

The Lord's Supper Observance

The Drink Element Considered

1Co 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Let this Scripture be our guide and our desire as we study this subject today. We commend this to the judgment of the saints and to the true churches of Jesus Christ our Lord, only to whom this subject pertains. We have no desire to stir up argument or cause any division among the dear brethren in Christ. Our hope is that what we say might be used of God to help, encourage, and admonish each of us in the doctrines of Christ, which has been committed to the trust of the churches. Our text concerns Matthew chapter 26.26-30, and particularly verse 29:

Mt.26:26-30 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27 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. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

The Lord's Supper: The Inaugural Ceremony of the N.T.

The subject we enter into is, as are all doctrines and practices belonging to the true churches, very important. This ordinance, one of two that we possess, baptism being the other, is precious because it is this ordinance that is essentially the 'ribbon-cutting' ceremony of the New Covenant. This is the inaugural ceremony to the New Testament. *28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* This supper, established just before the death of our Lord Jesus, was instituted to remind the disciples of the new things that they were embarking on as they marched down through the ages into all the world. Therefore it is a very precious emblem to us.

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Being Present at that First Supper

Particularly we are considering what the drink element is that should be poured into that cup of this supper. So let's pose this question: What if we had been there at that first supper? Would our personal presence at that first supper really add anything to the validity of the argument that we would then know for sure what to pour into that cup? Surely if they had wine in the cup we should use wine, or if they had only juice of the grape we would know to use juice. Is that true? Might we suggest that such a thought is to impose our own thoughts, or to superimpose them to what our Lord Himself actually said by His own words 29 *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.* In our estimation, this is one of the greatest errors that we, the saints of God, fall into and must constantly be wary: that is, posing our opinions into God's Word so as to unduly influence the content of its message from what it really and originally taught. But let's go back to the days when Christ Jesus began His public ministry, when He walked in the midst of Israel, when he called the apostles to service, and let's discover if our investigation will shed clearer light into our present subject. Will such an inquisition lend any more information to what we already know? Will it answer, once and for all, the question of what we should be pouring into that cup at the Lord's Supper observance?

Just a few months prior to our Lord Jesus' beginning His public ministry there was a man named John, His cousin. This man was sent from God (Jn.1.6.) This man preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mk.1.4.) He was a coarse, reclusive wilderness dweller (Mt.3.3, 11.8,) where, on the other hand, Christ Jesus was gentle, soft-spoken, social, public and traveled from city to city (Mt.12.18, 19; Mk.1.38.) John and Jesus were men of opposites in many respects. Now let us note a particular distinction between these two men which applies to our subject:

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Mt.11.18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

There is no denying that John was what we call today a teetotaler. He practiced total abstinence of every intoxicating form of the fruit of the vine that was available to them of that day. Jesus, however, practiced toleration. Based on the clear testimony of Holy Scripture our Lord drank wine. (It is not the purpose of our article today to justify the biblical and beneficial uses of wine. This should be evident enough to anyone who desires to learn the truth according to the Word of God.) John did not abstain from drinking wine because He was under commandment to do so. Luke, the first chapter and 15th verse simply and prophetically states what he would do. John was not under the vow of a Nazarite. There is no reason given to us answering the question why he was restrained to live in such a way as he did other than perhaps stating the obvious: that his character would be a living antithesis, in some measure, to that of His Lord. There was nothing wrong with his practice. His living was commendable, and must have strongly convicted those who lived in excess, as our Lord's practice of imbibing wine must have strongly convicted those self-righteous, religious leaders of the day. (Do not misunderstand what is being stated here. John's life was in no way on a standard with our Lord's. John was a sinner; Christ is without sin, and the sinless. Here we are only measuring the static effect of drink in these two men: the use of wine or juice has no intrinsic characteristics of good or evil.)

John's disciples adhered to his standards. In other words John's disciples were most likely teetotalers, and therefore Christ's disciples probably imbibed wine. (Mt.11.17; Lk.7.32 notice the plural *we*...it wasn't only John and Christ. Their disciples that were involved in these things too.) We know that John must decrease and Christ must increase. John's

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disciples, once they understood who Christ was, would leave John, from whom they had rightly received their baptism and instruction, and follow Christ. As these followers merged there can be no doubt that there were certain contrasting ideologies or customs. (Differences should not be thought to be evil. 1Co.12.4-7) This is the crux of the matter concerning the contents of that cup. We still have no answer to what was poured into it. Can you absolutely conclude that our Lord Jesus used wine in this supper? Have we the Scriptural proof that the apostles, that had formerly been followers of John, baptized of him, who knew John's tee totaling position, who had followed our Lord for nearly 3 ½ years, had taken either position, wine or juice, to the exclusion of the other? The answer could be stated in the negative. Please read this carefully: neither is wrong in themselves. So now we want to consider taking New Testament ordinances and putting them in an Old Testament setting. There is a danger of adding to or taking away from what is written.

Properly Interpreting the Church Ordinances

As stated earlier, the true churches of Jesus Christ have only two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism has been a great cause of persecution for us from the days of Christ. Baptism, we must emphasize, is a New Testament ordinance. It cannot be interpreted and does not need to be interpreted as if it had a pre-existence in the Old. Baptism rightly set forth raises the indignation of false religions, especially false religions that call themselves Christian and churches themselves. (Only two times does Scripture take an O.T. historical event to interpret N.T. baptism: 1Co.10.2; 1Pe. 3.21; but these religious groups have long butchered this crucial church ordinance through their abuses of types and antitypes.) Particularly among these so-called religious movements the sting of this offense could be obliterated if we would alter two things: the strict doctrine and practice of the ordinance of baptism. This is where we learn a valuable lesson about taking New Testament things and reevaluating and reworking them under the

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system of the Old Testament.

The Practice of Baptism Distorted

Baptism, when taken and reapplied to Old Testament patterns becomes heretically distorted. This forms the very foundation of the reason that false religions have so perverted the doctrine and practice of the baptism ordinance. From this they have concocted baptisms of washing, pouring (effusion,) and sprinkling. They force Old Testament types upon the New Testament church ordinance of baptism. Washing, as a mode of baptism, is justified because it must have been what Old Testament Israel was doing in their washing rites (Ex.19.10, 14).

Washing Misapplied to Baptism

The whole people of Israel being about to be taken into covenant with God, and thereby constituted "a holy nation," were required to "wash their clothes" --emblematic of their ceremonial purity. It was a baptism --the sign of their admission to sacred privileges...For which reason succeeding generations of Israelites were never baptized, because they were already in the holiness, the passage to which such baptism would signify' (Johnstone, 'Israel after the Flesh,' p.97). Taken from Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Bible Commentary, Vol.1, p.352, Hendrickson Publishers, Second Printing - January 2002.

Thus Christ filled up the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which consisted in divers washings; thus he recommended the gospel-ordinance of baptism to his church, put honour upon it, and showed what virtue he designed to put into it. It became Christ to submit to John's washing with water, because it was a divine appointment...Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 1, p.45, Baker Book House publishers. (He uses the word washing, but he teaches it by the art of sprinkling. see below)

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(At Acts 8.38) *All that is intimated is that there was water enough to perform the rite of baptism, whether that was by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. It must be admitted, I think, that there might have been water enough for either.* Barnes' Notes, Vol. Acts, Romans, p.149

Sprinkling Misapplied to Baptism

(Acts 8.38) *The baptizing of him hereupon. The eunuch ordered his coachman to stop, commanded the chariot to stand still. It was the best baiting place he ever met with in any of his journeys. They went down both into the water, for they had no convenient vessels with them, being upon a journey, wherewith to take up water, and must therefore go down into it; not that they stripped off their clothes, and went naked into the water, but, going barefoot according to the custom, they went perhaps up to the ankles or mid-leg into the water, and Philip sprinkled water upon him, according to the prophecy which this eunuch had probably but just now read, for it was but a few verses before those which Philip found him upon, and was very apposite to his case (#Isa 52:15): So shall he sprinkle many nations..._* Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 6, p.167, 168, Baker Book House publishers. (This sprinkling theory is the erroneous result of applying O.T. rites with a purely N.T. ordinance. Moses' taking the hyssop and blood, sprinkling the book and the people. (Ex.24.6, 8)

This confusion is the result of taking one of the New Testament ordinances and forcing it to conform to Old Testament practices. The two are incompatible. This is the danger of taking our present subject and doing the same with it. To try proving that we are obligated to use wine in the Lord's Supper by superimposing Old Testament types upon it alters the originality of the Supper. Our Lord did not take something preexisting in the Old Covenant and conform it to the use of the New Testament churches. No! He took a new thing for a new work intended for a new people. We are

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not observing an old practice with a few new additions. We are not under the terms of the old covenant. We are not the nation of Israel reworked. We have a new ordinance, under the New Covenant, for the churches of Christ. Be very cautious fitting the Supper to the Old Covenant types. The religions of Christendom have perverted both of these ordinances through this very means, and have through this craft transformed them into sacramental rites. (Simply put, this means that Catholic and Protestant religions have changed these N.T. church ordinances, which was never committed to their keeping, and they have transformed them into a means for attaining grace from God. It is a very strange thing to try and comprehend what these religions teach as transpiring during the observance of these ordinances. It is mysticism, and this is heresy to the true churches of Jesus Christ!) Below are a few excerpts of what the Catholic and Protestant religions believe concerning the two ordinances of the true churches of Christ. Their influence is felt in every other Christian religion, and should be rejected completely by the true churches of Jesus Christ.

The Practice of the Lord's Supper Distorted

In Loius Berkoff's Systematic Theology we find:

...the Roman Catholic Church...proceeds on the assumption that the sacraments contain all this is necessary for the salvation of sinners, need no interpretation, and therefore render the Word quite superfluous as a means of grace...

...the Churches of the Reformation...regard the Word as absolutely essential, and merely raise the question, why the sacraments should be added to it.

1. (c) ...This is the only way in which the sinner can become a participant of the grace that is offered in the Word and in the Sacraments. (p.616)

...In the New Testament. The Church of the New Testament also has two sacraments, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper...they symbolize the same spiritual blessings that were symbolized by circumcision and Passover in the old dispensation. (p.620)

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...The use of both elements (wine and bread, my insert) enabled Christ to give a vivid representation of the idea that His body was broken, that flesh and blood were separated, and that the sacrament both nourishes and quickens the soul. (p.649)

Under the heading of the Reformed view:

G. The Lord's Supper as a Means of Grace, of Its Efficacy.

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, instituted by the Lord Himself as a sign and seal, is as such also a means of grace...that his disciples should profit by participation in it...He instituted it as a sign and seal of the covenant of grace...

1. The grace received in the Lord's Supper.

...The sacrament merely adds to the effectiveness of the Word, and therefore to the measure of the grace received. (p.654)

2. The Manner in which this grace is wrought.

a. The Roman Catholic view.

...It is "the unbloody renewal of the sacrifice of the cross."...The sacrifice of Christ in the Lord's Supper is considered to be a real sacrifice, and is supposed to have propitiatory value. (p.655)

b. The prevailing Protestant view.

...It is not itself a cause of grace, but merely an instrument in the hand of God. It's effective operation is dependent, not only on the 'presence,' but on the 'activity,' of faith in the recipient...Some Lutherans and the High Church Episcopalians, however, in their desire to maintain the objective character of the sacrament, clearly manifest a leaning toward the position of the church of Rome... 'We believe, teach, and confess', says the Formula of Concord, "that not only true believers in Christ...but also the unworthy and unbelieving receive the true body and blood of Christ...nevertheless...they derive thence neither consolation nor life, but rather so as that receiving turns to their judgment and condemnation, unless they be converted and repent... (pgs.655, 656)

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In all simplicity we need to state that when the saints of the true churches of Jesus Christ (the only church that is a reality before God, Baptist churches) observe these ordinances it is not in order to obtain grace, but it is because they have already received it. (The thief on the cross participated in neither the ordinance of baptism, nor the Lord's Supper, and he met Christ in paradise that very day! Lk.23.43) The true saints of God respond in obedience to the command of God, not in order to receive grace, but as it is a sure sign that they have received the quickening grace of life from Him already. Their consciences testify that they have obeyed the Word of God from the heart, in that they have subjected themselves to both commands regarding these ordinances. First they have been baptized, which command rests upon repentant sinners, and second, they observe this Supper in memorial of their Lord's death until He comes again. (1Pe.3.21)

And so we must be clear: the Lord's Supper ordinance is not an extension of the Passover dinner. Judas departed upon the close of the Passover meal (Jo.13.1, 2, 30; Mt.26.25; Mk. 14.20, 21.) Our Lord institutes the church ordinance immediately thereafter (Mt.26.26-30; Mk.14.22-26.) But yet, in all of this we cannot prove the exclusive use of wine or juice.

The Type of the Blood of Christ

Fruit of the vine represents the shed blood of Christ because our Lord said this Himself. *Mt 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* That means many Old Testament types, that have any fruit of the vine as its ingredient, might be understood to represent blood, but it does not mean that the Supper necessarily carries all of those types in it. The Supper is given to us for a memorial of our Lord's death. It does not carry the meaning of the heave offering (resurrection,) or the continual sin offering (looking forward to the day of His death for sin.) For example, while wine and strong wine do represent blood and were in the drink offerings, they were poured out, not consumed. (Lev.23.13; Nu.28.7); however, the best of the wine was

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reserved from the fire of the heave offerings most likely kept and consumed at their homes. (Nu.18.11, 12) They were clearly restricted from the use of wine or strong drink during their times of service in the tabernacle.

(Lev.10.9) We conclude that the only substance remaining that they could drink of the *fruit of the vine* would have been *juice*. Otherwise they could drink water, milk and such things as normal. The time that the Lord gave this prohibition of the wine and strong drink might be directly related to the sin of Nadab and Abihu and their offering strange fire upon the altar.(?) We understand that alcohol affects our ability to make good judgments. That is exactly what Lev.10.9-11 states (The prohibition of wine and strong drink) 9 *Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:* (Their judgment was not to be affected by these things.) 10 *And that ye may put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and unclean;* 11 *And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.* To all of this there are obvious limitations to the extent that a type or pattern should be carried. Our two N.T. ordinances interpret themselves.

What Qualifies as the Fruit of the Vine?

The phrase *fruit of the vine*, and the word *cup* expresses all that we need to know. These terms are strangely ambiguous yet clear. According to Number 6.3 we read precisely what is specified by the phrase *fruit of the vine*. For exposing this let us use both the King James Version and the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures (LXX.)

KJV: Nu 6:3 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.

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LXX: Nu 6:3 he shall purely abstain from wine and strong drink; and he shall drink no vinegar of wine or vinegar of strong drink; and whatever is made of the grape he shall not drink; neither shall he eat fresh grapes or raisins,

Under the vow of the Nazarite a person was to abstain from any use of the *fruit of the vine*. Notice how the *fruit of the vine* is listed: 1. wine 2. strong wine 3. vinegar of wine 4. vinegar of strong wine 5. liquor of grapes. Now being we are concerned with the drink element we need not go into those things that are eaten, but that is clear enough. Each of these five things represents the *fruit of the vine*. We really need to note this. The LXX states it this way, after detailing the precise listing of the KJV excepting the juice element, which is called the liquor of grapes, it reads this way: *and whatsoever is made of the grape he shall not drink...* First of all this statement, by the use of the word *whatsoever*, includes juice as constituting one of the qualifying elements that belong to that classification of the fruit of the vine. Second, and we should give this due consideration: the term *is made of the grape* is undoubtedly the most synonymous phrase we will find anywhere, in all of the Bible, which agrees with the phrase *fruit of the vine*.

KJV:

gennh<matoj th?j a]mpe<lou
fruit/produce of the vine

LXX:

katerga<zetai e]k stafulh?j
works/produces of grapes

These phrases, though differing Greek words, reveal identical information. In Mt.26.29 **fruit** (gennh<matoj, genitive sing noun, identifies the relationship of this word to the genitive case of *the vine*: the root ge<nnhma, means: what is born or produced...fruit, increase; gi<nomai, the root verb is the act of producing or performing.) agrees with Nu.6.3 (LXX) **is made** (katerga<zetai, 3rd person, present, indicative:

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meaning *is produced*. In the N.T. the usage of this exact verb tense is always, but once, translated *worketh*. Once is it translated *causeth*. (2Co.9.11)

Next, the phrase as it is found in our King James Bibles, *liquor of grapes* is also enlightening to learn. Once in a while there are words whose meanings have changed over time. This is such an instance: ***liquor*** (hr!W4m, (misrah): the Hebrew from which this word *liquor* is translated is used only once in Scripture; thought to be from a root meaning *to divide*) The KJV uses the English word *liquor* one other time and there it means *mixed wine*, but this is translated from another Hebrew word. (See Song of Solomon 7.2 sysif3m2, (me-ga-sees,) ssif!, (gah-sas,) must, or new wine.)

How does the Oxford English Dictionary define the word *liquor*? The Oxford English Dictionary (O.E.D.) defines *liquor* as:

1. *A liquid: matter in a liquid state: occas. in wider sense, a fluid. Obs. in general sense.*
3. *Liquid for drinking; beverage, drink. Now (my underlining for emphasis) almost exclusively spec., a drink produced by fermentation or distillation.*

If you have an O.E.D. you will find beneath this 3rd heading our Scripture text of Nu.6.3 cited for its use of the word *liquor* in the year 1611. Two details in this category might be a further help to understanding the original uses of the word *liquor*: yr**1494**...*in the which they cast wine, milk, and other liquors*. And then, yr**1687**...*They call it coffee,...This liquor is made of a berry*. Notice that milk, as well as wine, and coffee are each called liquors. We can see that the word liquor was understood as a drink or beverage, which was certainly not restricted to drinks containing alcohol.

So, with all of that said, we have gained nothing to help us prove what kind of element it is that is in the cup of the Lord's Supper ordinance **other**

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than the restriction that it be the *fruit of the (grape) vine*. But is this all from which we have to work?

Leaven in the Cup

It is no small statement that it isn't the leaven in the cup which we should be concerned about; it is the leaven in our hearts. Perhaps all of the discussion about the physical attributes of the element in the cup is useless. The only leaven that Scripture indicates that we should watch for is that which would be found in bread. No Scripture gives us any indication that we should concern ourselves with leaven in a cup. That notion comes from a misguided zeal to be dogmatic in a position which **cannot** be resolved. It is a Biblical impossibility to set down clear proofs that one drink element of the grape vine has exclusivity over all others.

The Lack of Specificity Concerning the Contents of the Cup

The issue concerning the drink is an open one, and that by the wise decree of God. **It is an irrefutable truth that there is not one scripture, in all of the Bible, that specifically reveals to us which drink element it is, other than it being of the *fruit of the vine*, that the churches are to use in the Lord's Supper.** Brethren, the best illustrations, the best Biblical patterns we can find, the best of the best fails to ascertain with absolute certainty that the drink element should be either wine or juice. We have no *Thus saith the Lord* on this matter. And yet, with this in mind there are those who are contentious, even hateful, and breaking fellowship with other brethren over this. Perhaps we could spend some time delving into the clarity of our meetings being gathered together on the first day of the week. Let us find a command in the whole of God's word for this. Maybe we should think about some of the clarity we have surrounding the ordinance of baptism, whether we should dip once, or dunk three times; or that we should baptize in a river, pool, lake, or enclosed baptistery; or baptize the candidate

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face up or face down, against flowing water or with it. Perhaps we should discuss the clarity concerning a woman's head covering; or the clarity of foot washing; or best of all, the clarity we all have concerning the second coming of Christ: was that pretribulation, mid-tribulation, or post-tribulation; rapture or resurrection; or was it premillennial, postmillennial, or amillennial. Personally, we could settle some of these matter better, with all of the information we have in the Scriptures, than we can settle this one matter surrounding the drink in the Lord's Supper. Saints, there are some things that the individual soul must resolve to a conclusion, and there are some things that never will be in this life. And there are some things that independent churches must also resolve for themselves. *Ro 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.* Far more important to this issue of the drink element, which ought to concern us, is not **what** goes into the cup, but **how** it is poured into it.

Another Important Consideration Governing What the Cup Should Contain

We mentioned earlier that we believe it is nothing less than the wise decree of God to have undisclosed the specific element of the cup. This cup's content is taken up in the hands of sinners saved by grace. This is where the churches need to take their position as an autonomous body of Christ. It is the church that should know the welfare of their members. There is no denying that every one of us has some evil propensity, something that plagues us our entire life. Some of us have been drunkards; some of us have been fornicators and adulterers, some sodomites, some extortionists, and so forth. For some these problems do not appear to hinder us in our walk with Christ; we lay them aside and press on. Not that we necessarily aren't inclined any longer, but the faith of Christ has increased and prevailed in us to be conquerors over those things, as much as we can be while in this body of sin; but certainly never as much as we could wish we were. O for that day! Have we given enough consideration for our fellow

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brother's weakness to sin? Doesn't the attitude taught to us of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul apply to both the individual, and the church as a whole? That *Ro 14:21* *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.*

Let's discuss the possibility of offending a brother or sister by our eating meats sacrificed to idols. (The issue of eating meats that were declared clean and unclean creatures for national Israel under the law, and the preference of a vegetarian lifestyle doesn't pertain to the scope of this discussion.) We might have be confronted with weak brethren who have problems with meats that are sacrificed to idols. We simply cannot ignore our brother's conscience and cause offense. Furthermore, once in a while, we might have to address this issue with those who know not Christ. (1Co.10.28) Now, we might not necessarily, in our nation, have any difficulties concerning eating meats sacrificed to gods, but this is still a matter of livid concern for some of our brethren in other places of the world. Places where nations are steeped in demon worship, and the have a pantheon of gods to appease. For certain there are a number of our missionary brethren that could attest to that truth. It is in those regions that eating meats sacrificed to a god could be a matter that we would have to confront on a personal level as well as in a church setting. It might be, for the sake of weaker brethren, that we restrict our fellowship dinners only to meats not sacrificed to gods. (Or at least make it a rule that we not disclose where we acquired the meat.) If the whole congregation becomes settled on the matter of meats sacrificed to idols then nothing needs to be done: eat freely giving thanks to God. But if one member, just one, has trouble with eating meats sacrificed to gods, then the whole body knows exactly how to proceed. Is it proper, Christian behavior, to demand that the weak one get a set of legs and learn to stand on his own two feet? For whatever reason, some brethren are weak and we must bear with them in their weakness. They might never come to the place where the issue surrounding the powers of gods are really, absolutely nothing at all. But what stronger brethren know is this: *Ro 15:1*

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We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. What does that mean, and when does it apply if not in instances such as this? Let's ask ourselves this question, What wrong do those who know the truth commit by giving up the power to eat for a brother who hasn't that power? No wrong, dear brethren, has been committed. Holiness and love has produced this fruit toward the weak to the glory of God. *Let all things be done unto edifying...walk in love...forbearing one another in love...* How much better can those brethren, who are strong in the Lord, magnify the working of His power in them, among those of their own church body, than through these beneficent acts toward another, yet weaker brother or sister? Brethren, we need to put our brothers and sisters in mind when we use a substance like wine in the Lord's Supper. Some of us have had genuine problems with drunkenness. **In this matter, do we not have a biblical mandate to give those brethren the chiefest seats in determining which drink element should be administered in the Supper?** We do, and we're wrong when we do not. By the authority of the Word of God it is what our Lord Jesus Christ has done to provide for the needs of our weaker brethren. He has so ordered his Word, and His government in the churches, so that we can know that such conduct glorifies Him.

It is no secret that the church at Corinth had a great number of serious problems in their church. One of those problems involved their despicable conduct in the Lord's Supper observance. They had become fragmented in their gatherings. The Supper appears to have become an open-ended observance of 'come when you please and be sure to turn off the lights when you leave.' (Read 1Co.11.20-22) They would eat their supper and drink their wine very independently, probably in schismatic groupings. Corrupted as this Supper had become the Lord held them liable for their behavior. He began judging their sin. Some of the brethren became sick, and others died as a result of His chastening (1Co.11.30, 31.) The apostle Paul reminds them, with the Supper in context, that their homes were for eating and drinking (meals, v.22.) (We are not disannulling fellowship dinners. Paul

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defines for us the distinction of the Lord's Supper from every other event.) The Corinthians were implicitly gluttons, but explicitly drunkards. Notice that the Word of God does not draw the logical parallel between ...*one is hungry, and another is drunken...* (v.21) and ...*have ye not houses to eat and to drink in.* The logical parallel would have been, 'have ye not houses to eat and to get drunken in. **The strong inference is that they should not drink wine in their gatherings, but that it should be drunk in the home.** How did we come to this conclusion? First, drunkenness is wrong in public as well as in private. The other reason is the Corinthian's abuse of wine. They were not prepared to handle such an ingredient appropriately. Because of that it appears that the apostle Paul demanded that the Corinthians leave their wine at home for drinking...*And the rest will he set in order when he comes.* (v.34) Let us confirm what we have said all along. Had the Corinthian church ordered themselves appropriately in their observance of the Lord's Supper the use of both wine and juice might have been commendable. Again, allow me to reiterate, the use of both wine and juice in the Lord's Supper ordinance might have been commendable. (Here we should tread carefully because we cannot build facts on suppositions. The word *might* is used in view of the fact that if everything is understood correctly we can conclude this to be true. However, the evil of the Corinthian church must also have been the purpose of God to teach all succeeding churches the ills of certain things we have liberty to do but would best be left out.)

O. T. Types Overlooked Regarding the Use of Wine During Priestly Duties.

If we believe that the Old Testament priesthood presents a type of the N.T. believer/priests, and we do, we might want to entertain the prohibition of Lev.10.9 as shedding some light on what the N.T. church choice should be regarding the drink element. If that carries any weight at all, and it should, then we are now constrained to the use of these two elements: juice and vinegar from the grape. This is an overlooked part of the equation

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concerning the *fruit of the vine* in this discussion: that we can consider the use of grape vinegar as well. This qualifies, by Scriptural definition, as the *fruit of the vine*. (Nu.6.3) Perhaps all of the churches should simply use vinegar of the grape. That might better adorn our countenances to the memory of our Lord's suffering and death for our sins. Never have I heard of a person drunken from excess of vinegar. The arguments (which are baseless on both sides of the aisle) of leaven, sugar, and alcohol are all alleviated by the use of vinegar: sugar converts to alcohol; alcohol converts to vinegar, and the whole problem dissipates. But it is doubtful we will have any of that.

Closing Remarks

That wine presents special problems there is no doubt. Our society is full of drunkards. The masses love riotous living. Then from among the masses the Lord in His mercy regenerates one and converts him by the gospel. Do we suppose that all of this past livelihood simply dissipates in an instant. We, of all people, should know that is not the norm. We, knowing what we were before Christ, and knowing what we are since Christ, should bear with the young, bear the infirmities of the weak, and if the Lord is willing, they shall grow; but if not, the strong are to call upon the resources of His grace to gently, patiently lead by example, and continue serving weaker ones.

Finally, almost as a way of reminder from the things previously said, the drink element needs absolutely no qualifying Old Testament parallel. It can stand, as baptism does, on the force of the New Testament alone. We do not need to argue that only wine represents the blood of Christ, as compelling as the argument might be, because Christ Himself declared, by His choice of the phrase *fruit of the vine* that each of those particular elements represents his shed blood. He said...

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...this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Whatever it is that is constituted as the *fruit of the vine* and in the *cup* continually serves as a reminder, as oft as we drink it, that he died to pay our sin debt to God. Amen!

It is very difficult to refrain from forcing my preferences upon the subject. For years it has been my understanding that both *juice* and *wine* were suitable elements for use in the Lord's Supper. However, after this study, *juice* has become most prominent in my mind as the best drink to use in our particular setting, in the U.S.A, socially and morally. (Based on Lev.10.9; Rom. 14.21; 15.1; Gal.6.2) It will not be a contentious issue with me, and I will not break fellowship over it. My hope is that we will drink and eat this Supper worthily to the glory of God. If you have anything to share that would add to this discussion please contact me at:

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