

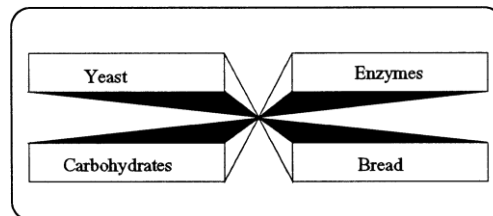
Leaven In The Cup?



By Larry Jones

Is wine leavened or unleavened? To some Christians this is a very important question. They believe that wine is unleavened. Their doctrine teaches that leaven is found in grape juice, and the fermentation process takes it out. It further teaches that leaven is always a picture of sin, and wine, since it has no leaven, is the best element for the Lord's Supper.

They say this process of fermentation renders the element "more-pure" than its initial state. They teach that this "unleavened" wine is the only equal symbol to unleavened bread, the other element of the supper. They say, "If the bread is unleavened then the cup should also be!"



You will find the issue of leaven in the scriptures only related to bread. There is no place in the Bible where leaven is spoken of in a liquid. Leaven was to be disposed of in the home of every Israelite during the Passover and the succeeding feast of unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was the bread of the Passover and the Lord's Supper.

First: What is Leaven?

Leaven is yeast, carbohydrates, enzymes, and the vehicle of leavening. Any of these substances individually could not be properly called leaven. "Leavening" is the chemical and biological process that takes place when these substances are brought together. "Yeast performs its leavening function by fermenting carbohydrates such as glucose, fructose, maltose, and sucrose." When these substances are mixed with wheat dough leavened bread is the result.

What does the Leavening process produce?

Leavening produces Carbon Dioxide and Alcohol. "Yeast also produces many other chemical substances that flavor the baked product and change the dough's physical properties."

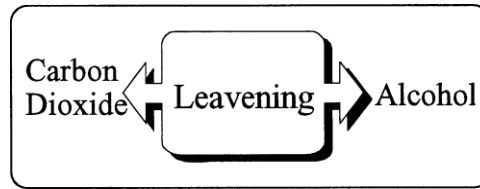
What is Leavened bread?

Leavened bread is bread that has undergone the process of leavening, i.e. the process that occurs when the leavening agents are mixed together with wheat dough. This produces carbon dioxide gas that makes the dough rise. Heat is then applied to make the process stop. The living leavening agents necessary for the process are killed by the heat. After the bread is heated there is no leaven in it. The biological agents necessary for leaven have been killed.

Note that the product is not called "leavened bread" because it has leaven in it, but because it has gone through the leavening process. It is this leavening process that is the illustration of sin. Paul says, when speaking of the permeating effects of sin, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Galatians 5:9; I Corinthians 5:6

What is Unleavened bread?

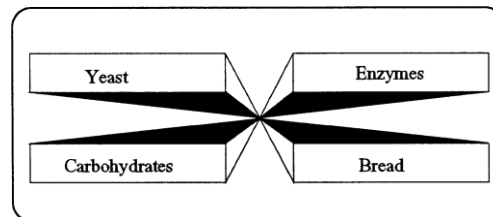
Unleavened bread is bread that did not go through the chemical reaction of leaven. One or more of the ingredients of leaven were absent, or it was baked before the process began thus killing the biological agents necessary for the leavening process.



What process does grape juice go through to become wine?

The process that grape juice goes through to become wine requires the following biological and chemical substances: yeast, carbohydrates, enzymes, and the vehicle of leavening.

The only difference in the process of leavening bread and leavening grape juice is the vehicle of leavening. The vehicle is grape juice instead of wheat dough. The product of leavening grape juice is wine.



The exact yeast used to leaven bread will also leaven or ferment grape juice when mixed with the natural carbohydrates and enzymes of grape juice.¹ Fermentation is the term used to speak of the biological process between yeast and carbohydrates in the leavening of grape juice.

The product of fermentation is Carbon Dioxide and Alcohol. The presence of these two substances in wine is proof it has gone through

¹ *Compton's Encyclopedia*, 1992 edition. Vol. 25, Page 412, Yeast, Para 2- "Saccharomyces cereviseae, is used in the fermentation process to produce alcohol in wine and beer and the carbon dioxide gas that causes bread to rise."

the leavening process. You don't need a chemist to tell you leavened bread has gone through the leavening process. You only need to see the risen dough. So it is with leavened grape juice, you only need to see the effervescent product and smell the aroma of alcohol to know it is leavened.

Heat is, and has been historically, applied to wine to stop the process of leavening just as it stops the same process in leavened bread. Most wine used by churches today, including Kosher wine, is heat or cold processed to kill the biological leavening agents and stop the fermentation process.

Most wineries today wash the yeast off the outside of the grape before extracting the juice. Some even flash-pasteurize the juice to make sure all biological substances are dead. They add yeast later to start the leavening process. Kosher wine must have Kosher yeast added to it for leavening purposes, and this is done after the grape juice is processed and, in many cases, flash pasteurized. All wines in my research, including Kosher, were pasteurized before bottling.

Is wine unleavened?

The answer is a definite no. Grape juice to become wine must go through the exact process that bread goes through to become leavened bread. Wine is leavened grape juice. If the yeast is washed off the grapes before extraction, and the grape juice is pasteurized after extraction, then it is unleavened in the same fashion as unleavened bread.

If one wishes to find the picture equivalent to unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper it is certainly not found in wine. If wine is purer because it

has been leavened then leavened bread is purer than unleavened for the same reason.

The Jews considered grain alcohol to be leavened. The Mishnah forbade grain alcohol from the Passover and feast of unleavened bread.²

The arguments for wine based upon leaven seem to me to be invalid and in fact teach the opposite concept as true. Since these arguments are never used in scripture pro or con I personally consider the whole issue of leaven related to the element in the cup to be empty of any doctrinal value.

Another invalid argument is the preservation argument. This asserts that there was no other way to preserve grape juice except fermentation. Food processing and preservation is big business these days. There are excellent books available on the history of food processing that describe the simple ways the ancients had of preserving all kinds of food including fruit juices.

I found a wealth of information on the subject of the leavening process. In my bibliography and quotations I have tried to list only easily accessible sources so each person can study this subject for themselves in their local library. The only exception is superscript 2.

² O. H. 442 in *Mishnam Berurah* 3, "Items which contain grain alcohol are forbidden," The Mishnah further states, "The following must be removed: Babylonian porridge, Medean beer, Edomite vinegar, and Egyptian barley-beer."

Compton's Encyclopedia 1992 edition, Vol. 8., Pg. 54, Fermentation; Vol. 3, Pg. 428, Bread.

World Book Encyclopedia 1993 Edition, Vol. 7, Pg. 73, Fermentation; Vol. 21, Pg. 340, Wine; Vol. 21, Pg. 556, Yeast; Vol. 2, Pg. 598, Bread;

Encyclopedia Britannica 1990 Edition, Vol 12, Pg. 702. Wine: Vol. 123, Pg. 829, Yeast; Vol. 7, Pg. 225, Leavening Agent; Vol. 4, Pg. 740, Fermentation; Vol. 2, Pg. 490, Bread.

The quotations used in this article are from the 1993 edition of GROLIERS ENCYCLOPEDIA.

The Lord's Supper is a wonderful ordinance given by our Savior over 2,000 years ago.

The words "wine" or "grape juice" never appear in the Bible Today some mar the spirit of this sacred meal by disputing which element, wine or grape juice is proper **in association with the Passover or the Lord's Supper** in the cup. If this subject is important to you...please keep reading.

The words "wine" or "grape juice" never appear in the Bible in association with the Passover or the Lord's Supper. When God instituted the Passover His detailed instructions did not include a beverage. The first evidence for the introduction of a beverage into the Passover is during the 400-year-period between the Old and New Testaments.

Wine seems to have entered the Passover ceremony by the influence of Hellenism. It did not become or continue as a practice without opposition. All Greek influences were opposed by some of the Jewish leadership, and wine in the Passover was no exception.²

Some Jewish religious leaders protested the introduction of wine based upon the liturgical prohibitions in the Old Testament. Aaron, his sons, and the Levitical priests were prohibited from drinking wine before entering the tabernacle service. Leviticus 10:9-11, Ezekiel 44:21

² *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days*, Abraham P. Bloch; KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1978, Page 150, 151.

Some Jews considered the spirit of this law to be that the service was so sacred the participants should not in any way be intoxicated.

They also taught from this passage that the introduction of alcohol as a beverage into a sacred ceremony could make the ceremony a drunken or common party instead of a sacred assembly. Evidence is given by some scholars that this controversy continued centuries after Christ's earthly presence. Paul rebuked the Corinthian Church for abusing the Lord's Supper in this very way.

Because of this controversy Kosher wine during the New Testament era, as defined by the Mishnah, was 1 part wine mixed with 3 parts water.³ The Greeks also mixed wine with water.

Outside of this historical evidence of Biblical interpretation the Old Testament is silent on the subject of a beverage in the Passover. We must turn to the New Testament to find the first statement of a beverage in the Passover. This statement is at the Passover ceremony when the Lord instituted His supper in Matthew 26:29.

The Greek words translated by the English word "wine," oinos and gleukos, never appear in association with the Lord's Supper or the Passover. Jesus used the word oinos at least five times, but chose not to use the term when instituting His supper.

The omniscient Christ must have been aware of the battles over the introduction of wine into the Passover. He could have solved the battles over the element in his supper very simply. All He had to do was address

³ *Rediscovering The Passover*, Joseph Stallings, Resource Publications, 1988, page 53, 188, 189.

the subject Himself or lead one of His New Testament writers to deal with it. This He chose not to do.

When Jesus spoke of the element in the cup, He used the Greek words "gennema" and "Ampelos." Strong's Greek dictionary says Gennema means "the fruits of the earth, the "ampelos" "produce of agriculture" and words are correctly translated "fruit of the vine".

This dictionary defines Ampelos as "vine." Ampelos appears 8 times in the bible and is always translated "vine". By definition then, any beverage product, of the fruit of the vine qualifies under the words used by Jesus. The fruit of the vine is any beverage derivative of the grape.

Without any commands or other directives related specifically to the Lord's Supper there is no biblical ground upon which to base any argument declaring grape juice or wine as the exclusive element of the supper. They both qualify under our Lord's choice of words.

Clearly members of the Corinthian church became intoxicated during a ceremony they called the Lord's Supper. Paul rebuked them for this, but did not rebuke them for the use of wine. He also does not commend the use.

To make the use of wine an exclusive doctrinal mandate based upon its excessive use by drunkards in the Corinthian Church seems to be lacking in redeeming logical value. This event falls short of building a case for the exclusive use of wine in the Lord's Supper. They could have as easily and properly used grape juice and still met the Biblical mandate given by Christ in His use of the terms "fruit of the vine".

This example of drunkenness seems to support the rabbinical fears based upon the Law stated in Leviticus 10:9-11. One of the counter arguments against their position was that the Passover was not a temple ceremony thus exempting it from the liturgical prohibition of alcohol as a beverage.

It could be argued that the moving of the Christian Passover into the church brings it back under this liturgical prohibition. The Corinthian Church would be a prime example for this prohibition. Paul, who was surely aware of this issue, did not use it when speaking to the Corinthians.

I believe most the arguments about wine or grape juice in the Lord's Supper are based in traditional and ethical values not in biblical substance. The choice becomes clearly a matter of conscience and not one of Bible Doctrine.

Churches and Christians who oppose the consumption of alcohol as a beverage find great problems in using wine in the Lord's Supper. They are, as far as I can see, clearly allowed by Christ's words to use grape juice.

A church that has no problem with the consumption of alcohol as a beverage will find no problem with following the pattern of the Corinthian Church by using it in the Lord's Supper.

If a Church has members of both views the Christian principles laid down by Paul in Romans 14 should solve any problem. Verse 21 says, "*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*"

Grace Memorial Baptist Church

6205 Elmore Road

Bartlett, Tennessee 38134

901-386-5790 Fax 901-382-5209