

Jesus and Wine

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Introduction:

Jesus is, of course, our perfect example in all things (2 Peter 2:21). That being the case, what He taught and what He practiced about the use of alcohol is a pattern we should honor, respect, and follow. If it can be established that He approved the use of alcohol – perhaps even promoted its use - then we cannot reasonably oppose it. In fact, we should embrace it. If, on the other hand, we find no such support in His example or teaching then we are right to teach strongly against it.

In this outline we propose to examine the references to wine/alcohol in the life of Jesus that have served as battlegrounds in the discussion of ‘social drinking.’ Did Jesus condone the use of alcohol?

I. Did Jesus approve of the use of alcohol by His own practice/example?

A. The Wedding Feast at Cana of Galilee

1. John 2:1-11
2. This is the most popular of the supposed evidences that Jesus approved of social drinking
 1. W. J. Wiltenburg: *“At the very least, the story of Cana’s wedding feast indirectly approves the use of alcoholic beverages.”*¹
 2. Herschel H. Hobbs: *“There is no point in debating whether or not this was real wine. The Greek word ‘oinos’ normally denotes the fermented juice of the grape. The ruler’s appraisal of it in verse 10 suggests that it was wine of the best quality.”*²
3. In analyzing this text, we must remember that the Greek word ‘oinos’ is a generic word and can have reference to all kinds of wine, in all stages, fermented and unfermented, intoxicating and non-intoxicating (reference other lectures in this series)
 - a. We must determine the type of wine that Jesus made by examining the context, the occasion, and all the attendant circumstances
 - b. Jesus’ character, and the resulting influence of this act must also be considered
4. Some commentators are absolutely certain that Jesus made intoxicating wine at the wedding feast

¹ W. J. Wiltenburg, “The Bible and the Attitudes of Ministers on Drinking”, *Pastoral Psychology* (April, 1958)

² Herschel H. Hobbs, *An Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 64

- a. Burton Coffman stated: *“The opinion of the ruler of the feast that the wine Jesus made was superior in quality to that they had drunk earlier, supports the conclusion that it was not merely pure grape juice . . . (to) read WINE as GRAPE JUICE seems to this writer to be a perversion of the word of God.”*³
 - b. From an Internet website: *“Everything from the context of a wedding feast, to the usage of ‘oinos’ in the 1st century Greek literature . . . argues for the wine that Jesus created to be normal, ordinary wine, containing alcohol. There is simply no solid historical, cultural, exegetical, contextual, or lexical reason to understand it to have been grape juice.”*⁴
5. Others are fully convinced that the wine Jesus made was not intoxicating.
- a. R. A. Torrey: *“There is not a hint that the wine He made was intoxicating . . . There is not a hint that our Lord produced alcohol . . .”*⁵
 - b. Wm. L. Pettingill: *“I’m satisfied that there was little resemblance in it to the thing described in the Scripture of God as biting like a serpent and stinging like an adder (Prov. 23:29-32)”*⁶
6. Determining the type of wine Jesus made must take into consideration:
- a. The “well drunk” argument
 - i. The ruler of the feast said: *“Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”* (John 2:10)
 - ii) It is claimed that the expression “well drunk” proves that the wine at the wedding feast was intoxicating alcoholic wine, and that Jesus made more of the same.
 - iii) However, the ruler of the feast and/or the guests at the feast would have been unable to discern that a better wine was being served if they were already drunk at the time it was served.
 - iv) The word translated “drunk” (methuo) (and its cognates) can, and often does, mean ‘intoxicated, inebriated’. However, it can also mean ‘satiated, full’.

³ Coffman, Burton, *Commentary on John*, Firm Foundation Publishing House, Austin, 1974

⁴ “Did Jesus change water into wine or grape juice?” *Got Questions?*, www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-water-wine, (2/19/15)

⁵ R.A. Torrey, *Difficulties in the Bible* (Chicago, 1907), pp. 96-97

⁶ William L. Pettingill, *Bible Questions Answered* (Wheaton, Illinois) pp. 223-224

- a) McGuiggan⁷ notes several passages that use it this way in the Septuagint such as Isaiah 55:10 and **Haggai** 14:8 
- b) Bacchiocchi says: *“The verb ‘methusko’ in John 2:10 is used in the sense of satiation. It refers simply to the large quantity of wine generally consumed at a feast, without any reference to intoxicating effects.”*⁸
- v) This “well drunk” argument fails to prove that the wine at the feast was alcoholic due to the fact that the Greek word for ‘drunk’ cannot be stated to exclusively mean intoxicated. Additionally, the ability of the feast goers to discern the superior quality of the wine Jesus made argues against the fact that they were intoxicated.
- b. The “good wine” argument
 - i) The ruler of the feast called what Jesus had miraculously produced “the good wine”
 - ii) Some argue that this implies that it had a higher alcoholic content and, thus, was more intoxicating
 - iii) There is, however, indication that the people of that time regarded the good or best wine as that which was not intoxicating (*“Plutarch and Horace each mention that the best wine was that which was harmless or innocent. Pliny indicated that good wine was that which was destitute of spirit.”*⁹)
 - iv) Logically, the ruler of the feast would not be able to immediately distinguish the intoxicating power of the wine Jesus made. But he could instantly judge its taste. It was “good wine” because of its superior taste.
 - v) This “good wine” argument fails to establish that the wine Jesus made contained alcohol.
- c. The quantity produced and the moral implications
 - i) The “six waterpots of stone” that Jesus instructed to be filled with water held “two or three firkins apiece” (John 2:6,7)
 - ii) A firkin is *“8.6696 gallons, and consequently the amount of liquid in six stone jars . . . would exceed 110 gallons”*¹⁰

⁷ McGuiggan, Jim, *The Bible The Saint & The Liquor Industry*, International Bible Resources, Inc., Lubbock, 1977, p, 119

⁸ Bacchiocchi, Samuel, *Wine in the Bible, A Biblical Study on the Use of Alcoholic Beverages*, Biblical Perspectives, Berrien Springs, MI, 1989, p. 143

⁹ Jeffcoat, W.D., *The Bible and “Social” Drinking*, Publishing Designs, Inc. (Huntsville, AL) 1987, p. 56

¹⁰ Smith, Wm., *Bible Dictionary*, John C. Winston Co. (Philadelphia) 1884, p. 742

- Other estimates are as high as 120 to 160 gallons
 - However, some suggest a lower volume: (*“Very possibly, however, the Greek term represents the Hebrew ‘bath’; and if the ‘bath’ be taken at the lowest estimate assigned to it, the amount would be reduced to about 60 gallons.”*¹¹)
- iii) Regardless of the conversion factor used, the implication is clear. If the guests were already intoxicated, and Jesus made huge quantities of wine that was even more intoxicating than what they had before, He was certainly contributing to their drunkenness.
 - iv) Compare such alleged conduct by our Savior with the woe stated in Habakkuk 2:15: *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!”* (used metaphorically by the prophet in condemnation of the Babylonians)
 - vi) The purpose of this miracle was to “manifest His glory” (John 2:11). If He made intoxicating wine in huge quantities – for people who were already drunk - it would have manifested shame rather than glory.
 - vii) We should not forget that Jesus warned about placing any stumbling block before others: *“It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”* (Luke 17:1-2)
7. Taking all things into consideration, one must conclude that the wine Jesus made was not intoxicating.

B. Jesus came “eating and drinking”, He was a “winebibber”

1. Matthew 11:18-19 *“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 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.”*
2. Luke 7:33-35 *“For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous*

¹¹ ibid

man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.”

3. Some believe they have found their desired proof for drinking alcohol in this text:
 - a. Kenneth Gentry: *“Jesus himself drank wine. As a matter of fact, in Luke 7:33-35 he makes reference to his practice of drinking wine as a vivid illustration of a distinctive difference between himself and his forerunner, John the Baptist”*¹²
 - b. Horace Bumstead: *“The Bible sanctions the use of wine by the example of Christ. This sanction is undeniable and emphatic. Undeniable because we have the statement of fact in Christ’s own words; emphatic because his example as a user of wine is expressly contrasted by himself with the example of his forerunner, John the Baptist, who . . . was an abstainer from wine.”*¹³
 - c. Irving Raymond: *“Jesus Christ undoubtedly followed the usual customs of His day and drank wine at daily meals and at different kinds of celebrations . . . there is direct evidence both from what others said of Him and from what He Himself actually did . . . Jesus Christ Himself use(d) and sanction(ed) the use of wine . . .”*¹⁴
4. The context of this accusation shows that Jesus was dealing with adversaries who would never be content and would always find fault. (Matthew 11:16-17 *“But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.”*)
5. Consider the reference to John:
 - a) His austere life style caused them to say, *“He hath a devil”*.
 - b) This was an obviously false charge. Jesus said: *“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist”*. (Matthew 11:11)
 - c) The charge against John was a lie.
6. Now consider the accusation against Jesus:
 - a) Unlike John, Jesus associated with the public – even those despised by the Jewish hierarchy.
 - b) They charged Him with being a “gluttonous man and a winebibber”
 - c) Some observations:

¹² Gentry, Kenneth, *The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages* (Grand Rapids, 1986), p. 48

¹³ Bumstead, Horrace, *“The Biblical Sanction for Wine”*, *Bibliotheca Sacra* (January 1881) p., 82

¹⁴ Raymond, Irving Woodworth, *The Teaching of the Early Church on the Use of Wine and Strong Drink* (New York, 1927) p. 81

- i) Obviously, these critics were hypercritical and hypocritical. They were His enemies seeking to destroy His influence and example. They were NOT accusing Him of 'moderate social drinking' of alcoholic wine. They were accusing Him of unrighteous conduct. ('winebibber' literally means 'a tippler, a drunkard'¹⁵)
 - ii) John (most agree) lived as a Nazarite (Luke 1:15). As such, he would consume nothing produced from the grape vine. This would even include non-fermented wine/grape juice (Numbers 6:3-4). Jesus acknowledged the fact that His conduct was different when He conceded that He "came eating and drinking." This would certainly demonstrate that He drank wine - but not all sorts of wine - and could not be used to prove conclusively that He drank intoxicating wine
 - iii) Did the fact that Jesus was "a friend of publicans and sinners" (as his accusers pointed out) mean that He participated in their sins? No. In fact, His sinlessness (Hebrews 4:15) would argue the opposite.
 - iv) If this charge by His enemies proves that He was a sinful 'winebibber' then it also proves He was a glutton.
 - v) These same enemies accused Him of having a devil (John 1:20; 8:48). Was the charge true? Of course not!
 - d) The expression "*wisdom is justified of her children*" is Jesus' answer to these false accusations. By so saying He is indicating that His work and character would prove all these claims against Him were false. No other explanation was called for or deserved.
 - e) As with the charge about John, the charge against Jesus was a lie
6. This argument fails to prove that Jesus partook of alcoholic wine. The accusers of Jesus were "*unscrupulous, malignant, and not noted for their truthfulness.*"¹⁶

C. Jesus drank wine on the cross

1. Jesus was offered something to drink at two separate times as He was dying on the cross.

¹⁵ "Winebibber," in *The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles*, p. 2433

¹⁶ Patton, William, *Bible Wines, Laws of Fermentation and Wines of The Ancients*, (Star Bible & Tract Corp, Fort Worth, 1976) p. 81

2. First, He was offered a mixed wine (oinos), or a drugged wine – agreed by all to be intoxicating - which He refused
 - a) Matthew 27:34 *“They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.”*
 - i) note here that ‘vinegar’ should be properly translated as wine
 - ii) The Nestle Greek Text and the Westcott-Hort Text both use ‘oinos’ (‘oinon’) ¹⁷
 - b) Mark 15:23 *“And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.”*
3. Later He was offered “vinegar” (oxos) which He accepted
 - a) Matthew 27:48 *“And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.”*
 - b) Mark 15:36 *“And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.”*
 - c) John 19:30 *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”*
4. ‘oxos’ (‘oxous’) is formed when “vinous fermentation is not well regulated . . . wine is converted into vinegar” ¹⁸. It was “neither exhilarating nor intoxicating” ¹⁹.
5. Adam Clarke comments: *“Wine mixed with myrrh was given to malefactors at the place of execution, to intoxicate them, and make them less sensible to pain. Christ, therefore . . . refused . . . But if vinegar was offered him, which was taken merely to assuage thirst, there could be no reason for his rejecting it.”*²⁰
6. *“Even if it could be proved that ‘oxos’ . . . was intoxicating . . . it would prove nothing about the Savior’s principles of abstinence . . . It was taken under circumstances so utterly exceptional, the only possible analogy which in our own case would be a medicinal consideration, that no inference can be drawn from it concerning the present subject.”*²¹
7. If proponents of social drinking are forced to use this case as justification for their practice, it proves (if it proves anything at all) that they have a weak and indefensible position.

¹⁷ Jeffcoat, p. 76

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 79

¹⁹ Hovey, Alvah, “Shekar and Leaven in Mosaic Offerings”, *The Old Testament Student* 6 (September 1886): 16

²⁰ Clarke, Adam, *Matthew-Acts, A Commentary and Critical Notes*. Vol. 5, p. 273

²¹ Jeffcoat, p. 79

II. Did Jesus approve of the use of alcohol by His teaching on the subject?

A. New wine and old bottles

1. Matthew 9:17 *“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”*
2. Mark 2:22 *“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.”*
3. Luke 5:37 *“And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.”*
4. These passages are used - by those who seek to defend the consumption of alcoholic wine - to prove that there was no way to preserve unfermented grape juice. This is utterly false (reference other lectures in this series). In fact, Jesus’ statement actually proves the opposite.
 - a) The argument is that new wine (unfermented grape juice) was always put into new skins so that the skins would be able to allow for the expanding gases produced during fermentation.
 - b) Old skins, it is argued, would already have been stretched to their limit and would burst from the pressures of fermenting juice.
 - c) The fact is that neither new nor old wineskins, when sealed, could withstand the pressure formed during fermentation.
 - i) One cubic inch of sugar transformed into carbonic gas (the gas produced during fermentation) takes up to 40 times more volume.²²
 - ii) Job 32:19 *“Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.”*
 - d) New wine was put into new bottles to prevent it from fermenting.
 - i) Old wineskins would have the remnants of previous fermentation which would, in turn, provoke fermentation of the new wine placed inside – and the skins would burst.
 - ii) *“When it was desired to preserve a quantity in the sweet state, an amphora was taken and coated with pitch within and without; it was filled . . . and corked, so as to be perfectly air-tight.”²³*

²² Lees, Frederic Richard & Burns, Dawson, *Temperance Bible Commentary*, Nabu Press (2010), p. 35

- 5) Jesus' statement about new wine in old bottles fails to prove what is intended by the social drinking crowd.

B. Old wine is better

- 1) Luke 5:39 *"No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better."*
- 2) Some see this as Jesus endorsing alcoholic wine
 - a) Kenneth Gentry speaks of *"the well-nigh universal prevalence of men to prefer old (fermented) wine over new (pre- or unfermented) wine. The Lord himself makes reference to this assessment . . ."*²⁴
 - b) Everett Tilson: *"Without a word of criticism, as if expressing a truism with which he himself agrees, Luke records Jesus as saying: 'And no one after drinking old wine desires new.' Why? 'The old is good,' he answers – though far more likely to be both fermented and intoxicating."*²⁵
- 3) The judgment Jesus is discussing (*"the old is better"*) is not His own, but rather that of those who are in the habit of drinking intoxicating wine.
 - a) Note: *". . . having drunk old wine . . . he saith . . ."*
 - b) Norval Geldenhuys: *"The point at issue here has nothing to do with the comparative merits of old and new wine, but refers to the predilection for old wine in the case of those who are accustomed to drink it."*²⁶
 - c) Henry Alford: *"Observe that there is no objective comparison whatever here between old and new wine; the whole stress is on 'desireth' and 'he saith', and the import of 'better' is subjective in the view of him who utters it."*²⁷
 - d) R. C. H. Lenski: *"It is not Jesus who calls the old wine 'good enough,' but he that drank it."*²⁸
 - e) Jack Van Impe: *"This shows the Lord's understanding of the habit-forming effect of beverage alcohol. His statement stands true today. Try to sell grape juice on skid row and you will probably have no takers. They are hooked . . ."*²⁹

²³ Smith, William & Wayte, William & Marindin, G.E., *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, Murray (London), 1890

²⁴ Gentry, p. 54

²⁵ Tilson, Everett, *Should Christians Drink?*, (New York, 1957), p. 31

²⁶ Geldenhuys, Norval, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, 1983) p. 198

²⁷ Alford, Henry, *The New Testament for English Readers*, (Boston, 1875), vol. 1, p. 324

²⁸ Lenski, R.C.H., *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Columbus, Ohio, 1953), p. 320

²⁹ Van Impe, Jack, *Alcohol: The Beloved Enemy* (Royal Oak, Michigan, 1968), p. 121-122

- 4) In the context Jesus is contrasting His 'new' instruction with the 'old' teaching and practice of the Pharisees, showing the superiority of His teaching, and that the two systems were not compatible with one another. He used three illustrations to emphasize His point:
 - a) new cloth is not used to patch an old garment (vs. 36)
 - b) new wine is not put into old wineskins (vs. 37,38)
 - c) new wine is not liked by those accustomed to drinking old wine (vs. 39)
 - d) The purpose of these illustrations was to demonstrate that the 'old' only seems good because one is not accustomed to the 'new,' which is actually better.
- 5) To argue that Jesus was acknowledging the superiority of the 'old' wine over the 'new' would destroy the reasoning of the context. It would actually have Jesus endorsing the Old Law - and the Pharisees' application of it – over His law.
- 5) This reference to what Jesus taught does not substantiate an approval for the use of intoxicating wine.

c) Wine and wounds

- 1) Luke 10:33-34 *“But a certain Samaritan . . . went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”*
- 2) This is obviously a reference to the medicinal, external use of wine. As such it cannot be used to justify 'social drinking'.
- 3) *“This was an external and medicinal application. The mixture of the two (oil and wine) formed a healing ointment. Pliny mentions ‘oleum gleucinum,’ which was compounded of oil and ‘gleucus’ (sweet wine), as an excellent ointment for wounds. Columella gives the receipt for making it.”³⁰*
- 3) Even if administered internally – which it was not in this case – it would not provide approval for use as a beverage (reference other lectures in the series, re: 1 Timothy 5:23)

III. Did Jesus use alcoholic wine when He instituted the Lord's Supper? (And should we use alcoholic wine in observing the Lord's Supper?)

A. Does the fact that Jesus called it “fruit of the vine” rather than “wine” indicate that it was non-alcoholic grape juice?

- 1) Matthew 26:27-29 *“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 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 Patton, p. 88

- 2) Mark 14:23-25 *“And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*
- 3) Luke 22:17-20 *“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come . . .”*
- 4) McGuiggan³¹ finds this expression only six other times in the Scripture – all in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. None of those references are to a liquid – all speak of the solid fruit.
- 5) The lack of evidence, Biblical or otherwise, leaves this question without definitive answer.
- 6) Ponder this: With the word ‘wine’ (*oinos*) so commonly used, is it not somewhat odd that Jesus did not use it on this occasion? Could this be purposeful? Did He intend to emphasize unfermented grape juice?

B. Does the fact that the Jews were to rid their houses of leaven during the Passover indicate that unfermented wine was used?

- 1) Exodus 12:15-19 *“Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel . . . Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses . . .”*
- 2) It is clear that the leaven under consideration was that of leavened bread. Wine, of course, was not part of the original Passover feast.
- 3) However, the leaven (‘seor’) of Exodus 12:15 includes anything that can produce fermentation. (*“ . . . applicable to any matter capable of producing fermentation.”*³²)
- 3) Patton³³ references Professor Moses Stuart: *“the Hebrew ‘khahmatz’ (translated ‘leaven bread’) means anything fermented . . . All leaven, i.e. fermentation, was excluded . . .”*
- 4) *“References to fermented wine (in the celebration of the Passover) . . . are not found in the ‘Mishnah’ . . . but in later annotations of the ‘Talmud’ . . . references to the intoxicating nature of Passover wine have been extracted”*³⁴

³¹ McGuiggan, p. 130

³² Field, Leon C., *Oinos: A Discussion of the Bible Wine Question* (New York, 1883), p. 74

³³ Patton, p. 83

³⁴ Bacchiocchi, p. 160

- 5) While not every authority agrees, it seems this evidence provides a strong argument in favor of unfermented wine in the Lord's Supper.

C. Does the time of year that the Passover was observed prove that it had to have been fermented wine?

1. An Internet blogger argues: *"If Jesus did in fact use fresh grape juice at the Last Supper, then the only means available almost 2000 years ago, was by crushing some grapes - and no more than a few hours before drinking it . . . the time (of the Passover) will always fall in the end of March or the beginning of April . . . the time between the bunches of grapes being taken off the vine (late September?) and Jesus needing some to crush for fresh grape juice (late March?), is about six months apart. How do you keep bunches of grapes fresh enough to crush for juice, for six months without refrigeration? The simple answer is - you can't . . . With no fresh grapes available to turn into juice, it is obvious that Jesus is pointing us to "wine" as the "fruit of the vine".*³⁵
2. This, of course, is an embarrassingly uninformed statement. The Jews of Jesus' day were well aware of multiple methods for preserving unfermented juice throughout the calendar year (reference other lectures in this series).
3. This argument certainly does not prove that the 'fruit of the vine' that Jesus used was fermented wine.

D. Does Jewish practice at the Passover, past or present, offer any evidence that the wine was fermented or unfermented?

1. Concerning the ancient practice of the Jews:
 - a) *". . . the wafer and the wine of . . . the communion service then instituted by him as a memorial would be the unleavened bread and the unfermented wine of the Seder (Passover) service.*³⁶
 - b) *"The wine used would of course be unfermented . . . the Mishnah states that the Jews were in the habit of using boiled wine."*³⁷
2. Concerning the modern day practice of the Jews:
 - a) *"The Jews are forbidden to drink any liquor made from grain, or that has passed through the process of fermentation. Their drink is either pure water or raisin-wine prepared by themselves."*³⁸

³⁵ "What does 'fruit of the vine' mean?", *A New Biblical Understanding*, <http://newbiblicalunderstanding.info>, February, 2011

³⁶ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1904 edition, s.v. "Jesus," vol. 5, p. 165

³⁷ Kitto, John, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, 1845 edition, s. v. "Passover," vol. 2. p. 477

³⁸ Allen, John, *Modern Judaism* (London, 1830), p. 394

- b) *“The Jews do not, in their feasts for sacred purposes . . . ever use any kind of fermented drinks. In their oblations and libations, both private and public, they employ the fruit of the vine – that is, fresh grapes, unfermented grape juice, and raisins . . .”*³⁹
- 3. We note that not every authority agrees, and differences in the practice of the Jews is observed. However, these observations tend to favor the conclusion that the ‘fruit of the vine’ that Jesus used was non-alcoholic grape juice.

E. Does 1 Corinthians 11:21 establish that early Christians used alcoholic wine in the observance of the Lord’s Supper?

- 1. 1 Corinthians 11:20-21 *“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.”*
- 2. It is argued that since some of the Corinthians were becoming “drunken” at the time of their assembly for the Lord’s Supper, this proves the wine they used was fermented, intoxicating wine.
- 3. Kenneth Gentry asks: *“How could the Corinthians get drunk on Communion wine if it were not fermented?”*⁴⁰
- 4. The Greek ‘methuei’ (“is drunken”) can be used to indicate intoxication or merely to be satiated or full (see comments previously on the wedding feast at Cana, John 2).
- 5. In the context of 1 Corinthians 11 it seems clear that it means ‘satiated’ or ‘full.’
 - a) Note that “drunken” is contrasted to “hungry” rather than to “sober”
 - b) To correct the abuse, Paul instructs: “What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?” (vs. 22), and “If any man hunger, let him eat at home” (vs. 34)
 - c) Is it permissible to get drunk/intoxicated at home? Of course not (1 Cor. 6:9,10)
 - d) But it is permissible to be full, or satiated, at home
- 6. This argument falls far short of justifying social drinking.

Conclusion: There is nothing in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ – neither His practice nor His teaching – that would authorize the use of intoxicating wine or other alcoholic beverages by Christians. Let us powerfully and definitively defend this truth.

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³⁹ Patton, p. 83

⁴⁰ Cited in Ewing, Charles Wesley, *The Bible and its Wines* (Denver, 1985), p. 107