Blood of the Grape
With His Stripes We are Healed
Biblical Imagery

- Bible writers tried to capture what an infinite God revealed to them—in human language.

- To accomplish this they had to stretch their words to the limit, using:
  - Symbols, motifs, metaphors, figures of speech and literary patterns to communicate rich Bible truths as accurately as possible.
Biblical Imagery

- Among the most popular in the Bible are:
  - Symbols: actual people, places or things that point to something or someone greater than themselves
  - Figures of Speech: expressions that cannot be taken literally—used to suggest a picture, image, or some other special effect
Biblical Imagery

- One of the most powerful families of symbols in the Bible that point together to Christ and what He did for God’s people, has to be:
  - The grape
  - The wine that comes from it
  - The winepress that squeezes grapes into wine
- Let’s tackle them, one at a time
The grape, a major crop in biblical times, was grown in vineyards for wine production. So a land full of vineyards symbolized abundance and prosperity. Images of grapes represent successful agriculture. Epitomized by the cluster of grapes brought back by the 12 spies as evidence of fertility in Canaan (Num. 13:23)
Grapes

- In the coming golden age, according to Amos, there will be such an abundance, that:
  - “The treader of grapes” will overtake the sower (Amos 9:13), still harvesting when next planting season begins

- In the Bible the success or failure of crops is often linked to people’s obedience or disobedience
  - As evidence God had either blessed or punished them
Grapes

- Failure of a grape crop to reach maturity signaled disaster in the land
  - So, oracles of judgment in the OT sometimes included predictions that disobedient people will be deprived of the pleasure and sustenance of grapes (Deut 28:39; Is 18:5; Mic 6:15)

- Even the premature demise of a wicked person is pictured as a vineyard shaking off its unripe grape (Job 15:33)
Grapes

- Based on this grim image, God pictured a wayward Judah...
  - As a vineyard he planted to produce *good* grapes but that has instead yielded *wild* grapes (Is 5:2, 4)

- In several prophetic passages, the image of “sour grapes” that set teeth on edge
  - Portrays sin and its unpleasant effects (Jer 31:29–30; Ezek 18:2)
Grapes

- In the OT...
  - The vineyard that produced a disappointing crop of grapes—is the nation of Israel (Isa. 5:7)
  - The men of Judah are the plant that pleased Him

- In the NT...
  - Jesus, replaces Israel as the LORD’s Vine (Jn. 15:1)
  - He and His branches (disciples) are the LORD’s plant who will eventually please Him (Mt. 3:17; 25:21)
Wine

- In the ANE, scarcity of water made wine a necessity rather than a luxury
  - Thus, it became a symbol of sustenance and life

- So, in Solomon’s Song…
  - The lover expresses her satisfaction with her beloved’s love, saying that it is better than wine (1:2)
  - He reciprocates the praise by describing her kisses as more intoxicating than wine (4:10)
Wine

- Due to its close relationship to the ongoing life of the community, wine joins grain and oil, as a technical term for covenant blessings
- From God to Israel for obedience and withheld by God for disobedience
- So, Deut. 28:39 warns Israel, if it breaks the covenant, they “will plant vineyards and cultivate them but … not drink the wine”
Wine

- Abundant wine became a stock prophetic image of end time blessing: “in that day the mountains will drip new wine” (Joel 3:18)
- But, fermentation, can be positive or negative
  - So, Paul warns not to get drunk with wine (Eph. 5:18)
  - And Eccl. 9:7 urges readers to “eat food with gladness and drink wine with a joyful heart”
Wine

- Jesus shows the importance of wine when people celebrate—by turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 4)
- The ultimate image of wine as an end time blessing comes as a promise from Jesus at the Last Supper
- “I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Lk. 22:18)
Winepress

- The winepress appears far fewer times than grapes or wine, but is nevertheless just as important
  - While people ate grapes, the shortage of water made pressing grapes into wine a necessity
  - So, the winepress serves a major purpose in completing God’s blessing of grapes to His people
Winepress

- Winepresses were pits, either:
  - Carved out of rock, or
  - Lined with plaster

- Israelites threw grapes into winepresses and trampled them to squeeze the juice out

- Normally a place of joy and singing, silence at the winepress is a picture of divine judgment (Isa. 16:10)
Winepress

- The winepress became a symbol of abundance
  - Writers sometimes paired it with the threshing floor another harvest symbol of plenty and success (Joel 2:14)
  - When the Midianites oppressed Israel, Gideon beat out wheat in a winepress to conceal what he was doing (Jdg. 6:11)
  - Israelites actually killed the pursuing enemy Midianite captain, Zeeb in a winepress (Jdg. 7:25)
Winepress

- No one is more pathetic than the person who treads the winepress, yet is deprived of drinking its wine (Job 24:11)

- In fact, Bible writers use the winepress as a negative rather a positive metaphor
  - They use the trampling of the grapes in the winepress as symbol of destruction and judgment
Winepress

- So, Jeremiah compares Babylonian invaders to grape treaders in a winepress (Lam. 1:15)
  - Joel paints the picture of a nation brimming with wickedness with a winepress overflowing with wine (Joel 3:13)

- But, the most terrifying negative image is the winepress of God’s wrath—-His final destruction of evil and punishment of evildoers
Winepress

- Isaiah 63:3, pictures God treading the winepress alone in anger, trampling the wicked in wrath, and staining his robes in the process.

- The ultimate example of divine judgment comes in Rev 14:18 where the angel…
  - Swings his sharp sickle
  - Harvests the grapes from the earth’s vine, and
  - Throws them into the winepress of God’s wrath
Winepress

- The image climaxes in Rev 14:19–20; 19:15, where John...
  - Identifies the winepress with God’s anger against any and all sin
  - In a surrealistic vision of blood flowing from the wine vat instead of wine (Rev 14:20)
The LORD’s Supper

Moses used graphic language to describe the winemaking process in Deut. 32:14…

- Reminding Israel of past blessings, the LORD said:
  - “You drank the finest wine made from the pure blood of the grape”
  - Moses compared the juice produced from crushing grapes in the winepress—-to blood
  - As if grapes die, releasing their life juices in the process, an image of significance to the world’s redemptive future
The LORD’s Supper

- The image of blood running from the grape has both positive and negative overtones
  - In a literal, positive way, the blood of the grape represents prosperity, grapes giving up their lives to provide wine
  - But, in a symbolic, negative way, the blood of the grape may point to the destruction of the wicked, crushed in the winepress of God’s end time wrath
The LORD’s Supper

On his deathbed, Jacob linked wine and grapes to Judah’s future with a patriarchal blessing...

“He ties his foal to a grapevine, the colt of his donkey to a choice vine. He washes his clothes in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes” (Gen. 49:11)

In the immediate, literal sense, Judah will prosper

He will have so much wine that he can wash his clothes in it—in the juice or “blood of the grape”
The LORD’s Supper

- Though Jacob didn’t realize it, in the fuller sense of the text, known only to God at the time…
- In a distant, symbolic sense, Judah will spawn the Messiah and LORD, who will judge the world…
  - He will crush the wicked like “grapes” in His winepress of wrath
  - So much “wine” will overflow the wine vat, he will wash his clothes in it—in the juice or “blood of the grape”
- The Messiah will also be the Savior of the world
  - To adapt to this other side of Christ, “blood of the grape” imagery takes on another positive dimension
The LORD’s Supper

- Jesus uses “wine” to represent the “blood” He shed on the cross (Mk. 14:24)
- “For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ” (2 Cor. 5:21)
- A “sacrifice” according to John: “that atones for our sins—and not only our sins—but the sins of all the world” (1 Jn. 2:2)
The LORD’s Supper

- As a winepress squeezes blood from grapes, so the winepress of God’s wrath also squeezed the blood from Christ’s body.

- On the night of His arrest, Jesus told James and John, the sons of Zebedee:
  - “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me”  
    Mt. 26:38
The LORD’s Supper

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The LORD’s Supper

- Under the weight of our sins, as the time of His suffering drew near:
  - “He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood” (Lk. 22:44)

- Like juice pressed from a grape, blood began to run from Christ’s body, even before His crucifixion
The LORD’s Supper

- On the cross, the weight of judgment for our sins, like a winepress, squeezed the blood from His body
  - “Since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation” (Rom. 5:9)
  - Because God squeezed the blood from Christ’s body in our place, we will not enter the winepress of His end time wrath
The LORD’s Supper

- In this sense, the “washing” Jacob predicted also includes the demonstration of Christ’s love for us, when He...
- “Washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1:5)
- Before He washes His robes in the blood of wicked grapes, Jesus washed His people from their sins in the blood wine-pressed from His sacrificed body
The LORD’s Supper

- Jesus called the “cup of wine” at the Supper, the “cup of the New Covenant” (1 Cor. 11:25)
  - In the first place, the “cup” refers to the basin that captured the blood drained from His sacrificed body
  - In the second, it refers to the wine vat that held the blood squeezed from Him in the winepress of God’s wrath
    - The “wine” in the “cup” represents the “blood” pressed from Christ to launch and ratify the New Covenant, just as Moses confirmed the Old Covenant with the blood of sacrificial animals (Heb. 9:18-20)
The LORD’s Supper

- Isa. 53 predicted Messiah’s suffering like a grape in the winepress, on behalf of others
  - He grew up like “a tender green shoot” [vine] (v.2)
  - Our sorrows “weighed him down” (v.4a)
  - Instead of for his own sins, he was punished for our rebellion, “crushed for our sins” (verses 4b, 5)
  - The LORD “laid on him” the sins of us all (v.6)
The LORD’s Supper

- Isa. 53 predicted Messiah’s suffering like a grape in the winepress, on behalf of others
  - He was “oppressed and treated harshly...led like a lamb to the slaughter” (v.7)
  - He was “struck down” for our rebellion (v.8)
  - He had “done no wrong...yet, was buried like a criminal” (v.9)
The LORD’s Supper

- Isa. 53 predicted Messiah’s suffering like a grape in the winepress, on behalf of others
  - It was “the LORD’s good plan to crush him” (v.10a)
  - “When his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants” (v.10b)
  - “Because of his experience…many will be counted righteous” (v.11)
The LORD’s Supper

- Isa. 53 predicted Messiah’s suffering like a grape in the winepress, on behalf of others
  - “He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels” (v.12b)
- Repeated adjectives describe the weight of our sins on Jesus, crushing Him for our benefit
- Misunderstood and mistreated, He still, willingly suffered and died for us
The LORD’s Supper

- Isaiah summarizes the suffering servant’s ministry as:
  - “With his stripes we are healed” (v.5b)
    - A reference to conversion, transformation, and translation
      - From our fallen condition in this world
      - To a state of perfection in the world to come
  - So, when Jesus says, “unless you eat the Son of Man’s flesh and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (Jn. 6:53)
    - He talks about abundant life now, and eternal life then
The LORD’s Supper

- So, drinking the wine—Christ’s blood—is…
  - More consuming the elixir of spiritual health and salvation
  - Than observing an ordinance or preserving the memory of what Christ did for us
    - Drinking the wine to honor Christ transforms the Table into an altar for priestly mediation with God to become sound or healthy
    - So, Paul warns those who drink it irreverently, they may become “weak or ill, and even die” (1 Cor. 11:30)
The LORD’s Supper

- The “cup of wine” at the Supper visibly reminds us that
  - Christ threw Himself—the Vine—into God’s winepress, to spare His branches from God’s wrath
  - Like a grape squeezed for its juice, His “blood” filled the vat with the “wine” of healing, joy, and life
    - As the “blood” launched and ratified the New Covenant
    - It also fulfilled the benefits of the OT symbols
    - As often as we “drink” the wine, the benefits are realized in our lives