

COURSE I I

JACOB, MOSES, AND THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

We've seen that during the Last Supper, Jesus taught that *he* was the true grapevine. But long before the Messiah's words at this momentous event, the fruit of the vine (or grapevine in the Greek) played an important role in Jewish tradition.

Israel's Historic Connection to the Grapevine

Israel had a longstanding connection to grapes and the grapevine, which is shown below in a historic artifact—the last coin minted in Israel before the final crushing of Bar Kochba, the Jewish leader who fought against the Roman occupation (AD 135):



A cluster of grapes hangs from a vine on the front of the coin (left image), and on the reverse is a lyre surrounded by a Hebrew inscription that reads “for the freedom of Jerusalem.”

When those whom Moses sent to “spy out” the Promised Land of Israel later returned, they brought back a large vine with grapes on it (Numbers 13:20–23). Thus grapes and the grapevine became symbolic of the Promised Land:

^{NAS} Numbers 13:17 When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, “Go up there into the Negev; then go up into the hill country.

^{NAS} Numbers 13:20 “And how is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land.” Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

^{NAS} Numbers 13:23 Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two *men*, with some of the pomegranates and the figs.

The spies returned to Moses with this tremendous cluster of grapes, which was so big that it took two men with a pole to carry it. In addition, the scripture says the spies brought back an “evil” or “bad” report of the existence of giant-sized men in the land who were too strong for them (13:32). It was not evil in the sense that it was a false report, only that it put fear and unbelief into the people as to accomplishing what God had called them to. They cried out, saying that it would have been better if they had stayed in Egypt instead of following God and Moses.

Joshua and Caleb were of a different spirit, though; they wanted to go in and take the land that God had promised. Because this report caused the multitudes to be fearful, however, the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all those who were over 20 at the time—and thus should have known better (Numbers 32:11)—had died. Forty years later, under Joshua, the next generation finally entered the Promised Land.

Jesus and Joshua have identical names in both Hebrew and Greek; however, English translators changed “Joshua” into “Jesus” (as we saw in “Setting the Table 2”). Thus Joshua leading the multitude into the Promised Land points forward to the true Joshua (Yeshua/Jesus) leading us into the spiritual Promised Land.

Going back earlier to the father of the Israelite nation, we see that Jacob spoke in enigmatic parables about *grapes* and the *grapevine* in a prophecy concerning the Messiah:

^{NAS} Genesis 49:10 “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, **Until Shiloh comes**, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples.

^{NAS} Genesis 49:11 “He ties *his* foal **to the vine**, And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes **in the blood of grapes**.²¹⁹

If we view this scripture through our natural or literal senses, we would ask how and why one would ever wash his robes in wine, the “blood” of a “grape,” or the blood of a single cluster “of grapes”? And how could such a thing possibly tie into the

219 The Greek Septuagint uses the word “grape” in the singular, but this can also refer to a separate cluster. In Hebrew and the Septuagint, the word used for “vine” is “grapevine.”

promised Messiah? No one would wash a garment in the fruit of the vine, for in the natural sense it would become stained.

What would later men of God, such as Moses or David, think of this prophecy? What could Jacob's prophetic words possibly mean?

In the Psalms, David referred to the Messiah coming with parables to bring forth "dark sayings" *that were from old*. Jacob's prophesy was one such *dark saying*.

^{NAS} Psalm 78:2 I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter **dark sayings of old**,

Or, as Young's Literal Translation has it:

^{YLT} Psalm 78:2 I open with a simile my mouth, I bring forth **hidden things of old**,

And Jesus fulfills this prophecy from the Psalms:

^{NAS} Matthew 13:35 so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "I will open My mouth in parables; **I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.**"

You will not see much written in the Torah commentaries about Jacob's statement of washing his robes in the "*blood* of grapes," because how could this be explained?

John Gives the Spiritual Fulfillment of Jacob's Washing of Robes in Wine

One of the closest Jewish followers of Christ was John, who when writing the Book of Revelation used this saying of Jacob, yet with a slightly different application. John pictured this same spiritual concept of washing robes in "blood" and making them white, but he showed this being done not in the blood of a grape, but in the Messiah's blood. This is what Jacob's "dark saying" pointed to:

^{NAS} Revelation 6:11 And **there was given** to each of them a **white robe**; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.

^{NAS} Revelation 7:14 And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribu-

lation, and **they have washed** their robes and **made them white** in the **blood of the Lamb**.

You cannot literally make a robe clean or “white” by washing it in wine or in blood, so of course these statements are intended to be interpreted spiritually.

Those who are familiar with Jewish writings know that God was firm through Moses in requiring the Jews never to ingest any manner of blood. However, what may surprise some is that Moses also spoke of drinking blood in a positive sense. Moses, like Jacob, also spoke of the *blood* of the grape:

^{NAS} Deuteronomy 32:13–15 “He made him ride on the high places of the earth, And he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock, And oil from the flinty rock, Curds of cows, and milk of the flock, With fat of lambs, And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats, With the finest of the wheat—And **of the blood of grapes you drank** wine. But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—You are grown fat, thick, and sleek—Then he forsook God who made him, And scorned the Rock of his salvation.

Moses was speaking of the blessings that pointed to the Promised Land, of God’s provision, and drinking from the *blood* of a grape (“grape” is singular in Hebrew, referring to either a single grape or a single bunch of grapes). This “Song of Moses” not only spoke of the Israelites drinking of the fruit of the vine in the Promised Land, but also of their eventual forsaking of the Lord and the exile that occurred.

Whosoever Ingests Any Blood Is to Be Cut Off

But why would Moses speak of *drinking* blood in any form, especially here as a positive experience? Wouldn’t this be improper, and at least slightly distasteful, given all of God’s commands through Moses to never ingest blood?

^{KJV} Leviticus 7:27 Whatsoever soul *it be* that eateth any manner of blood, even **that soul shall be cut off** from his people.

^{NAS} Leviticus 17:10–11 ‘And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, **who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people.** For **the life of the flesh is in the blood,** and I have given it to you on the altar **to make atonement** for your souls; **for it is the blood** by reason of the life **that makes atonement.**’

Couldn't Moses have just said that the Israelites drank *cool, refreshing grape juice*? Why put the word "blood" in there? Do we really want to equate the Promised Land with drinking natural blood of any kind, even if it is the blood of a grape? We know that Moses must have had a good reason for including it, for he was a friend of God with whom God spoke face-to-face.

Torah commentators, as well as New Covenant commentators, often avoid this verse altogether since there's no question that the idea of ingesting blood, even the "blood" of a grape, is disturbing.

Since God had said that the "life" is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), let's assume for now that Moses was speaking spiritually. He gave an analogy about the "life" of the grape from which they were drinking and "the life" that God would provide in the Promised Land. Moses spoke of drinking blood for the same reason that the Messiah spoke of it—both meant it to be understood in a figurative, spiritual sense.

The Messiah and the Spiritual Lifeblood of the New Covenant

The Old Testament contains some scriptures that may seem bizarre, and this is also true of the New Testament. Often a bizarre scripture is a signpost that the speaker is giving a parable that must be understood spiritually. One of the strangest Bible scriptures happens to be spoken by the Messiah himself, and just as with the figurative statement made by Moses, it relates to taking in the lifeblood of the grape in the Promised Land:

^{NAS} John 6:53–54 Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have **no life in yourselves**. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood **has eternal life**, and I will raise him up on the last day."

If ever Jesus spoke a parable that needed to be properly interpreted, this was it. Yet when these Jewish scriptures were brought to Rome, it was decided that they meant a new Communion ritual.

Early Jewish believers knew, however, that Jesus was speaking another parable, as he had done so often before. Every statement a person makes must be taken in context, and much needs to be understood about the context of John chapter 6 that leads up to verses 53 and 54, so let's take a closer look.

First of all, this was a particularly stubborn group that was following the Messiah only for "loaves and the fishes" (verse 26), as Jesus had miraculously fed the hungry multitude the previous day by *breaking bread* and multiplying it out to them. Some people from this previous day were waiting for more free bread, and were subtly tempting Jesus to be like Moses and provide bread continually, as Moses did with the

manna in the wilderness (verses 30–31). Jesus responded that it was not the decision of Moses that gave them the provision of the manna, but God’s miracle (verse 32). Jesus then compared himself to the manna that came down, showing that he was sent by God as the true spiritual provision to which the manna pointed.

Secondly, Jesus taught those present not to labor for food that perishes, but to seek the spiritual food that will bring everlasting life in God’s presence. However, they resisted and did not really hear him (verse 27). This is partly what led up to the shocking statement that caused even many of his disciples to forsake him (John 6:66). It must be remembered that Jesus spoke the words that his Father gave him to speak (John 7:16, 17; 14:10; Hebrews 1:1, 2), and at this time God did not want a large group of people only interested in free bread to follow the Messiah. So Jesus gave a parable that would separate out those who were only seeking free bread, and that would later be understood spiritually by the disciples as they came fully into the promised New Covenant.

His disciples who remained loyal knew that this was another parable or “dark saying,” and never thought this was something that Jesus wanted in any natural or ritualistic sense. They did not obediently walk over to him and begin nibbling on his leg and drinking his blood as it flowed out. It was only in Rome where this parable would be interpreted naturally as a new Communion ritual that they took literally.

The Blood of the Two Covenants Compared

The reason God stated for not ingesting blood was that He had given the blood of the sacrifice to the Israelite people “to make atonement for your souls” (Leviticus 17:11). But remember that John had shown the blood of the lamb to be what washed the believers’ robes and made them white. This pictured the atonement and ritual cleansing, as God had commanded the Israelites to wash their garments when they approached His presence (Exodus 19:10, 11).

It was a longstanding Jewish requirement to have one’s garments and body washed when approaching God, and also to have the blood of the appropriate sacrifice applied before entering His presence. Only the high priest was permitted to enter where God’s direct presence dwelt, in the Holy of Holies, and never without having first applied the sacrificial blood. One would never want to stand before God and be in His presence having refused the provision that He laid out.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul compares the blood of the animal sacrifices under the Old Covenant to how the shed blood of Christ brought us into the New Covenant, whereby we could be cleansed and go into God’s direct presence:

^{DBY} Hebrews 9:6 Now these things being thus ordered, into the first tabernacle the priests enter at all times, accomplishing the services;

^{DBY} Hebrews 9:7 but into the second, the high priest only, once a year, **not without blood**, which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people:

^{DBY} Hebrews 9:8 **the Holy Spirit shewing this**, that the way of the *holy of holies* has not yet been made manifest while as yet the first tabernacle has *its* standing;

In other words, these verses indicate that the way into God's direct presence was blocked while the first Tabernacle under Moses had its *legal standing*. Paul is showing what the Holy Spirit "is signifying" with these laws from the Tabernacle concerning the Holy of Holies, the veils, and only the high priest entering, and never without the blood. Under the New Covenant, those laws and regulations no longer have a legal standing to keep believers out of God's direct presence. This is why the disciples could be filled directly with God's spirit on the day of Pentecost; the veil had been torn in two at the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:51), signifying that the way into His direct presence had now been provided.

Paul continues:

^{NAS} Hebrews 9:9–10 which *is* a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they *relate* only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body **imposed until a time of reformation**.

The two Greek words that are translated "reformation" in verse 10 actually mean until the "new order of things" was brought in, referring to the promised New Covenant. Paul continues in Hebrews 9 (in NAS):

9:11 But when Christ appeared *as* a high priest of the good things to come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, **not made with hands**, that is to say, not of this creation;

9:12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, **but through His own blood**, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained **eternal redemption**.

9:13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,

9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

9:15 And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

Paul talks about blood in the Old Covenant:

9:18 Therefore even the first *covenant* **was not inaugurated without blood.**

9:19 For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, **he took the blood** of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, **and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,**

9:20 saying, “**This is the blood of the covenant** which God commanded you.”

9:21 And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.

9:22 And according to the Law, *one may almost say*, **all things are cleansed with blood**, and **without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.**

Then he turns to the New Covenant, which Christ’s sacrifice ushered in:

9:23 Therefore it was necessary for the **copies of the things** in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

9:24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a *mere* copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

9:25 nor was it that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own.

9:26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Old Covenant Blood Applied Without; New Covenant Blood Applied Spiritually Within

Under the Old Covenant, God did not want the Israelites to take the “life” (i.e., blood) of the animal sacrifice within them in any form, because He did not want them to *symbolically* take the life of *an animal* within. It is not the life of the animal that God wants *within* us but rather the spiritual life from the Messiah.

Moses, however, did sanctify the people and set them apart unto God by sprinkling sacrificial blood *on the outside* of the people:

^{NAS} Exodus 24:6 And Moses took half of the blood and put *it* in basins, and the *other* half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

^{NAS} Exodus 24:8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it on the people*, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

When God then inaugurated the priesthood under Aaron and his sons, he again told Moses to apply the blood externally. Each priest was to apply the blood on his right ear (symbolically showing that he must hear what this means), the thumb of his right hand (showing the work of his hands is set apart to God), and the toes of his right foot (showing a walk that is set apart to God). Thus the blood atonement would always be pictured as the priests were ministering in His presence.

^{NAS} Exodus 29:20 “And you shall slaughter the ram, and take some of its blood and put *it* on the lobe of Aaron’s right ear and on the lobes of his sons’ right ears and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the big toes of their right feet, and sprinkle the *rest of the* blood around on the altar.

All of these blood applications *were on the outside of their bodies*; nothing went within. We know that these animal sacrifices pointed further to New Covenant truths,

and at the Last Supper, Jesus showed that the fruit of the grapevine in the cup represented his blood *of the New Covenant* (as we saw in Course 10). Again, when his blood was shed, the Jewish disciples eventually came to know that they were now in the promised New Covenant, with the previous covenant no longer having legal standing over them (Jeremiah 31:31, 33). The promised New Covenant was not based on sacrificial animal blood but on the shed blood of the promised Messiah.

After his disciples eventually came to understand the parables and New Covenant truths that Jesus had been speaking to them, they went out teaching based on this understanding:

^{YLT} Revelation 5:9 and they sing a new song, saying, ‘Worthy art thou to take the scroll, and to open the seals of it, because thou wast slain, **and didst redeem us to God in thy blood**, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,

In the New Covenant the *spiritual* “priests” (referring to the believers, for “he has made **us** to be a kingdom and priests,” Revelation 1:6, 5:10, NIV) understood that they were sanctified to God in a blood that was not from an animal sacrifice:

^{DBY} 1 Peter 1:18–19 knowing that ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible *things*, as silver or gold, from your vain conversation handed down from *your* fathers, but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, *the blood* of Christ,

^{KJV} Revelation 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us from our sins in his own blood**,

This was the blood of the grape(s) that Jacob spoke of concerning the coming of the Messiah and the washing of the robes, and this was the blood of the grape(s) that Moses spoke of as a blessing from God for the Promised Land.

God’s Spirit to Indwell the Believer

As we’ve seen, the blood of sacrificial animals in the Old Covenant was not enough to make the full atonement, and thus God’s spirit did *not dwell within* the Israelites yet.

However, the Messiah, having redeemed them and us by his shed blood, does provide for us all to be filled with God’s spirit, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Joel that God would pour out His spirit on all flesh. To enter the New Covenant, we spir-

itually apply the blood of the true Passover *within*—in our hearts—by accepting the Messiah. We allow his sacrifice and atoning death to enter in and touch our hearts.

We have no record that Jesus ever told his disciples, “I am the true Passover,” but his Last Supper parables made the connection between his body and blood such that his disciples (who knew the Jewish idiom of applying sacrificial blood) would soon understand that he was the true Passover to which the sacrifices pointed.

These two aspects of the Passover—its body and its blood—were very important under the first covenant, as God required the Israelites to always eat the flesh of the Passover, which was part of the atonement (that also pointed forward). Both aspects were needed to keep the death angel away when God “passed over” and spared the Israelites that first Passover, after blood was applied to the doorposts. The Israelites were never to ingest the blood of any of the animal sacrifices, but they were required *to apply* the blood, such as by pouring it out at the altar of God in the Temple.

On the last night before the Messiah’s sacrifice as the true Passover, he applied the two Passover aspects—its body and its blood—to himself. At the Last Supper, Jesus spoke of *his body* figuratively as pieces of the bread, meaning that we would partake of him as we spiritually fellowship with other believers who are filled with God’s spirit. Then he spoke of *his blood* being “poured out” for many, just as the Passover blood was always poured out at the altar for the Israelites. His parable also showed that his blood was applied *within his disciples*, because after they drank some of the grape juice, he then appears to pour out the remainder (as if figuratively at the altar) to show that it represented his New Covenant blood:

^{NAS} Mark 14:24 And He said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out²²⁰ for many.

The Greek word Jesus used for his blood being “poured out” is the same word used in the Septuagint for the sacrifices, whose blood was similarly “poured out” at the altar. The Messiah was showing the fulfillment of the inauguration of the first covenant under Moses, when, after the Israelites had left Egypt, half of the blood was “poured out” at the altar and half was sprinkled *on* the people.

In the book of Ezekiel, God spoke of a time when He would place His spirit within the Israelites:

^{NAS} Ezekiel 36:26–27 “Moreover, **I will give you a new heart** and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. “**And I will put My**

220 The Greek for “poured out” is a present tense participle, showing it was “being poured out.”

Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

For God's spirit to indwell the believer, and, as God promised in Jeremiah regarding the New Covenant, to "put my law *in their inward parts*" and write the law "*in their hearts*," the blood must be applied *within*:

^{JPS} Jeremiah 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD, I will put My law **in their inward parts**, and **in their heart** will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people;

The blood at the first Passover was to be applied on the outside doorposts to spare the Israelites from the coming judgment on Egypt:

When I see the blood I will pass over you. (Exodus 12:13).

In our day, talking about blood may be distasteful to many. However, the Israelites' religious life *revolved around these sacrifices* and the *blood being applied* for them to walk in God's forgiveness. They viewed blood very differently than we do today, thoroughly understanding the concept of the life being in it and the atonement it provided. One of the rare times that Moses became angry was when Aaron's sons had not eaten the flesh of the sin offering (Leviticus 10:16, 17). Moses understood that this partaking of the sacrificial flesh was the second part of what provided the atonement—not just the shed blood.



The parables Jesus spoke in John 6 show the fulfillment of the two Passover aspects—partaking of the lamb (i.e., Christ's "body") and applying its blood—yet Christ's blood was to be applied in a different way. In these parables, *Jesus showed that his blood must go within, spiritually*, to make way for the soon-coming spiritual life from God, whereby the disciples would be filled with God's spirit and have God Himself dwelling within:

^{NAS} John 6:53 Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, **you have no life in yourselves.**"

Now Jesus was not speaking to dead people here; those listening certainly had *natural* "life" in themselves, so we know that he was speaking of *spiritual* life from God.

He spoke this truth in the form of a parable, as he so often did and as the Messiah was prophesied to do. God’s dwelling must be sanctified and set apart, and for God to indwell the believer He must see the atoning blood applied. Similarly, the sacrifice of the Messiah must touch the heart, sanctifying the person within.

Right after Jesus spoke those shocking words in John 6:53 and many of his disciples left him, he made it especially clear to his closest remaining disciples that his words were to be *taken spiritually*. However, they still did not understand:

^{NAS} John 6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; **the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**”

Jesus was not a Roman Catholic priest teaching a new ritual; indeed, no Roman Catholics even existed yet. Nor was he teaching Luther’s ritual of Consubstantiation or the Protestant “Communion-lite” (i.e., without the actual flesh and blood) that came later.

Jesus was a Jewish man from the line of David, living at a time when Jews were familiar with applying the blood of various sacrifices. His disciples were first-century kosher Jews who were well acquainted with his frequent method of speaking to them in parables, whether they fully understood his meaning each time or not.

It’s important for us Protestants (and Catholics as well) to realize that we have been led astray by various Communion rituals, so that we can move past these rituals into the true communion that God desires for us. We must unite together, all Jews and Gentiles who love God and His Messiah, as one body under Christ the head. We must allow him to bring the new truths that he has for his people, his spiritual body of believers. We must allow the Holy Spirit to bring new truths, as in Acts 15. We must not allow egos or positions of authority to hamper any truths that the Messiah wants to bring to his people. Christ seeks to cleanse and prepare his bride, and woe unto the men who stand in the way of the truth that he desires to bring (Ephesians 5:26).

Christ Is the Grapevine—His Shed Blood Is the Spiritual Life Flow to the Branches

The promise of the Father in the New Covenant is that His spirit will indwell the believer. At the Last Supper, just before Jesus was slain as the true Passover that God called “My sacrifice” (Exodus 23:18), he spoke of the fruit of the grapevine. There is actually no mention of “wine”²²¹ at the Last Supper, but fresh fruit of the vine is spoken of. The grape juice in the cup—the fruit of the vine—linked directly into the parable that he spoke after supper, in which he said that he was the grapevine:

221 Nor is there mention in the Bible of four cups of wine at Passover; this was a later tradition.

^{NAS} John 15:1 “I am **the true vine**,²²² and My Father is the vine-dresser.”

The *natural* fruit of the vine was the lifeblood flowing through the vine, and in the New Covenant it was the Messiah’s “lifeblood” (his sacrificial blood) that would provide the spiritual life flow to the connected branches. The Jews understood the concept of the lifeblood of the grape, for they were familiar with the Song of Moses. They were also familiar with Isaiah’s analogy of treading the wine press, where the “lifeblood” of the people is pictured as the juice from the trodden grapes (Isaiah 63:3, 6, NAS). Israel was often pictured as the grapevine.²²³ However, many of these idioms were not understood in Rome.

Jesus said “I am the true vine” (John 15:1) on the same evening as his Last Supper parables, after he had shown his disciples that the fruit of the grapevine in his cup represented his blood of the New Covenant being poured out. Then later that night he said that *he* was the true grapevine and his disciples were the branches; if they would abide in him, they would bear much *spiritual* fruit. Of course, when they heard this, they did not literally hold out their arms pretending to be branches in a new ritual, because they knew that the Messiah was not creating new rituals at the Last Supper.

So the overall picture created when the two parables are joined—the bread and the fruit of the grapevine during the Last Supper, and the grapevine right after supper—is of Christ as the grapevine and his shed blood providing the spiritual life flow into the vine that spreads to the branches. The spiritual life flow would be the Holy Spirit of God and His *agape* love.

In scripture, the nation and land of Israel are often pictured as a grapevine. And it was a grapevine bearing an enormous clump of grapes that those spies sent by Moses brought back when they first explored this Promised Land. Jesus declared that *he* was *the* true grapevine from which the spiritual essence of the spiritual Promised Land emanated. In effect, he was the grapes and the grapevine branch that the spies under Moses brought back in type, which pointed to the true provision in the spiritual Promised Land, as depicted on the Israelite coin at the beginning of this Course. This was the lifeblood of the grape that Moses spoke of and the blood of the grape mentioned by Jacob (and later John) that would ritually cleanse the believer.

222 In the Greek, the word translated into English as “vine” is actually “grapevine.”

223 This is in scriptures such as Psalm 80:8–14, Isaiah 5:1–13, etc. See also the parable of Israel as the vineyard, given a few days before the Last Supper in Mark 12:1–10.

Abide in Him and Stay Connected to the Spiritual Flow

Later the apostles would bear much fruit from their ministry by abiding in this spiritual grapevine and allowing this life flow to spread to one another, as thousands came to the Lord through their ministry. They fulfilled what Moses had spoken concerning the Promised Land and the blood (life flow) of the grape—namely that the spiritual life from God would soon be flowing through and within them:

^{NAS} John 7:37–39 Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” **But this He spoke of the Spirit**, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

This picture of the fruit of the vine at the Last Supper and the grapevine parable afterward taught the necessity of “abiding in him”:

^{NAS} John 15:4 “**Abide in Me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you **abide in Me.**”

We cannot naturally or literally abide in him, but *spiritually* we abide and stay connected to the spiritual flow that comes from God, because of Christ, so we do not dry up and die spiritually.

^{NAS} John 15:6 “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

^{NAS} John 15:9 “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

^{NAS} John 15:10–11 “If you keep My commandments, you will **abide in My love**; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and **abide in His love.** These things I have spoken to you, that **My joy may be in you**, and *that* your joy may be made full.

Shortly thereafter on that same night, Jesus spoke similar words again:

^{NAS} John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, *art* in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

^{NAS} John 17:23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

The Holy Spirit of God would be poured out after Christ's sacrifice on the day of Pentecost, which came 50 days later, counting from the Resurrection. A powerful new experience and closeness to God opened up to these Jewish believers, whereby God was no longer distant but was actually *dwelling within them* by His spirit (Acts 2). This life of Christ, symbolized by his shed blood, pictured the spiritual life that is found only in the New Covenant, and now it was flowing spiritually through the believers.

After the Last Supper and shortly after the disciples had taken some of the bread and the fruit of the vine *within them* (thus spiritually applying the two aspects of the Passover—its flesh and blood), Jesus said more about *dwelling within them*:

^{NAS} John 14:16–18 “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is* **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because **He abides with you, and will be in you**. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

^{NAS} John 14:20 “**In that day you shall know** that I am in My Father, and **you in Me, and I in you**.”

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would be sent *in his name*, meaning that it was *because of him* that God's spirit would be coming:

^{NAS} John 14:26 “But the Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

And this “Helper” (or “comforter” in some translations) and “spirit of truth” is the Holy Spirit of God that would soon indwell them:

^{NAS} John 14:17 *that is* **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because **He abides with you, and will be in you.**

Our Fellowship Is with the Father, Christ, and One Another

As the branches of the grapevine, our fellowship is with the Father, the Messiah, and one another:

^{NAS} 1 John 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship²²⁴ with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

The disciples realized that in Christ's spiritual body, blood flows spiritually to its every member, cleansing and atoning. This blood was never meant to be applied in the natural sense—in a new ritual—for the Jews understood these things spiritually:

^{NAS} 1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, **we have fellowship²²⁵ with one another**, and **the blood** of Jesus His Son **cleanses us** from all sin.

We spiritually commune with God through His spirit that dwells within us, and God has provided that we also commune spiritually with His son. We see this in the new heaven and new earth, where Jesus is pictured as the “lamp” and God is the light that flows through that lamp. Jesus shows forth God's nature, such as His glory and His love, and God has the same plan for all who love Him:

^{NAS} Revelation 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the **glory of God has illumined it**, and **its lamp** *is* the Lamb.

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 4:6–7 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of **the glory of God in the face of Christ**. But **we** have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;

224 The Greek word *koinonia* is translated as “fellowship”; it is sometimes translated as “communion.”

225 Same as footnote 224 above.

^{NAS} Hebrews 1:3 And He is the radiance of His glory and **the exact representation of His nature**, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;

We Inherit the Lifeblood from Christ and Grow into His Likeness

In Israel, humanity was often spoken of as “flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). When Paul came to the Lord, the scripture says that he did not first consult with “flesh and blood” (Galatians 1:16) because Paul knew his calling was from God. Of course this did not refer to some bread as literal human flesh and some natural wine in a cup with which he consulted, but rather of humanity. Thus Paul did not feel led to consult with the other disciples right after his conversion, and yet the Lord showed him what the Last Supper meant (1 Corinthians 11:23).

The children of Israel were said to share or partake in the “flesh and blood” of their parents, whose life flow and DNA passed down to them (Hebrews 2:14). This flesh and blood referred to the parents from whom the child was born.

^{NAS} Hebrews 2:13 And again, “I will put My trust in Him.” And again, “**Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.**”

^{NAS} Hebrews 2:14 Since then the children **share in flesh and blood**, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;

^{KJV} Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the **children are partakers of flesh and blood**, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Of course, this Jewish manner of speaking means that children partake in the flesh and blood of their parents by being born of them. As God’s children, we inherit the same *spiritual* DNA that Christ had, such that we’ll grow into the same image and likeness if we partake of God’s spiritual food and spiritual drink, fulfilling His plan:

^{NIV} Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness . . .”

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.**

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:16 from whom **the whole body**, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, **causes the growth of the body** for the building up of itself in love.

Even in our modern idiom, we often speak of those in our own family as our “own flesh and blood.”



John P. Lange, in his *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, uses a phrase in reference to John 6 that I think is perfect here. He says, “But flesh and blood elsewhere denotes **inherited nature**”²²⁶ (boldface mine). So with “Christ our Passover,” we partake spiritually of Christ’s humanity, “the man, Christ Jesus,” as he is called in the scripture. When we read about him and receive his word, we partake of who he was (and is), what he did, and the things that he said. We partake of his life and love that he showed forth. This is the *spiritual* DNA that we inherit. We grow into that same likeness by the spirit:

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 15:49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 15:47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 15:48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

Just as Eve came out of Adam’s side, so did the spiritual bride emerge from Christ’s side when his blood was shed (Christ is pictured as the second Adam in 1 Corinthians 15:45–49). Thus we have within us his *spiritual* DNA that is programmed to grow us into his likeness, as long as we receive the nourishment from above.

God’s spirit and His word affect our hearts and transform us into His likeness, as we yield:

226 Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Gospel of John), p. 223 (John 6:53).

^{YLT} 2 Corinthians 3:18 and we all, with unveiled face, the glory of the Lord beholding in a mirror, **to the same image are being transformed**, from glory to glory, even as **by the Spirit of the Lord**.

^{NAS} Romans 8:29 For **whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born **among many brethren**;

Why is it that so many Jewish believers are coming to know the Messiah in our day? The scripture above says, “whom he did foreknow he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Israel has also been brought back to become a nation, and these things happening at the same time are not by accident. God is doing special work to form all the believers—those who will enter in—into the image and likeness of His son.

Jesus was the first man born who yielded perfectly to God, and who grew into the exact image and likeness of God. He is the firstborn in the Jewish sense; he has the pre-eminent position before God, and in a certain sense he is our elder brother. This scripture says he is the firstborn among *many brethren* whom God will bring into His image and likeness by His spirit, fulfilling Genesis 1:26.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness”