
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: **Should fermented wine be used in the Lord's supper?**

When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, sometimes called the "communion," He used three elements to symbolize three spiritual things:

(1) He used one loaf of unleavened bread to symbolize His one unbroken body that was sacrificed for the sins of all the world.

1 Corinthians 11:23-24

23 ... the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

(2) He used one cup, or container, to symbolize the New Testament which He ratified with His own blood.

1 Corinthians 11:25

25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. ..."

(3) The one cup contained a liquid which the New Testament calls "fruit of the vine" and this was to symbolize His blood which brought the New Testament into force.

Matthew 26:29

29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

The question before us is this:

- (a) Does the expression "fruit of the vine" refer to grape juice, or fermented wine? and
- (b) Does it really matter one way, or the other?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JEWISH FEASTS

To find the answer to these questions, let's begin by noticing the occasion on which Jesus instituted the Lord's supper.

The occasion of the first communion service was the Jewish Passover and the Jewish "Feast of unleavened bread." Notice carefully:

Matthew 26:17

17 Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

Jesus instructs His disciples to find a certain room in Jerusalem and prepare for this "feast of unleavened bread." In keeping with God's law the entire house had to be cleansed of everything containing leaven. If any leaven was found in the house during the "Feast of unleavened bread," that household had broken God's command and would be cut off from God.

Exodus 12:19

19 For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.

Exodus 13:7

7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.

God was very strict about this requirement and there was no misunderstanding exactly what He meant! As strange as this may seem, there could be nothing with leaven in the house – leaven means yeast.

It is because of this that we know Jesus used unleavened bread – that is, He used bread that contained no yeast. It is also because of this that we know beyond doubt that Jesus used unfermented grape juice, because fermented wine is made with and contains yeast – a leavening agent.

THE WORD "WINE" IS NEVER USED

Besides the fact that no yeast was allowed in the houses during this Jewish feast, we can know that Jesus used unfermented grape juice because of the very wording of the communion passages.

(1) Notice that the word "wine" is never used in any communion passage. Now there were several Greek words available to Jesus which could have been used to describe fermented wine, but He never used one of them.

(2) Instead of using the word "wine" Jesus said He used the "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29).

The expression "fruit of the vine" literally means "that which is produced on the vine." Grape juice fits this description. Grape juice is exactly what the grape vine produces.

In contrast, fermented wine is never produced on the vine. Fermented wine is not the product of the vine, but is rather a "by-product." To have fermented wine one must pick the grapes off the vine, crush them, add sugar and yeast and store it at the proper temperature for several weeks. If fermented wine were the produce of the vine one could take the grapes right off the vine and squeeze wine directly from the clusters.

Obviously, then, fermented wine is not literally the "fruit of the vine," and fermented wine is not what Jesus used in the communion. He used unfermented grape juice.

DOES IT MATTER?

Our final question is: Does it really matter what we use? Does God really care if we use one loaf of unleavened bread, or one cup, or unfermented grape juice?

My friend, think about this carefully! If it did not matter to God how the communion were observed, then why did He go to the trouble of telling us how to do it? If it did not matter He would not have bothered revealing it to us.

When men willfully ignore the divine pattern given by God and substitute their own innovations, they are not relying upon the grace of God, but instead they are testing the grace of God. Men are testing and tempting God to see what He will do and Jesus plainly declared:

Matthew 4:7

7 ... "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"

Please think about this carefully. If your church is not observing the communion exactly as God instructed, don't continue to "tempt" God. Come out from that congregation and do not partake of their sins lest you suffer with them on the Judgment Day (2 Cor 6:14-17).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. If you would like to speak with someone from the congregation in person, you may call **405-589-4184** or you may leave your name and number at the sound of the tone and one of our brethren will be glad to call you back. We also invite you to visit our web site www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on *Bible Talk*.