

Section: Doctrine of Church (Ecclesiology)

Wednesday, April 7 2021

Lesson 88 <> Q112

Pastor Joshua Kirstine

**TEACHING NOTES**

Intro: We are currently in the section of theology called Ecclesiology, which is the study of the church.

It is the study of how God has instructed us, His redeemed people, to act and what we are to do and not do, and how we are supposed to operate. Today, we look at the second New Covenant ordinance that our Lord gave for the church to practice for remembrance of and as a public and symbolic testimony of the gospel of Christ. The first being believers baptism as Steve taught recently. The second is our focus tonight: The Lord’s Supper. Let me read the question and answer and then we will dive right in as we have much to cover.

**Q112. What is the Lord's Supper?**

The Lord’s Supper is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby professing believers gather together regularly to remember, celebrate, and testify of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ by the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, which symbolize the body and blood of Jesus. This is a regular practice and testimony for those who are saved by God.

Previous lessons in this catechism series have taught well many components of this answer…for example,

-What it means to be a professing believer,

-What the New Covenant is,

-What an ordinance is…. And what biblical law applies to us in the here and now.

And, recently, Steve explained why the New Covenant ordinance of Baptism is only for those with a personal profession of faith in Jesus. The same certainly applies to this other New Covenant ordinance of the Lord’s Supper.

In this lesson then, I won’t be speaking to those things at length. Rather we will focus on the specialness and uniqueness of the Lord’s Supper and the elements that King Jesus chose for us to use.

To begin this, turn with me to Genesis 3 as I want to give us a tota scriptura view of The Lord’s Supper tonight.

I want to do this because we are very used to talking about the Lord’s Supper in a 5 minute window as we practice it regularly at Sunday Worship. But tonight, I want to help us have a deeper understanding of why the Lord’s Supper is so meaningful to us and what it is and why it matters.

**1. Separation, Judgment and Wrath**

I want to start in Genesis 3 because I want us to see the original and consequential separation, Judgment, and wrath brought about because of human sin.

As we have carefully studied, Adam, as our representative, sinned in the garden of Eden.

And, because of Adam’s sin God brought separation, judgment, and wrath.

God told Adam clearly that if Adam broke God’s good law that man "shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

In this fall of man, we see devastating separation enacted by God because of Adam's sin in the Garden…

**Genesis 3:23-24** the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

And, as we have carefully studied: Adam’s sin was our sin—we sinned in Adam—so we are all cursed, and we show our sin guilt in that we all were conceived in sin and go on from the womb sinning.

The Bible is abundantly clear about our sin guilt, see Romans 3:

**Romans 3:9-12** For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;11 no one understands; no one seeks for God.

12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one

“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (**Romans 3:23)**

The righteous consequence of mankind’s sin was and is God’s judgment and wrath.

We have seen God enact his judgment and wrath in many ways though out mankind’s history as we study the Holy Scriptures.

One of the most historic is found in the verses in Genesis 6 whereby God declares and then executes his judgment and wrath over all of mankind by killing them with a global flood with the exception of the family of Noah.

**Another one of the critical and pinnacle places we see God exercise his righteous judgment and wrath on deserving sinners is found in the 10th plague that God put over Egypt.**

**Turn with me to Exodus 11:1** The Lord said to Moses, “Yet one plague more I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. Afterward he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will drive you away completely.

**Exodus 12:1-14** The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, **2**“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. **3**Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. **4**And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. **5**Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, **6**and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

**7**“Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. **8**They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. **9**Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts.**10**And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. **11**In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. **12**For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. **13**The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

**14**“This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast.

Understand that this event, the exodus and the provision of God to free Israel from Egypt’s grip was talked about worldwide for generations and generations. It would be the most cherished gathering of the Jews and would serve to point the hearts of his people to the One who is sovereign in salvation.

**2. Passed Over**

From the Beginning God has had a plan to redeem his elect from the separation and eternal wrath due them for their sin. To do this he planned for a royal redeemer to come and die in our place so that we could be free from the eternal penalty of sin and reconciled to God to enjoy him forever.

God the Son, Jesus, is this promised redeemer. The Passover not only became the most cherished Jewish practice to honor God and remember what he did to set them free but it would be the table at which Jesus would establish a new covenant between God and his people.

The Passover that began at the Exodus would point generations to the truer and better Passover lamb. Jesus Christ.

Turn with me now to the Gospel of John chapter 1:

**John 1:29** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

In our text tonight, “the forerunner of Christ (John the Baptist) announces Jesus as "the lamb of God," not as "the word of God," not as "the Christ of God," but as THE LAMB. This is so critical because the work of the Lamb of God is absolutely vital to forever salvation being earned and applied. Without a proper sacrifice (a fitting “lamb”), sinful humans are without hope for spiritual redemption!

Before we get to the official work of Jesus as the Lamb of God, let’s look back on God’s divine plan from the beginning to provide the needed Lamb. God in his providence uses a lamb all throughout history to make it clear that a sinful people are desperate for a Lamb.. A Lamb of God.

1. In Genesis 4, we have the Lamb typified as Abel sacrifices a lamb unto the Lord.

2. We have the Lamb prophesied in Genesis 22:8 where Abraham said to Isaac, "God will provide himself a lamb."

3. In Exodus 12, we have the Lamb slain on behalf of the people and its blood applied.

4. in Isaiah 53:7, here for the first time we learn that the promised Lamb of God would be a Man.

5. In John 1:29, we have the Lamb identified as Jesus.

7. in the last chapter of the Bible we have the Lamb glorified, seated upon the eternal throne of God, Revelation 22:1.

As **Hebrews 9:22** says, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.”

The Bible says in Romans 6:23 the wages for sin is death, <>Sin earns death.

In the Old Covenant system God put in place, the animal dies as a temporary substitute in the place of the sinful people at the hands of the High Priest.

**Now, here the problem, the Bible is also clear that ….**

*“it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”* ***Hebrews 10:4***

So, What is going on in all of the OT sacrifice and the spilling of the blood of Spotless lambs and goats is a foreshadow of the lasting sacrifice—the ultimate grace of God that would be provided in Christ alone.

God is pointing to the ultimate Sacrifice. The one true Sacrifice.

The perfect and satisfactory blood **of the Lamb of God** who would take away the sin of the world.

All throughout the OT, God is making a way for Jesus. The one who would bring grace upon grace.

Oh how it was the grace of God to give his people this system **to point to the fact** that he would not just condemn but he would act in amazing Grace!

The whole OT system was pointing forward to what would happen someday in a final sacrifice for sin. Those whom God would save of the OT were putting their faith in the coming Messiah--THE LAMB OF GOD--who would pay the complete and final price for their sin and make Atonement for their sin in the only way it could be paid for.

Now, Turn to John chapter 2…

*Here in John 2 we witness the first miracle of God in flesh, was turning water into wine at the wedding celebration. It is filled with symbolism of what Jesus has come to bring his people.*

***John 2:9-11*** *When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*

*This miracle, demonstrated not only Jesus lordship over creation, but was also a picture of what the Messiah would do in His ministry; i.e., take up common elements (like water) and transform them into something special and wonderful for the good of others.*

**3. The Cup of Wrath**

We will see that Jesus drinking of the cup for the purpose of celebration with his people is yet to come at this point in His ministry.

Before the celebration can begin he must also drink of another cup. He has a work to do first that to make possible the highest enjoyment of wine at the wedding feast whereby he and his bride ( the church) will have fellowship forever.

**John 2:3-4** When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4 And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”

What is on Jesus’ mind in ”My hour has not yet come.” is, **the cup of wrath**.

Like God has done from the beginning of time, Jesus is continuing the predetermined rescue mission of his people for the banquet that will out do all banquets and that will last for eternity!

Before Jesus would drink the wine at the eternal feast with his redeemed he would have to drink of the **cup of wrath** on behalf of his people. Yes, as Psalm 104:14-15 states, God gave "wine to gladden the heart of man," He gave it as a good gift to be enjoyed and eventually to be a part of his eternal celebration…….but Jesus came to do a work that we could not do, a work that must be done.

In this Jesus had to set aside the ceremonial wine and instead drink of ***the cup of wrath*** so that we, his chosen people don’t have to.

All of this is pointing to another wedding feat. Where Jesus is the eternal Bridegroom and his redeemed people are his beloved bride. Listen to the language used later in Revelation 21.

“Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb” **-Revelation 21:9**

**Jesus is the true Bridegroom!** So the Lord is using the stage of his first miracle at wedding in Cana to point to the eternal wedding by which Jesus, the bridegroom will be united forever with his bride. The Church. The Redeemed.

Praise God he finished what he came to do. It’s not without real cost that he did this too.

Turn with me to…

**Mark 14: 32-36** They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." **33**He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. **34**"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." **35**Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. **36**"Abba,Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Praise God that Jesus was obedient to the Father to the point of Death.

***Not my will but yours be done. He drank the cup of Wrath on our behalf.***

This is the Gospel of “our Passover”

**2 Corinthians 5:21**, He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf,

**He took on our sin for His chosen ones!** He paid our price. He Atoned our sin.

**Now, we must also understand:**

**At that moment, the wrath of God due a particular people was satisfied.**

**The justice of God was met. The holiness of God was respected. AMEN?**

**1 Corinthians 5:7 says** … For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

This is God’s amazing plan of redemption for us, his chosen people.

What **the Passover** meant to the Jews for generations pointed to what **the Lord’s Supper means to us today.**

It is our opportunity to celebrate **the Passover lamb who drank the cup of wrath on our behalf.**

Only in Him do we have new freedom from the wrath of God and are reconciliation to him forever.

This brings us to the new ordinance that Jesus gave to the disciples the night before he was betrayed. At the last Passover meal, God the Son, gave his people a new tradition and new remembrance and a new celebration and testimony to the watching world about how the Lord Jesus paid our penalty so that God is righteous to “pass over” us and all others who believe in Jesus alone for salvation…

**4. The Lord’s Supper**

Turn with me to:

Jesus Ordinance of the Lord’s Supper

**Luke 22:14-20** And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves.18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

To understand the instructions of our Lord we must understand the context.

They are at the last Passover meal.

In Luke, Jesus expresses the weight of this particular Passover meal and all that it pointed to for all those years. He was about to fulfill it. And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. **Luke 22:15**

In verse 16 & 18 Jesus is clear that he will not partake of the ceremonial bread and wine until his kingdom is fulfilled.

At the last supper, Jesus gives us instruction as to how we (his bride) are to remember him, testify of what he has done, and tell the story by celebrating the Lord’s Supper until he comes again. In Matthew we read:

**Matt. 26:26-29** Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

**Why is this so significant?** Because He was about to substitute himself. Just as the lamb that the Jews used to put blood on their doorpost, so the Spirit would Passover them and not kill their first born as the 10th plague required. **We who are in Christ. Whom he substitutes himself for us.. we are Passed over from the wrath of God because Christ our sacrificial lamb took it on himself.**

This is the Gospel. This is the Good news. That in God’s grace and Jesus costly sacrifice we are forgiven and made new and given eternal, new life in Christ.

Jesus wants us to remember him.. (do this in remembrance of me)

And he wants us to testify this good news to each other and the watching world with visual physical symbols until he comes again.

Now, to rightly understand how we are to practice this ordinance given to us by the Lord we must understand the two specific elements the Lord chose to be symbols that represent his body and blood. He took these two symbols from the Passover table and told us to carry them forward as a specific testimony of what he has done in a new tradition and ceremony!

As we study the whole of scripture we need to understand that the two elements that Jesus chose **are not without deep meaning and purpose**. It is our desire to understand the meaning and purpose and to use these elements in our church’s communion table so that all believers can participate in these things as the Lord instructed us.

Let’s look back for a moment at the elements at the Passover meal table that the Lord chose for us to carry forward.

-**The Bread**

**The Symbolism of *unleavened* bread and why Jesus choose it for the Lord’s Supper ordinance.**

The grain the Lord instructed them to eat at Passover in place of *chametz* is called matzah. Matzah is unleavened bread made from simple ingredients like flour and water and cooked very quickly.

The instructions for the Passover meal involved the removal of *chametz* (sha-mets) from homes and property. *chametz* is leaven.

The removal of *chametz* commemorates a few things possibly, one being the fact that the Jews left Egypt in a hurry and did not have time to let their bread rise.

Additionally, in the Bible, leaven is almost always symbolic of sin. Even a little leaven will eventually leaven the whole lump, affecting the whole church or the whole world.

**Galatians 5:9** A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Even a little permitted sin will lead to other sins will compromise our testimony in Christ.

**1 Corinthians 5:6-7** … Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

So, such strong symbolic testimony in UNLEAVENED bread—Jesus was the perfect, SINLESS man. He gave His SINLESS (UNLEAVENED) life as a ransom. For this, He gave His body to be broken….which leads us to our next point.

**The Symbolism of bread and why Jesus choose it for the Lord’s Supper ordinance.**

First, Jesus’ human life under God’s wrath, substituted for ours, is the only way we are set free, forgiven and unshackled from our bondage to sin. **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Second, in John 6:27-37 and elsewhere Jesus teaches that he is the true satisfying bread of life. That Bread which symbolizes life and sustenance points to Jesus as the True bread of life. That fact that he gave up his body, his life, for our so that we could have the true bread that is eternal life and satisfaction is the beautiful testimony of the gospel. So, Jesus gave us the symbolism of eating the unleavened BREAD to remember the breaking of his body that he who is the true bread and lasting life will come again to usher in his eternal kingdom.

**Church, don’t miss the meaning of the bread which symbolizes Life.**

Jesus body was given so that we could be given true and lasting Life in Christ.

All of what the bible teaches us about bread and unleavened bread is helpful and good for us as we partake in the Lord’s supper and use this symbol to remember his body give for our life.

**- The Wine**

**The Symbolism of wine and why Jesus choose it for the Lord’s Supper ordinance.**

The Passover Seder (ritual) included 4 different cups of wine that were poured and consumed with different emphasis at different points in the meal.

The four cups of wine used at various points during the Seder each has a name:

the first glass is the “cup of sanctification.”

the second is the “cup of judgment.”

the third is the “cup of redemption.”

the fourth is the “cup of praise.”

**Sanctification, Judgment, Redemption, and Praise.**

All significant meaning for the New Covenant that Jesus shed blood would mean for us.

So as Jesus lifts the cup of wine at the Last Supper He does two amazing things:

1. He promised that the next time He drank the fruit of the vine with them would be in the kingdom (Luke 22:17).

2. Later in the Seder, Jesus holds up a cup of wine and declares it to be the symbol of his shed blood which would bring about the New Covenant between God and his people. (Luke 22:20).

In this, Jesus fulfills the Passover symbolism pointing to him as the ultimate sacrifice for us and he establishes a new ordinance with important meaning for the church until he returns that centers around the symbol of wine.

Understand it is not “the cup” that is the symbol that points to his blood but what is in the cup that is the symbol of his blood. Jesus uses the term, “the fruit of the vine” because that is the term the Jews used *to designate the wine partaken of on sacred occasions, as at the Passover and on the evening of the Sabbath. We must not forget that the “blood of grapes” in the OT was always reference to Yayin, which is wine. Wine is the substance that holds the special symbolism God intended and pointed to all throughout scripture.*

The late Baptist theologian John Gill also adds, helpfully, “It should be further known, that the wine at the Passover, and so what Christ used at his supper, **was red**…which, as it most fitly represented the blood sprinkled on the door posts of the Israelites, when the Lord passed over their houses; so the blood of Christ, shed for the remission of the sins of his people” AMEN!

***Like the bread, the wine has always held significant symbolism and value in God’s economy.***

***Let me remind you of a few…***

***Wine is a symbol of blessing***

*Wine, in Scripture, is a promise from God of the blessings of the covenant*

***Psa 4:7*** *You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

*Though sinful men can misuse and abuse this gift, as with many good gifts, God Himself uses it as an example of His goodness towards us.*

***Ps 104:14-15*** *You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate,*

*that he may bring forth food from the earth 15 and wine to gladden the heart of man,*

*oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.*

*In fact, wine is a blessing that God specifically promises to those who honor Him with their first fruits.*

***Prov 3:9-10*** *Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce;*

*10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

*As in all things in creation, wine itself is a symbol, a picture, a reflection of something bigger and greater. It is a picture of the blessings that come from a right relationship with God*

***Isa 25:6*** *On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.*

***Wine is a symbol of Life with God***

*In fact, it is a picture of the new life we have in Christ*

***Isa 55:1*** *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money,*

*come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

*Jesus used wine as a symbol of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who cannot be limited by old traditions.*

***Matt 9:17*** *Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.*

These two good gifts (unleavened bread and red wine) Jesus chose for us are used to point to the better gift.

An everlasting gift we have only In Jesus Christ.

We are convicted according to scripture and not tradition or personal preference that we should honor the Lord in our regular and faithful remembrance of Him and testimony of his death until he comes again by using the symbols he gave us remembering that the bread and the wine point to Him.

He is the prize, he is the point, he is the gospel we testify of and hope in and worship forevermore.

Church: Remember the good news is he did this for us and he is coming again..

And when he does that feast will be amazing.

**Isaiah 25:6-9** On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,

of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.

This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

AMEN!

**Until God ordains Jesus coming to take us home to the wedding feast he has prepared, He has instructed us to testify with the Lord’s Supper and so testify we must.**

This is why the regular practice of the Lord’s supper is so important. It keeps our minds and hearts focused on the Gospel and centered on Christ and it is a public testimony of a tangible symbolism of the Gospel for those who are still unbelievers.

May the Lord’s supper never become an obligatory routine but one of great symbolism and deep meaning of the Gospel that has set us free and the that proclaims Jesus substitutional death on behalf of undeserving sinners so that we can be restored to Him for life eternal.

**5. Our Reformation form an unbiblical modern adjustment to the Lord’s Supper**

For those of you who are newer to our church and didn’t sit with us through a last midweek teaching on this topic several years ago, and for those who did, let me remind us of the recent history and all to common modern adjustments many church’s made for their practice of the Lord’s supper that we felt convicted that we needed to address in our church as part of our commitment to biblical obedience in place of human tradition and or personal preference.

About 150 years ago a change was introduced.

This change was **not** brought about from a teaching found in Scripture.

In fact, it was brought about **despite what Scripture tells us about wine and about the Lord’s Supper**. During the temperance movement in the 19th century, the Welch family (founders of now well know Welch’s grape juice company) made a proposition to a Methodist Church council to change the Lord’s Supper from wine to a juice that didn’t contain alcohol.

This change required a completely new process to handling the juice of grapes. Their commitment to prohibition was so strong, they were able to create a pasteurization process and new handling of grapes that had never been done like this before as then were successful in influencing much of the church in their practice of the Lord’s Supper.

From Welch’s own website, we find the explanation of the historic change that was made in 1869, *“Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch launches the processed fruit juice industry when he successfully pasteurizes Concord grape juice to produce an ‘unfermented sacramental wine’ for fellow church parishioners in Vineland, N.J.”*

The problem is, “Unfermented sacramental wine” is not what Jesus instructed for the Lord’s Supper, and that is not what Jesus drank in His time, nor what the Apostles and churches after Him drank, and not what honors God ordaining the gift of real wine.

But, the practice of substituting wine for a pasteurized juice that doesn’t contain alcohol was then adopted by many other churches and denominations along the way. This included, many years ago, our church.

The main problem with this change and practice is that there is not a biblical basis for it.

It was a pragmatic attempt at addressing cultural struggles instead of trusting in scripture to properly lead us. As a result a new approach to the Lord’s Supper was introduced, which was the use of grape juice in place of wine at the Lod’s Supper.

Some, modern churches still justify why they insist on grape juice instead of what Jesus prescribed in order to attempt to prevent people from struggling with overuse of alcohol.

But let me bring to mind two very important clarities from scripture that reveal the misstep and misapplication of the Gospel in this line of thinking.

1. **Sin doesn’t come into us from the outside.** As the Bible says in James 1:14 says, “each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.” We sin when we give in to temptation **within** our flesh. So the removing of wine from the Lord’s table doesn’t solve the problem that some have with sinfully over indulging in alcohol. The position some of the church took 150 years ago to remove wine form the Lord’s Supper and to say Christians shouldn’t drink is an anti-gospel way of dealing with sin. While, removing something from our grasp or practice for a time might help for a moment or a season it doesn’t address the internal issue and or give lasting power to overcoming sin.

**Hear me clearly on this point because we can’t miss this:**2. The power to honor God in all things is the gospel’s work in and through us.

The way we fight sin is not removing ourselves from society or the good things God has given us, the way we fight sin is Christ in us to rightly handle the things we face and to turn away from temptation and to honor the Lord.

Therefore the answer to how we help those who struggle with the sin of over indulgence of alcohol **is the gospel**. It is not with an external modification to Christ’s prescription for the Lord’s Supper.

Praise God for the gospel’s work in our lives to empower us to mature in Christ and rightly steward the things he has given us for his glory and others good.

Here is the point of our biblical conviction for using wine at the Lord’s Supper at Disciples Church.

**--Since the good and perfect and authoritative Lord of all, instituted wine for us to consume the Lord’s Supper, we need NOT question or change the practice based on circumstance or the logic or rational of man. To argue that a modern day demands a modern practice is to say that the Lord did not have in full and clear view what our society and it’s struggles would be today. This is to break down the very omniscience and holiness of God. This is simply not our place.**

God is good in all he does and prescribes and He does not and will not tempt his people to stumble. **James 1:13** says "Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."

What this means is our Lord Jesus giving bread and real wine for this ordinance is not wrong or lacking wisdom and we should not feel the need to think we have a wiser practice then he gave us.

Therefore, using wine for the Lord’s Supper is not wrong or lacking wisdom.

The righteous use of something that is not sinful is not lacking wisdom.

Additionally, No one should say that ½ an ounce of ceremonial wine instructed from the Lord is the reason or basis for any sinful actions someone takes.

Again, "Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one." If someone pursues sin, they are responsible.

Because God is God, we should honor him as the one to decided how we the church practice the Lord’s Supper.

Again, Jesus was not lacking a clear view of that first century society’s struggle with drunkenness OR our modern society’s struggles with alcohol therefore giving us reason to change what he instructed us to use as the symbols for the Lord’s supper.

He knew and he still gave us these symbols to use. **We need not second guess or question that.**

*Let me show you an example from scripture for another reason why we know that it is not* ***the will of the Lord*** *to remove wine for the communion table for reasons that some struggle with over indulgence in alcohol. Even when the New Testament church was overindulging in wine and coming together to participate in the Lord’s supper the prescription of the* ***Apostle Paul*** *was not to remove wine but to call the church to accountability and repentance.*

*Look…*

**1 Corinthians 11:17-26** But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, 19 for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. 20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Paul admonishes the Corinthian church for the overuse of alcoholic wine and their lack of selfless unity at the Lord’s supper. He rebukes them for their selfishness and getting drunk at these church gatherings. AGAIN, SEE THAT His remedy is not to remove wine from communion but to instruct them to get back to what the Lord told us to do and without sinful or selfish indulgence.

**Church Family,** Because we are committed for God’s word to rule us in all things, it is our Elders united and ongoing conviction that the use of wine at the Lord’s table (as the Lord instructed us to use) for our time of remembrance and testimony is the proper way to honor him in these things.

**No one is wiser than God.** We don’t know things now that he didn’t know in the time God the Son instructed the use of wine. This is knowing full well the struggle some have with alcohol from Genesis until His second coming, He chose to use the blessed gift of wine as the drink to use for the Lord’s Supper. We are not wiser than our Lord, we are not more loving to neighbor than our Lord.

The wisest, most loving person to ever walk this planet chose to use wine personally and to instruct us to use it for the Lord’s supper as the symbol of his choice. The God of love and wisdom chose to create wine, give it, and have us drink it on the new earth one day. These are important things we perhaps too easily forget.

**Let me address while we are together a few common questions that some have as we interact with this practice and with God’s prescription in His holy word.**

One of those is…

**-What about underage believing children or teens, can they or should they partake of wine with the Lord’s supper?**

**Our answer is Yes**.

Note first that, the custom of the Jews at the Passover required **all** (men, women, **and children**) to drink four cups of wine. A prominent Jewish Rabbi in the early years noted that, it is commanded to perform this duty, "with red wine.”

So, remember, that was the context that the Lord Jesus prescribed the Lord’s Supper—the context where adults AND children drank the ceremonial wine.

But, even more important then what happened in that old Passover tradition is that, the Lord has given these symbols as the means of our testimony during the Lord’s supper. Jesus prescribed unleavened bread and real wine for Christians. We need not and should not question that they are right and good. Jesus did not give a separate symbol for the believers under a certain age. He would not have given a separate symbol as real wine was THE fitting symbol.

As it relates to human laws, as you’ve learned very well in recent years, Christians are to follow the laws of the land *when they do* ***not*** *contradict or work against the instructions of the Lord*. For this reason the underage children/teens who are of faith have partaken of sacramental wine for religious gatherings or reason’s for centuries rightly, without a problem.

Pastorally, we also want to add that, Parents and bible teachers teaching children the proper use of anything is how we are to lead and shape them. As they grow, we want our children and youth to have a God honoring view and practice of things like alcohol, eating, media, etc. Part of this is to help them see that a 1/2 oz of ceremonial wine for the Lord’s supper is very different than socially having a glass of an alcoholic beverage and VERY different than someone getting drunk.

**-What should you do if you feel a conviction or struggle that contradicts the clear teaching of scripture and is currently causing you to choose grape juice instead of wine when you participate in the Lord’s Supper?**

Upon our transition to wine in the past, while it was **our conviction to use wine at the Lord’s table as the Lord prescribed, it was not our conviction *at the time* to remove the offering of grape juice as an option for those who needed to digest this change in our practice and so they could seek their shepherds if further help or insight was needed to honor God’s revealed will for these things.**

Our deep desire in the time of transition is to be to help our church family to obtain unity in a right and God honoring view and practice of these things according to God’s word. We want to walk with you as you look to honor God with all of your life.

So, to answer the question,

-I would say first, your desire should to be to ultimately honor the Lord in all things as he has revealed in scripture. You should desire to walk by faith and not by sight. You should do this because you belong to Christ and because Christ has you in His grip now and forever and have nothing to fear but God himself.

-Second, you should humbly lean on your shepherds to help you walk and talk this out. Not assuming and or not exercising the good means God has given you as sheep of His flock but looking to your shepherds to hear you, pray with you, look to scripture with you and help you seek the Lord in all things.

To be clear, we do not intend to have grape juice on the table ongoingly. Our specific request of you (if you are struggling to embrace Christ prescription of consuming wine at the Lord’s Supper) is to make it a priority to reach out to us to find time and space to seek the Lord on these things. Please prioritize this. Take the step to reach out and clearly let us know you are in that place and that you want to talk. Then, elders and/or group leaders will be able to help. *Together, we’ll seek unity in God’s word*. Please do not delay in this, let us know, and when we have a good time, we will take steps together.

We want to know where the precious members of this church stand and struggle and only by knowing where you are can we lead you well in these things and our best walking with you in the ways we will continue to reform this practice in our church moving forward.

**6. Accountable and Faithful Practice**

**Finally, It is important that when we take the Lord’s supper we do it accountably.**

**1 Corinthians 11:23-29** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

**Three things I want to be sure to touch on here.**

1. **the Lord’s supper is only for those whom God has given saving faith in Jesus alone for salvation and who have ideally been baptized to profess that faith.**

This means the Lord’s Supper is not for children who are **not** credibly professing faith in Christ and or friends or casual attendees who **don’t** credibly profess faith. The Lord’ supper is given to the body of Christ to remember his sacrifice on their behalf… if you do **not** have saving faith in Christ then you are **not** a part of the body of Christ and you do not have a testimony of Christ to celebrate and share with the world. \*it stands as a tangible reminder to our unbelieving children of friends or family who attend that they have the most serious business to do in being saved before they are a part of the family of God in this most important way.

1. **Repentance from sin must happen to rightly honor the Lord’s supper.**

If a believer is walking in unrepentance or is under Christian discipline they should repent so they can rightly testify publicly that they belong to Jesus and he has given them the power to overcome sin. Walking in disobedience to King Jesus is a contrasting testimony that is not good for the gospel or one’s personal witness. This is why Paul is saying, 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. (**1 Corinthians 11:27-29)**

We must examine ourselves. Is there unrepentant sin I have not dealt with? This doesn’t mean perfection. The Lord’s Supper is a wonderful place to be reminded how dependent on Jesus you are to overcome sin. If struggling repent and drink deeply and be reoriented for who you are in Christ.

But if you are in a season of sinfully avoiding repentance then you are participating in an unworthy manner. The Corinthian church was guilty of selfish and sinful behavior. Paul is saying, take account and repent so that you do not stand in judgment outside of a true witness and walk with Christ.

1. **The Lord’s supper is to be practiced faithfully and regularly by his people until he returns.**

**1 Corinthians 11:26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

*The Lord’s super is a beautiful and wonderful symbol of the grace of God on undeserving sinners. It points us to the sacrifice of the spotless lamb in our place and testifies to a watching world about what God has done and that he is coming again to claim his bride and provide a wedding feat like no other as we honor and worship the God of all creation.*

*We are convicted to treasure our time at the Lord’s table and this witness and remembrance the Lord has given. So we long to be regular and faithful in our practice of it moving forward.*

*Please make your preparation for the Lord’s supper a special part of your preparation for Sunday worship.*

*Let us value the symbolism God has given us and be faithful and accountable in our practice of it.*

**What is the Lord's Supper?**

“The Lord’s Supper is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby professing believers gather together regularly to remember, celebrate, and testify of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ by the eating of bread and the drinking of wine, which symbolize the body and blood of Jesus. This is a regular practice and testimony for those who are saved by God.”