

WINE

(GOD'S WORD ON IT)



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Many try to justify the use of alcohol by saying that Jesus drank wine or served it to His disciples, but this could not have been fermented wine because Jesus was a Nazarite and would have been under vow to His Father to abstain from any intoxicating beverage. In all situations, there is no excuse for doing anything that would harm someone spiritually or influence them wrongly.

The Bible's warning on intoxicating beverages is clearly defined. Proverbs 20:1 "*Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*" Ephesians 5:18-19 "*Do not over-indulge in [get drunk on] wine—a thing in which excess is so easy—[which leads to debauchery [immorality, dishonesty, decadence]—but drink deeply of [be filled with] God's Spirit.*" The Word and will of God for the believer concerning fermented wine is clear—avoid it entirely and be filled with His Holy Spirit.

The use of alcoholic beverages by over 100 million Americans is regarded by many to be America's number-one public enemy. The economic cost to society from the use and abuse of alcohol is estimated to be \$117 billion dollars a year, but the *real* cost is in divorce, the destruction of families, violence in the home, accidents on the road, and harm to children.

The Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution January 16, 1919, outlawed the "manufacture, sale or transportation" of alcoholic beverages, but the repeal of Prohibition in 1933

resulted in most professing Christians to abandon their stand for total *abstinence*, and encouraging *moderation* instead. This has led many millions of Americans to become *immoderate* drinkers—due to the fact that alcohol is habit-forming and weakens one's self-control.

Many professed Christians erroneously believe that Scripture condemns the *immoderate use* of alcohol, but approves of its *moderate use*. This is based on the assumption that the Bible knows *only* of fermented wine—that, they say, can be enjoyed with moderation. According to this misconception, then, any disapproval of wine in the Bible is not to the *kind*, but the *amount*, consumed.

The truth of the matter is, however, that the Bible knows *both* fermented wine—which it *disapproves*, and unfermented wine—which it *approves*. The word *wine* [English], *oinos* [Greek], and *yayin* [Hebrew] have always been used to refer to the *juice of the grape*—whether fermented or unfermented. This discredits the claim that the Bible knows *only* fermented wine.

The Bible refers to both fermented and unfermented wine, but approves *only* of *unfermented* grape juice. Both types were used by people in the Bible. Noah Genesis 9:21 and Lot Genesis 19:32-35 were intoxicated—which would come from fermented wine. In the New Testament, when the assembled believers heard devout men speak in their own language, they were amazed, but others said "*These men are full of new wine,*" Acts 2:13. The mockers said it was intoxication, but they were wrong.

Historians of that day referred to *good wines* as those which did *not* intoxicate, thus, we conclude that the "*good wine*" Jesus made John 2:10, was "*good,*" not because of its alcoholic content, but because it was fresh and unfermented juice of the grape. This is also supported by the adjective used to describe the "*good*" wine with the

Greek word "*kalos*"—which denotes that which is "*morally good,*" instead of the use of "*agathos*" which means simply "*good.*"

Intoxicating wine includes fermented grapes and adding the corrupting element of leaven to produce alcohol. Leaven or yeast is always a symbol of sin and corruption, so Jesus would not have participated in, and certainly not have served, anything identified with sin prior to observing the Passover supper with His disciples.

Nothing the Lord Jesus ever did or taught would ever be in opposition to what the Scriptures teach. Habakkuk 2:15 "*Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbors, pouring it from the wine-skin till they are drunk.*" New Testament teaching is consistent in giving the message of total abstinence from alcoholic drinks. Jesus abstained from all intoxicating substances and gave no sanction to His followers for using them.

Looking closely at the reasons for the Biblical approval, and disapproval, of wine, we will learn that the *positive* references to "wine" have to do with unfermented and non-alcoholic grape juice. This is because the natural and nourishing properties of the grape are always represented as a blessing from God.

On the other hand, any *negative* references the Bible gives to "wine" have to do with fermented and intoxicating wine. Alcohol distorts the perception of reality, impairs the ability to make responsible decisions, and weakens moral inhibitions or convictions. Alcohol and Christianity just do not mix.

Bible verses mention wine as both helpful or harmful. It is called, "*the best of the wine*" Numbers 18:12, and "*wine that makes glad the heart*" Psalm 104:15, but more often it is referred to in the negative and the resulting harm or impairment from its use. It is described as a *poison* that will result in misery and called "*mixed wine*" Proverbs 23:30.

We are told Hosea 7:5 *"Princes have polluted themselves [made him sick; become inflamed] with the poison of wine, He hath drawn out his hand with scorers [mockers]."*

John the Baptist Luke 1:15 *"is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth."* That command is in full agreement with the apostle's advice Ephesians 5:18. Moses' brother Aaron was told Leviticus 10:9 *"Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die."*

Samson's mother was told Judges 13:7 *"You will conceive and give birth to a son. 'Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.'"*

A follower of Christ would not indulge in any type of fermented beverage that could easily, and very quickly, lead to intoxication and drunkenness. The apostle describes drunkards as *unrighteous* or *wicked* 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and that they will *"not inherit the kingdom of God."*

A powerful indictment against an intoxicating beverage is the apostle Paul's condemning wine as the cause of debauchery [corruption and sin]. His admonition shows the stark contrast between the effect of wine, and the control of the Spirit. WEY Ephesians 5:18 *"Do not over-indulge in [get drunk on] wine—a thing in which excess is so easy—[leads to debauchery; ruins your life]. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."*

Jesus told a parable of using new wineskins. Mark 2:22 *"No one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins."* This *new wine* would have had to be *unfermented wine*, and been heated or filtered, because even new wineskins could not withstand the

pressure of the fumes produced by *fermented wine*.

A follower of Christ would totally reject any type of fermented wine or intoxicating beverage, because all alcoholic drinks lead to loss of self-control, and then to violent, or immoral behavior. The control of the Holy Spirit leads to the opposite results Galatians 5:22, *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control [temperance]."*

Jesus gave a parable that spoke of a wise manager who would conduct his life properly at all times—even when the owner was not present or no one was looking. He said Luke 12:43 *"It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns."* He then said 45 *"But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk."*

"The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers [unfaithful]." Matthew 24:51 *"He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Proverbs 23:29-32 *"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper."*

As a true believer, we must desire to have the Holy Spirit within to control every decision, every action, and every message we send to others by our conduct. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received*

from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor [glorify] God with your body." To purposely harm, damage, impair, or ruin our own body, would be a direct disobedience to God's will and Word.

There is no justification in Scripture to use intoxicating beverages for any reason, or in any amount. When Jesus served His disciples at the Last Supper, the beverage would not have been intoxicating for several reasons. Being Jewish and a Nazirite, Jesus was under a sacred vow and would not have partaken of any leaven, at any time, and would never do this prior to the Passover Exodus 23:18; Leviticus 6:17.

It is important to note that the beverage served at the Lord's Supper is never referred to as *wine*, but rather as *"the cup"* or *"the fruit of the vine"*—and for a very specific reason. In His great wisdom, God the Father had the Holy Spirit refrain from using the word *wine*, in reference to the communion service, lest anyone distort the interpretation of that important remembrance.

Every decision we make, every beverage we drink, and every example we set, must be approved by God, and must be a spiritual help to fellow believers. For that reason Romans 14:21 *"The right course is to forego eating meat or drinking wine or doing anything that tends to [will cause] your brother's fall [influence him to stumble or weaken his faith]."* Total abstinence from any type of alcoholic beverage—is our only choice!



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