, not indulging in the

brawling, violent conduct towards others, which proceeds from being given to wine. The opposite of “patient” or (*Greek*) “forbearing,” reasonable to others (see on Phil 4:5)”.

The phrase “*given to wine*”, then, is referring to habitual drunkenness and the brawling riotousness that it breeds. These verses are not giving a strict prohibition on wine.

Further proof of this is seen in the fact that Timothy was, for a time, the overseer (i.e., “bishop”) of the Church of Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). In 1 Tim 5:22-23, Paul directly advised Timothy to “*use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities*”. Since Timothy was the bishop of the Ephesian Church, it would be totally unreasonable to interpret either 1 Tim 3:2-3, Tit 1:7, or Eph 5:18 as giving a strict prohibition on wine.

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given [PROSECHO] to much wine [OINOS], not greedy of filthy lucre;” (1 Tim 3:8)

“The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given [DOULOO] to much wine [OINOS], teachers of good things;” (Tit 2:3)

Interestingly, the Greek words for “*given to*” are different in these two passages. In 1 Tim 3:8, “*given to*” is PROSECHO, but in Tit 2:3, it is DOULOO.

In 1 Tim 3:8, PROSECHO means “to *hold* the mind (G3563 implied) *towards*, that is, *pay attention to*” (Strong) or “(1) to bring to, bring near, ... (2) to turn the mind to, attend to be attentive ... (3) to apply one's self to, attach one's self to, hold or cleave to a person or a thing” (Thayer). So, in 1 Tim 3:8, “*given to much wine*” means “not always thinking about or paying attention to much wine”. Such an obsession with wine would no doubt lead to habitual drunkenness.

In Tit 2:3, DOULOO means “to make a slave of, reduce to bondage” (Thayer) or “to *enslave* (literally or figuratively): - bring into (be under) bondage” (Strong). It is from the word DOULOS, which is the most common word for a “servant” or “slave” in the New Testament. So, in Tit 2:3 “*given to much wine*” means to be “enslaved by much wine”. Being an alcoholic or being addicted to wine is what is being referenced.

“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine [OINOPHLUGIA], revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet 4:3)

1 Pet 4:3 is not referencing the Christian, but describing the way a person acted before becoming a Christian. The implication is that we Christians should no longer act this way. The Greek word translated “*excess of wine*” is OINOPHLUGIA which means “drunkenness” (Thayer) or “an *overflow* (or surplus) of *wine*, that is, *vinolency* (*drunkenness*)” (Strong’s). Peter is saying that Christians should no longer walk in “drunkenness” which is “*excess of wine*”.

So, there are many instances where drunkenness and excess are forbidden in the New Testament. However, none of these verses pronounce a general prohibition on wine and some even encourage its use for medicinal purposes.

Wine in the Lord’s Supper

We have shown that wine was in common use in both New and Old Testament times. We have shown that there is no strict prohibition against wine in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. Therefore, it should be of no surprise that wine was used in the Lord’s Supper. However, there are several ways to prove that wine actually was used at both the institution of the Lord’s Supper and the Church’s later observances of the Lord’s Supper.

At this point it is important to mention that although we have yet to prove that wine was actually used at the Lord’s Supper, we have proven that it was not a sin to drink wine in Jesus’ day. That is, we have shown that we **may** use wine in the Lord’s Supper. We will now show that wine **was** used in the Lord’s Supper. Afterward, we will show that we **should** use wine in the Lord’s Supper today.

What was in the Cup?

Wine or Grape Juice?

“For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” (Luk 22:18)

Some say that the content of the cup at the Lord’s Supper was not wine because Jesus did not use the word “wine” (or, OINOS). They say since Jesus did not use the word “wine” that the words “*fruit of the vine*” must mean unfermented grape juice.

We must understand the time of year in which the Lord’s Supper was instituted. It was instituted at the time of the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread.

“Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. [...] (14) And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. (15) And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer:” (Luk 22:7-15)

The feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread occur in the spring (Lev 23:5-6). The grape harvest is not until summer (Jer 40:10). So, it had been 6 to 9 months since the last grape harvest was tread in the winepress. The pressed out grape juice had long since become fermented wine. Making wine was by far the most common, if not the only, mechanism for preserving grape juice. The fact is that there was no fresh grape juice to be had. “*Fruit of the vine*” must have been wine.

Water and Wine

The wine in the cup of the Lord's Supper was probably highly diluted with water. It was probably at most one third wine and two thirds water as this was commanded by Jewish oral law (see Mishna Shabbat 77a and Berakoth 50). This combination of water and wine also has significant symbolism.

“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” (John 19:34)

“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” (1 John 5:6)

“Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.” (Deuteronomy 12:16)

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.” (Psalms 22:14)

There is much symbolism in the association of water and blood. In the Law, the blood of animals must be poured out on the ground like water (Deu 12:16, 15:23). In Psalm 22, which foretells the crucifixion from Christ's point of view, the speaker says “*I am poured out like water*” (Psa 22:14), indicating that He is an offering. He is probably indicating that His blood is poured out like water. When the soldier pierced Jesus' side, blood and water came from the wound. This indicated that He was the Lamb of God which was sacrificed for us.

Lord's Supper and Passover

It is the author's opinion that the Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of a Passover meal. However, the exact timing and sequence of the events involving the Lord's Supper and the crucifixion has been the subject of great debate over the centuries. Therefore, it is understood that, for various reasons, some may disagree with the assertion the Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of a Passover meal. A full defense of this position (including an analysis of John's Gospel) is beyond the scope of this document.

Please note, however, that the other arguments set forth here do not depend on whether or not the Lord's Supper was instituted during a Passover meal. Therefore, the other portions of this document should not be rejected because of a disagreement regarding this one point.

Recognizing the fact that the Lord's Supper was instituted during a Passover meal helps to explain much about the elements, sequence and wording used in its institution. If the Lord's Supper was instituted during a Passover meal, then we have strong historical evidence showing

- that wine was used in the Lord's Supper,
- why Jesus used the term "*fruit of the vine*", and also
- what Paul means by "*the cup of blessing*" in 1 Cor 10:16.

It is also interesting that regardless of what modern congregations used in the cup of the Lord's Supper, unleavened bread is almost always used as the bread. Exo 12:18 and other passages make it clear that unleavened bread was required at the Passover. Though we may not realize it, Christianity's almost universal practice of using wine and unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper has its roots in the traditional understanding that the Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of a Passover meal.

Evidence from the Gospels and the Law

In each Gospel account, the institution of Lord's Supper is clearly and consistently described as occurring in the context of a Passover meal.

"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? (18) And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples. (19) And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. (20) Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve." (Mat 26:17-20)

"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? (13) And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water:

follow him. (14) And wheresoever he shall go say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? (15) And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. (16) And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. (17) And in the evening he cometh with the twelve." (Mar 14:12-17)

"Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. [...] (14) And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. (15) And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer:" (Luk 22:7-15)

[John's Gospel does not record the institution of the Lord's Supper.]

In each Gospel account, Jesus explicitly said either that He would keep the Passover with His disciples or that He was glad to be eating it with them. Jesus told the Master of the house "*I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples*" (Mat 26:18). Jesus was not making an appointment that He knew He would not keep. Should we really claim to believe that Jesus failed to accomplish what he explicitly said that he would do? What a horrible wrenching of the scripture it would be to believe anything other than that He kept the Passover with His disciples in that man's house. Therefore, we know **that** He kept the Passover and **where** he kept it: in the guest chamber of a house in Jerusalem.

In the Gospel accounts, it is made very clear that Jesus sent the disciples to prepare the Passover on the same day that the Passover lambs were to be killed. In both Mat 26:20 and Mar 14:17 we see that it was this same day, the day "*when they killed the Passover*", that Jesus came with the disciples "*in the evening*". Later that evening, when they had finished the

ceremony, Jesus left and went to Gethsemane to pray (Mat 26:30-36, Mar 14:26-32, Luk 22:39-42), where he was arrested just before dawn (Mat 26:34,74, Mar 14:30,68, Luk 22:34,61). Additionally, 1 Cor 11:23 says that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper "*the same night in which he was betrayed*". So, we know **when** He kept the Passover, "*in the evening*" on the day "*when they killed the Passover*".

The Bible simply leaves no room for any interpretation other than that the Lord's Supper was instituted during the Passover meal which occurred "*in the evening*" of the day "*when they killed the Passover*", which was "*the same night in which he was betrayed*".

In each Gospel account, the day of the Passover is called the "*first day of unleavened bread*" or "*the day of unleavened bread*". The reason they referred to Passover, the 14th of Nisan, as the "*first day of unleavened bread*" is because all the people were required to travel to the temple for the feast of Unleavened Bread.

"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:" (Deu 16:16)

The Passover meal started before sunset on the evening of the 14th of Nisan (i.e., Abib). Unleavened Bread started just hours later with the onset of the 15th of Nisan.

"In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's Passover. (6) And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread." (Lev 23:5-6)

In Mat 26:20 and Mar 14:17, we see that they kept the Passover meal in the evening as commanded in Lev 23:5 and Deu 16:6.

Since the Jewish day began at sundown, the Passover meal extended from the 14th into the 15th, as the sun went down. So, Passover was actually marked the beginning of the feast of Unleavened Bread.

Also, unlike the first Passover in Egypt, the feast of Passover must be sacrificed at the temple, which was convenient since they were already in Jerusalem for the feast of Unleavened Bread.

"Thou mayest not sacrifice the Passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee: (6) But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt." (Deu 16:5-6, see also Ezr 20:16-20, 2 Chr 35:10-11)

Since the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread are kept at the same time in the same place, they often were referred to by the same name. This is why the Gospel writers call the feast of Passover the "*the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover*" or "*the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed*". So, we can see that the Gospels very clearly and explicitly state that the Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of a Passover meal.

Historical References Regarding the Passover

We have proven from the scriptures that the Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of a Passover meal. Given that we have first proven this fact from the scriptures, we can now attempt to reconcile the Gospel accounts to the historical references that show how ancient Passover meals were observed. Since some aspects of the Jewish Passover ceremony have changed over the years, we must look for the most ancient historical documents

available that explain how the ceremony was conducted in ancient times.

The *Haggadah shel Pesach*, or “*The Telling of the Passover*”, is the traditional text that governs the Passover meal in Judaism. It describes the ceremony in great detail, even describing what is to be said at each stage. The Haggadah was originally derived from the Passover ceremony described in Jewish oral law. The oral law was eventually written down in the Mishna, the most ancient portion of the Jewish Talmud, upon which Rabbinical Judaism is based. Although the compilation and transcription of the Mishna was not finished until about 219 A.D., it was the first written record of the Jewish oral laws that were developed throughout Jewish history as early as 200 B.C. and earlier (some Rabbi’s claim that the oral law has paralleled the written law as far back as Mount Sinai). Initially, there was great resistance to writing down the oral law, but with the great persecutions following the destruction of the Jerusalem in 70 A.D. came the fear that there would not be enough Jewish Rabbis left to communicate the oral law to subsequent generations. Under the leadership of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, the oral laws were carefully researched and written down in the form of the Mishna.

Since the Mishna contains the oldest known description of an ancient Passover ceremony, it is the best extra-biblical description of how a Passover observance was conducted in Jesus’ day.

The Jewish Passover ceremony was highly scripted. The Haggadah and the Mishna describe the ceremony in great detail, even describing what is to be said at each stage. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day upheld these oral laws and enforced them on the Jewish people. However, Jesus was only technically bound by the Law of Moses and not by the extra-scriptural oral law of Jewish tradition. Often, He even defied the “oral law” of the scribes and the Pharisees as is seen in several Gospel passages. Although Jesus was not bound by the traditional Passover script, there is no reason to think that He

deviated greatly from it. Furthermore, many elements of the ancient Passover ceremony described in the Mishna and the Haggadah can be clearly seen in the New Testament Gospel accounts of the Lord’s Supper.

[Please note that the author is not attempting to build a doctrine on the foundation of Rabbinical Judaism, for there is much in the Rabbinical writings that is contrary to the scriptures. The Mishna and the Haggadah are used here as historical references only.]

Why Did Jesus Say “Fruit of the Vine”?

“For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.” (Luk 22:18)

The Rabbinical laws that govern how the Passover is to be kept are found in chapter 10 of the Pesachim tractate in the Mishna. A step by step process is given. It was from this step by step guide that the ceremony in the Haggadah was derived.

The traditional Passover ceremony defined in the Mishna mandated four cups of wine. Even the poorest man must have all four cups.

“1. On the eve of Passover, from about the time of the Evening Offering, a man must eat naught until nightfall. Even the poorest in Israel must not eat unless he sits down to table, and they must not give them less than four cups of wine to drink, even if it is from the [Pauper’s] Dish.” (Mishna Pesachim 10)

There were two cups before dinner and two cups after dinner. According to both the Haggadah and the Mishna (Pesachim 10 and Berakoth 35a), a prayer of consecration and thanksgiving, also known as the Kiddush, was given for the wine.

The Mishna is divided topically and therefore the requirement to say a blessing is located in a different section than the instruction concerning the manner in which it must be blessed. The requirement to bless the wine is found in Mishna Pesahim 10.

“2. After they have mixed him his first cup, the School of Shammai say: He says the Benediction first over the day and then the Benediction over the wine. And the School of Hillel say: He says the Benediction first over the wine and then the Benediction over the day.” (Mishna Pesahim 10)

The manner in which things are blessed is defined in the Berakoth tractate of the Mishna.

“What blessings are said over the fruit? Over the fruit of the tree one says, Who createst the fruit of the tree, **except for wine, over which one says, Who createst the fruit of the vine.** Over that which grows from the ground one says: Who createst the fruit of the ground, except over bread, for which one says, Who bringeth forth bread from the Earth. Over vegetables one says, Who createst the fruit of the ground; R. Juda, however, says: Who createst divers kinds of herbs.” (Mishna Berakoth 35a, emphasis added)

In the Haggadah, the Kiddush prayer is specified as follows:

“Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, the king of the world, who hast created the fruit of the vine.”

It is from this part of the Passover ceremony that Jesus chose the words “*fruit of the vine*”. He had just prayed this blessing over the cup.

Note that the assertion that Jesus used the term “*fruit of the vine*” because it was part of the traditional Passover ceremony

is not based on the scriptures, but it is based purely on historical evidence. However, given that we have already proven *from the scriptures* that the Lord’s Supper was instituted during a Passover meal, the historical evidence serves to give a very plausible explanation for Jesus’ choice of words.

The “Cup After Supper”

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: (18) For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. (19) And he took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. (20) Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” (Luk 22:17-20)

It is very interesting that Luke places Jesus’ comments regarding “*fruit of the vine*” as occurring before dinner. This fits perfectly with the Passover ceremony, for this is when the first cup was blessed and drunk.

However, unlike the other Gospel writers, Luke mentions two cups. Jesus did not say “*This cup is the new testament in my blood*” in reference to the first cup, but to the “*cup after supper*”. Luke uses the phrase “*the cup after supper*” as if he is expecting that his readers understand what the phrase means. The “*cup after supper*” did indeed have great meaning to any Jew because “*the cup after supper*” was the third cup of the Passover ceremony, which was sometimes called the “Cup of Redemption”. It represented the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, which is the primary reason for celebrating the Passover. This is also a rich source of symbolism for Christianity.

The “Cup of Blessing” in the Early Church

The Apostle Paul referenced the “Cup of Blessing” in 1 Cor 10:16.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”
(1 Cor 10:16)

The term “Cup of Blessing” is connected with either the first or the third cup of the Passover.

The Passover description in the Mishna does not give names to the four cups. Some Jewish references denote the first cup as the “Cup of Blessing” because the Kiddush is said over it. However, the instructions in Mishna Pesachim 10 also specify that the benediction (the Kiddush) is to be said over the third cup as well.

Most Jewish sources, however, either reference the third cup by the name “Cup of Blessing” or refer to the third cup by either name: the “Cup of Blessing” or the “Cup of Redemption”. This third cup was the most important because it was at this point that the story of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt was retold – the primary purpose of the Passover feast.

In 1 Cor 10:16, it is most likely that Paul used the term “*cup of blessing*” to refer to the third cup of the Passover because it was the third cup that was used during the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

Regardless of whether Paul used the term “*the cup of blessing*” in reference to the first or third cup, it is evident that the early Church associated the elements of the Lord’s Supper with the elements of the Passover meal. This is also seen 1 Cor 5:7, where Paul refers to the unleavened bread and states that “*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*”.

Must We Use Wine in the Lord’s Supper Today?

Do we have to use wine in the Lord’s Supper just because Jesus used wine? This is a question that is often asked when this topic is studied.

In seminary, theology students learn that the Bible teaches in three ways: command, inference, and example. There is no direct Bible command that says “Thou shalt use fermented wine in the Lord’s Supper.”

We are directly commanded that God is One (Deu 6:4, Mar 12:29). We are directly commanded to be baptized in Jesus name (Acts 2:38). We are directly commanded to receive the Holy Ghost (Joh 20:22, Acts 2:38). However, there are many strongly held doctrines of the Church that are not taught by a direct command. For example, there is no direct command to speak with tongues. We strongly hold that speaking with tongues is the initial evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost, but this belief is not based on a command, but on inference and Apostolic example. That is, we read the *example* of Acts 10:45-46: “*for they heard them speak with tongues*” and *infer* that speaking in tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

If one of the core doctrines of the Apostolic faith is based, not on a command, but on inference and example, do we really need a direct command to use wine in the Lord’s Supper? Obviously not.

[Please do not misunderstand the argument here. The author is not saying that we have no firm scriptural basis for speaking with tongues. We have a very firm basis for it, but it is taught by example and inference and not by command.]

Given that Jesus used wine in the institution of the Lord’s Supper, do we still need to use wine in the Lord’s Supper

today? If so, why? Why could grape juice not be used instead? What is so special about wine?

Following the Example of Scripture

It is evident that wine was used in the institution of the Lord's Supper. This should be enough reason for us to also follow this example. We baptize by immersion (as opposed to sprinkling) in part because that is how Jesus and the early Church baptized. At the Last Supper, Jesus said "*this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*" (1 Cor 11:25). He told us to do what He did. If Jesus used wine, we should use wine also.

Not only did Jesus use wine, but the early Church used wine. In 1 Cor 11, Paul corrected the Corinthian church for improperly celebrating the Lord's Supper.

"Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. (18) For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. (19) For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (20) When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. (21) For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken [METHUO]. (22) What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." (1 Cor 11:17-22)

Paul uses the Greek word METHUO for "drunken". Every time METHUO is used, it refers to intoxication. It is the same word used in Eph 5:18.

"And be not drunk [METHUO] with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;" (Eph 5:18)

The Corinthians were having a party and calling it the Lord's Supper. Paul rebukes them for this because some of them were getting drunk and were not caring for those who are too poor to afford fine food and wine. Paul goes on to explain that the Lord's Supper is a solemn time of thanksgiving and self-examination.

Paul also likened the elements of the Lord's Supper to the elements of the Passover meal.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (17) For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor 10:16-17)

Wine was used in the Cup of Blessing during a traditional Passover meal and also during the institution of the Lord's Supper.

So, we have a pattern. Jesus used wine at the institution of the Lord's Supper. The early Church used wine in the Lord's Supper. There is no evidence of anything but wine being used in the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we should use wine in the Lord's Supper also.

The Symbolism of Wine

"And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, (8) Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so

thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. (9) And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. (10) And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? (11) And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. (12) And the LORD spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." (Num 20:7-12)

Moses was forbidden to enter the Promised Land because he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. According to 1 Cor 10:4, the rock represented Christ.

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Cor 10:4)

Christ was "struck" (i.e., crucified) once and now we "speak" to Him in prayer. Why was the punishment of Moses and Aaron so severe? Not only were their actions disobedient, done in anger, and manifested a lack of faith, but they also violated God's system of symbols. God takes his symbols very seriously.

We adhere to God's system of symbols when we practice baptism by immersion rather than sprinkling. Immersion is not only what was practiced originally, but it also has the symbolic meaning of burial: "... we are buried with him by baptism ..." (Rom 6:4).

We also adhere to God's system of symbols when we anoint with oil during the laying on of hands. Anointing with oil is a symbol of the application of the Holy Ghost.

If we preserve the symbolism of water baptism by immersion, and we preserve the symbolism of anointing by using oil, then shouldn't we also preserve the symbolism of the Lord's Supper by using wine?

So, what does the wine symbolize in the Lord's Supper? Jesus answered this question very clearly.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; (28) For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Mat 26:27-28)

Jesus said that the wine in the cup of the Lord's Supper represents His blood. This is very appropriate because wine is red like blood. Wine has been associated with blood for thousands of years. The skin and clothing of those who tread the winepress are stained red from the color of the crushed grapes. It is not only the crushing, but the blood red stains that make treading the winepress symbolic of God's judgment. This is seen in Isa 63:3 and Rev 14:20.

"I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." (Isa 63:3)

"And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." (Rev 14:20)

The wondrous message of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ underwent the crushing power of God's winepress of judgment and His shed blood is the payment for our sins. One day, that judgment will fall upon all those who have rejected this salvation which Christ provides.

In Isa 49:26 and Deu 32: 14, wine is likened to blood.

“And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.” (Isa 49:26)

“He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; (14) Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure [CHEMER] blood of the grape.” (Deu 32:13-14)

Some prohibitionists say that “*pure blood of the grape*” in Deu 32:14 is referring to freshly pressed grape juice. The word translated “*pure*” is actually the Hebrew word CHEMER which *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries* defines as “From H2560; *wine* (as *fermenting*): - pure, red wine.” *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions* defines CHEMER simply as “wine”. CHEMER is derived from the Hebrew root word CHAMAR which means “A primitive root; properly to *boil* up; hence to *ferment* (with scum); to *glow* (with redness)” (Strong). The Jewish Publication Society's translation of the Old Testament reads “*and of the blood of the grape thou drankest foaming wine*”. Young's Literal Translation translates it as “*and of the blood of the grape thou dost drink wine*”. This is also how it was translated in the Septuagint (which uses “OINOS” for “wine”). So, it is fermented wine that is called “*the pure blood of the grape*”, which further substantiates that fermented wine is a symbol of blood.

In addition to representing blood, fermented wine is also considered to be without leaven. This is interesting because leaven (yeast) is used to produce wine. However, all the yeast dies in the fermentation process. It “sacrifices itself” to turn

the grape juice into wine. Notice that leaven could not be used with blood sacrifices under the Law.

“Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left unto the morning.” (Exo 34:25)

“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.” (Lev 2:11)

“Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years: (5) And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.” (Amo 4:4-5)

But, wine was commanded to be offered with the morning and evening blood sacrifices.

“And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of a hin of wine [YAYIN] for a drink offering.” (Exo 29:40)

Leaven is a usually symbol of sin.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” (Mat 16:6)

“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: (8) 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.” (1Co 5:7-8)

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” (Gal 5:9)

Since leaven represents sin, and wine is considered unleavened, then the wine of the Lord's Supper not only symbolizes blood, but it symbolizes Christ's *sinless* blood. The same principle is also seen in the use of unleavened bread to represent Christ's sinless body.

The symbolism of the Lord's Supper is a very important part of the ceremony. It is no less important than the symbolism in baptism or anointing with oil.

The History of Grape Juice in the Lord's Supper

The use of unfermented grape juice in the Lord's Supper has a rather surprising beginning. It started in about 1869 during the Great Prohibition movement in the United States.

One ardent prohibitionist did not agree that wine should be used in the Lord's Supper so he invented a method whereby grape juice could be pasteurized. The pasteurization process kills the yeast bacteria that are naturally present on the grape and prevents the grape juice from fermenting into wine. This prohibitionist called this preserved grape juice “non-alcoholic wine” and convinced his Church to use it instead of regular, alcoholic wine. The name of this ardent prohibitionist was Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch. The following is from the company history as described on the Welch's company web site.

“1849 In Concord, Mass., Ephraim Wales Bull achieves his goal of developing the “perfect” sweet and palatable grape: the “Concord.” His work with seeds and seedlings spanned more than 10 years and was the result of 22,000 crossbreeding experiments on 125 vines.

1869 Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch, a physician and dentist by profession, successfully pasteurizes Concord grape juice to produce an “unfermented sacramental wine” for fellow parishioners at his church in Vineland, N.J., where he is communion steward. His

achievement marks the beginning of the processed fruit juice industry.

1893 Grape juice becomes a national favorite as thousands sample it at the Chicago World's Fair. Dr. Charles E. Welch, son of Welch's founder, discontinues his practice of dentistry to give full attention to the marketing of grape juice. A new label is adopted, omitting the “Dr.” before the name Welch's.”

Does Using Grape Juice Invalidate the Lord's Supper?

There are those who argue that Christ's use of the words “*fruit of the vine*” proves that it does not matter whether we used grape juice or wine: both are “*fruit of the vine*”.

It is true that grape juice is red like blood. It is true that grape juice is unleavened. However, Christ commanded “*this do ye*” (1 Cor 11:25) in reference to the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we should strive to figure out what He did and do it.

While the author stops just short of asserting that grape juice invalidates an observance of the Lord's Supper, let us consider the motivations behind such a practice.

The use of grape juice in the Lord's Supper is a modern invention and a product of the Temperance movement in the United States in the late 1800's. While abstinence from alcohol beverages is wise in our times, we must not place such abstinence above the teaching of scripture. It is far more important to be aligned with the example set by Christ and the first century Apostolic Church than to be aligned with any modern social or religious trend or to base our service to God in any way upon the practices of the majority.

“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” (2 Cor 10:12)

Should Christians Drink Wine Today?

Whether or not Christians may drink wine today is a decision to be made by the leadership of the Church according to the leading of the Spirit.

We know that alcoholism has always been a problem, but in our prosperous modern environment, alcoholic beverages are very affordable and, as a result, alcoholism affects all segments of our society. Therefore, alcoholism may be much more of a problem than it was in ancient times. In addition, modern technology can amplify the destructiveness of alcoholism. A drunkard can do much more damage with a 2,000 pound automobile than he can with a camel or a mule.

Additionally, drinking alcoholic beverages is often associated with the worldly, licentious, and unconsecrated lifestyle that has become the norm in our decaying modern culture. Because of this, it is the opinion of the author that Christians should abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages.

However, it is not somehow “inconsistent” for a Christian to drink a small quantity of wine in the Lord’s Supper even though he abstains from alcohol at all other times.

Conclusion

The most common reason given for using grape juice instead of wine in the Lord’s Supper is the idea that the Bible prohibits the drinking of wine. The primary focus of this document has been to show that the Bible contains no such prohibition and that wine can and should be used in the Lord’s Supper.

While, abstaining from wine and other alcoholic beverages is wise in our modern society, we should not try to enforce our practice by teaching that the Bible says something that it does not.

To avoid the use of wine in the Lord’s Supper is to depart from the example of Jesus and the first century Apostolic Church.

Using anything other than wine in the Lord’s Supper is incongruent with God’s system of symbols. Maintaining the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper is no less important than maintaining the symbolism of other ordinances such as baptism or anointing with oil.

No man, woman or child is going to become intoxicated from a tablespoon of highly diluted wine.

For all these reasons, we should continue to use wine in the Lord’s Supper, even though we may practice abstinence from alcoholic beverages at other times.

References

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr,
M.A., D.D., General Editor

Smith's Bible Dictionary, Dr. William Smith (1884)

A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments,
Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown

Exposition of the Entire Bible, Dr. John Gill (1690-1771)

Commentary on the Bible, Adam Clarke, LL.D., F.S.A.,
(1715-1832)

Commentary on the Whole Bible, Matthew Henry (1662 –
1714)

Vincent's Word Studies, Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.

Notes on the Bible, Albert Barnes (1798-1870)

Fausset's Bible Dictionary, Andrew Robert Fausset (1821-
1910)

Illustrated Bible Dictionary, M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., 1897

Hebrew Definitions, Brown, Driver, Briggs

Word Pictures in the New Testament, Archibald Thomas
Robertson

Commentary on the Old Testament, Johann (C.F.) Keil
(1807-1888) & Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890)

Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries, James Strong,
S.T.D., LL.D., 1890.

***Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New
Testament***, Dr. Joseph Thayer

Agriculture in Iron Age Israel, Oded Borowski, 1987

Haggadah shel Pesach

The Babylonian Talmud