

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

The Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the solemn evening in which Jesus instituted the Lord's supper which Christians partake each Sunday as an act of worship. Jesus authorized the use of unleavened bread to represent His body and "fruit of the vine" (Luke 22:18) as an emblem of His blood. The Lord commands, "this do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). The apostle Paul states that the Lord's supper is a time to commune (1 Cor. 10:16) or enjoy fellowship with Christ and His death which gave man the opportunity to be saved. The "fruit of the vine," therefore, is much more than just a little grape juice in a cup. The "fruit of the vine" stands as a reminder to all Christians of the blood which was shed on the cross (Mat. 26:28), washes away sin (Rev. 1:5), and is contacted through obedience to God which culminates in water baptism (Rom. 6:3-4).

The Lord's supper was instituted as a memorial of the sacrifice of the sinless Lamb of God which takes away sin (John 1:29). The Lord's supper shares many similarities with the Passover Feast which was instituted by God to memorialize the night in which Israel sacrificed an innocent lamb and smeared its blood upon the door posts so that God would "pass over" their house when all of the first born of Egypt were killed in the tenth plague (Exo. 12 & 13). The Passover Feast was also known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread because no leavened bread was to be eaten for seven days during the feast. In fact, no leaven was to be found in their houses at all (Exo. 12:19).

Sadly, some have promoted and/or condoned the use of alcoholic wine as part of the Lord's supper. Mack Lyon, preacher for the television program, "In Search Of The Lord's Way" and participant with the Gospel Broadcasting Network (GBN), states, "to say it *must be* intoxicating or non-intoxicating is to make a law where God does not make one and such practice is not acceptable in the Lord's church. It is divisive."¹ In hopes that this statement was a mistake, I contacted brother Lyon for clarification. Lyon was adamant that he was against the use of alcohol for recreational purposes, but sadly, he stood by his statement that the use of intoxicating "fruit of the vine" was acceptable for use while partaking the Lord's supper. Lyon stated, "I do not know what the Lord used," in regard to the question of whether the "fruit of the vine" was alcoholic or simply grape juice. When asked if he (on behalf of the television program, "In Search Of The Lord's Way") would accept financial contributions from congregations which used alcohol on the Lord's table, he replied, "yes," and continued, "we probably already do." Lyon informed me that he had been preaching for seventy years and no one had been able to prove to him that the fruit of the vine the Lord used was not intoxicating. When I attempted to explain why it would be sinful to use alcohol as an emblem of the Lord's supper, he stated that we were "going around in circles" and the conversation soon came to an end.

The "fruit of the vine" used as part of the Lord's supper is simply that, "fruit of the vine," or juice from the grape. Alcohol is not a fruit from the vine. Alcohol is a by-product of grape juice which has been "leavened." The yeast reacts with the natural sugars of the grape juice and produces alcohol. The drink used in the Passover Feast of the Old Testament, therefore, could not have been alcoholic since there was to be no leaven, whatsoever, in the house for seven days (Exo. 12:19). Also, leaven is used as a figure for sin and wickedness in the New Testament (Mat. 16:11-12). Since Jesus was sinlessly perfect, why would God allow the "fruit of the vine" representing His Son's sinless blood be marred with leaven? In addition, the Greek words

translated, “wine,” are used 37 times in the New Testament, but are *never* used in reference to the Lord’s supper. Consider the following consequences of teaching that Jesus approved of or used alcohol in instituting His memorial feast: 1) If the “fruit of the vine” was intoxicating, Jesus promoted a product that would deceive its victims, thus implying that Jesus was deceitful (Pro. 20:1). 2) If Jesus drank alcohol, then He too, would have been deceived and would have sinned against God’s word. 3) If Jesus drank alcohol, the Scripture would consider Him to be unwise. 4) If the “fruit of the vine” was intoxicating, Jesus would have promoted a product which would produce woe, sorrow, wounds, contentions, cause the heart to utter perverse things, and deaden inhibitions to a point where one may be seduced by acts of lasciviousness (Pro. 23:29-35). 5) Jesus would have been guilty of placing a stumbling block and temptation before those who found alcohol a weakness (Hab. 2:15). The proof is overwhelming that the “fruit of the vine” is not to be intoxicating and using intoxicating drink as a part of worship is sinful indeed. The Bible consistently condemns the use of alcohol as a beverage and the thought of alcohol being a part of our communion with Christ is abominable.

Let us honor God’s Word and the precious blood of Christ which washes away sin when we partake of the “fruit of the vine.”

- *Brad Green*

1. Lyon, Mack. “More Striving For Unity.” *The Search Light*. Edmond Church of Christ; Edmond, OK. January 2009, p. 2-3.