

In biblical times, a winepress was a specially designed structure used for crushing grapes to extract their juice, primarily for making wine. Unlike today, where industrial machines do this work, ancient winepresses were simple but effective. They consisted of two main parts: a large upper basin where grapes were placed and trodden underfoot, and a lower basin that collected the juice.

People would throw bunches of grapes into the upper pit and step on them, usually barefoot. To maintain balance while stomping, ropes were often used for support. The juice would then flow through a small channel into a lower container where it could be gathered, filtered, and stored.

This process is referenced in multiple passages of Scripture, both literally and symbolically:

Matthew 21:33-34 (NIV)

“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.”

Here, the winepress represents God's investment in Israel, His chosen people, and His expectation of spiritual fruit.

Haggai 2:16 (ESV)

"How did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty."

This reflects the consequences of disobedience despite laboring, the results are lacking due to God's displeasure.

Other verses with literal references to winepresses include:

- Isaiah 5:2 – God's care for His vineyard (Israel)
- Judges 7:25, Nehemiah 13:15, Job 24:11

Spiritual and Prophetic Meaning of the Winepress

The winepress is not just a tool for making wine; in Scripture, it becomes a symbol of divine judgment. Crushing grapes in a winepress is a vivid picture of the wrath of God being poured out on the unrighteous especially in the end times.

This is most clearly seen in Revelation, where Jesus Christ is portrayed as the One who treads the winepress of God's fury:

Revelation 19:15 (ESV)

"From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty."

Here, the winepress symbolizes the final judgment. Jesus is not returning only as Savior but also as Judge. The wicked will be "crushed" under the weight of divine justice, just like grapes underfoot.

This theme is repeated earlier in Revelation:

Revelation 14:19-20 (NIV)

“The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of about 1,600 stadia.”

This terrifying image shows the magnitude of judgment. It emphasizes that no one who rejects God’s grace will escape His justice.

The Cup of His Wrath

To be thrown into God’s winepress is to drink from the cup of His wrath — a biblical metaphor for the full experience of divine judgment.

Revelation 16:19 (NIV)

“The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath.”

Isaiah 63:3 (ESV)

“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel.”

These verses serve as solemn warnings. God’s patience will come to an end, and His justice will be executed.

What Does This Mean for Us Today?

We are currently living in the time of grace — an opportunity to repent and escape the coming judgment. The winepress of God’s wrath is real, but so is His mercy, available through Jesus Christ.

The call is urgent:

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NIV)

“I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”

God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23), but a day is coming when grace will give way to judgment.

Final Thoughts

The winepress in Scripture serves as both a literal tool and a profound symbol. It teaches us about God's expectations, His displeasure at sin, and the certainty of final judgment. But it also points us to Christ who drank the cup of wrath on our behalf (Matthew 26:39) so we wouldn't have to.

Let's not take this time of grace for granted. The day of the Lord will be great and terrible (Joel 2:31). Make sure your life is hidden in Christ today.

Maranatha — Come, Lord Jesus.

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