



DRINKING & THRIVING

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY OR SPIRITUAL SPEEDBUMP?



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CHAPTER 1: A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The rampant abuse of alcohol worldwide has caused much concern for Christians and for good reason. In 2012, 3.3 million deaths globally were attributed to alcohol. In the United States, 88,000 people will have alcohol related deaths this year with 31% of all driving fatalities being alcohol related. The US government will spend over \$223.5 billion to correct alcohol misuse problems, almost 3/4 of the total cost is related to binge drinking. Alcohol contributes to over 200 diseases and injury-related health conditions, most notably alcohol dependence, liver cirrhosis, cancers, and injuries.

In previous generations, such statistics would be enough to place a Christian into a state of grave concern regarding alcohol. Along with the Biblical warnings of abuse, the majority of Christianity would avoid alcohol usage altogether. But 2014 is different because the Millennials (Generation Y) are starting to mature and question every tradition or teaching the church has held. There is nothing wrong with a generation asking why a church observes certain traditions or doctrines, but the older generations must be ready to teach the Millennials and following generations why we hold to certain teaching, doctrines, and traditions.



It is because of this pressing need for discipleship that we are entering into a Biblical study on the topic of alcohol.

OUR STUDY METHOD

As we begin this study, we need to set some goals that are easily identifiable so we can stay on track. For this reason, I will not assume that everyone understands the method of approach. With this in mind, let us define some terms.

Verbal Inspiration - The verbal inspiration of Scripture means that the process of inspiration applies to the very words used in the biblical books. Scripture contains the exact words, forms of words, and wording that God desired in the original manuscripts (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Authority of Scripture - The God who inspired the exact words through human writers stands behind every statement, every doctrine, every promise, and every command written in the Scripture. To the authority of this Word all men must submit, without rebellion or reservation, because the Bible is God's written will.

Grammatical-Historical Method of Interpretation - The words that God chose to use in the Holy Scriptures were not written in a vacuum, but rather had very distinct meanings by their usage in an author's grammar, syntax, and how the word was defined in an historical setting. Simply stated, words have meaning. Because of this, every word, by definition of the

very nature of verbal inspiration, is critical to understanding its own meaning and the context of when and where it is used. The meaning of words can change (an example would be the usage of the word “gay” in the 20th Century). It is therefore the Bible student’s solemn duty to understand the grammatical and historical definition of a word when studying the Scriptures.

Context - Understanding context begins with four principles: literal meaning (what it says), historical setting (the events of the story, to whom is it addressed, and how it was understood at that time), grammar (the immediate sentence and paragraph within which a word or phrase is found) and synthesis (comparing it with other parts of Scripture for a fuller meaning). Context determines the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence, verse, chapter, and book.

Why is defining all these terms so important? As previously stated, the Bible was not written inside of a vacuum, so the words God chose must be analyzed within the historical framework and cultural setting of the appropriate time. Yet, God wrote his words with perfect accuracy, pregnant with meaning, and understandable for his people. “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). Our goal is to discover what God meant when he wrote the Bible, not answer the question, “What does the Bible mean to me?”

THE BIBLICAL WORDS FOR WINE

It is imperative that we appreciate that God wrote the Scriptures in several languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic). Our translations are at best just translations. There are times in translation that words or concepts do not translate well into another language. Second, we must recognize that the process of making alcohol in this current day is much different than the process 2,000 years ago. We must be careful not to infuse our modern definition of words or concepts into the words or concepts in the Bible.

The ancients would have had typically three types of fermented beverage: beer, wine, and cider. They all had relatively low alcohol content compared to modern alcohols. The earliest evidence of true distillation producing hard liquor did not come until the 12th century. Thus, when discussing alcohol in the Bible, students would do well to remember that fermented alcohol typically contains much less alcohol content (<10%) than distilled liquors (>20%).

A search of the Bible (using KJV and the New International Version) reveals 228 references to wine (or winepress) and 23 references to strong drink. In the Old Testament, there are 6 Hebrew words that are all translated as “wine.”

1. **YAYIN:** From a root word meaning “to give off bubbles;” 140 occurrences; The KJV translates it as “wine” 138 times, “banqueting” once, and “winebibbers” once. This is by far the most common term for wine in the Old Testament. It is most often used of

fermented grape juice, and intoxicating beverage (Genesis 9:21). However, on rare occasion, it is used for unfermented grape juice (Isaiah 16:10).

2. **TIROSH:** This term occurs in the KJV 38 times and is always translated as “wine,” sometimes described as new wine (Isaiah 65:8) or sweet wine (Micah 6:15). The term means “juice, fresh or new wine, must, freshly pressed wine” (Proverbs 3:10).
3. **SHAKAR:** Of the 23 occurrences of this term in the Old Testament, the KJV translates it as “strong drink” 21 times, “strong wine” once, and “drunkard” once. The term means “strong drink, intoxicating drink, fermented or intoxicating liquor.” It is translated “strong wine” in Numbers 28:7. There is some ancient evidence of usage of fruit juices other than grape, but this is rare.
4. **CHEMER:** This term appears only two times and is translated as “pure” once and “red wine” the other (Deuteronomy 32:14; Isaiah 27:2). It denotes purified wine without sediment. It can denote a thick, sticky syrup or foaming juice.
5. **AWSEES:** This term occurs five times and is translated as “new wine” twice, “sweet wine” twice, and “juice” once. It means “sweet wine, wine, pressed out juice” (Joel 3:18).
6. **MAMSAK:** This term has two occurrences in the Bible and refers to a “mixed drink, mixed wine, or drink-offering.” It is the last word for wine in Proverbs 23:30, translated: *mixed wine*. It is fermented wine that has herbs added to make a higher alcohol content.

The New Testament, translated from Greek, uses the word “wine” for both fermented and unfermented drink. There are four Greek words for wine the New Testament.

1. **OINOS:** The most common term for wine found in the New Testament. It appears 33 times in the KJV, and is translated as “wine” 32 times, and “winepress” once. This term refers to a fermented, intoxicating beverage (Ephesians 5:18), or it refers to grape juice not yet fermented (Matthew 9:17).
2. **GLEUKOS:** Denotes sweetness; sweet wine, new wine; fresh grape juice. This term is used only in Acts 2:13. The term refers to fresh grape juice that is just beginning to ferment. Alcohol is produced when the yeast on the outside of the grape eats the sugar of the grape. When wine is sweet, there is very little or no alcohol present.
3. **SIKERA:** This Greek word is a transliteration from the Hebrew term *shekar* (strong drink). It is to be distinguished from *oinos* in that this is a wine made not only from grapes, but includes a strong drink made from grains and other fruits. This term is always used of a strong drink, an intoxicating beverage. It occurs only in Luke 1:15.

4. **OXOS:** This term means sharp wine or vinegar. In each of its seven occurrences, it is translated “vinegar” (John 19:29, 30). It is sour wine that has fermented too far and spoiled into vinegar.

The reason we have taken time to define every word in the Bible that refers to alcohol is that some claim the words for wine in the Bible always refer to a fermented, alcoholic beverage. Hence, they would say that the term wine always means wine as defined by our culture in 2014. They claim that when the term is used in the Bible it always has the same meaning and it always refers to an intoxicating beverage. If wine meant an intoxicating beverage in one passage (example: Noah drank wine and got drunk), then it must be construed as an intoxicating beverage in every other passage where the English word “wine” is mentioned. Is that an accurate position?

OUR PROPOSITION

We recognize the term wine is an English translation of six individual Hebrew words (in the Old Testament) or four Greek words (in the New Testament) that all have their own unique meaning. God chose these 10 specific words to communicate what he intended through the process of verbal inspiration. With ten different terms translated as “wine” in our English Bibles, it is necessary for the reader to consider these various terms, their various shades of meaning, and the context in which they are used. If the context does not identify the meaning of a word, we have no right or authority to assign a modern meaning!

The 251 references to wine and strong drink in the Bible can be divided into three broad categories: negative references, neutral references, and positive references. We will first summarize these categories and then examine them in detail.

Negative References: In the Scriptures, there are 17 warnings against abusing alcohol, 19 examples of people abusing alcohol, three references in the selection of leaders, and one verse advocating abstinence if drinking will cause a brother to stumble. **Total negative references: 40, or 16%.**

Neutral References: A Neutral reference is when the context gives no identification as to the meaning of the word. The context doesn't characterize wine as being good, but neither does it contain warnings about the dangers posed by fermented wine. We therefore cannot assign a definition to the word. There are 33 symbolic references ("the wine of His wrath," etc.), 21 references to vows of abstinence, 4 references to people falsely accused of being drunk, and 9 references which don't seem to fit a category. **Total neutral references: 67, or 26%.**

Positive References: On the positive side, there are 59 references to the commonly accepted practice of drinking wine with meals, 27 references to the abundance of wine as an

example of God's blessing, 20 references to the loss of wine as an example of God's curse, 25 references to the use of wine in offerings and sacrifices, nine references to wine being used as a gift, and five metaphorical references to wine as a basis for a favorable comparison. **Total positive references: 145, or 58%.**

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be deduced from our study:

1. The word “wine” in English Bible translations can have at least ten different meanings arranged into two categories: unfermented liquid or fermented liquid.
2. The modern definition of the word “wine” (an alcoholic drink made from the juice of grapes) may be very different than the ten words used in the original three languages of the Bible. We will develop this thought more in Chapter 2.
3. The Bible references alcohol positively, negatively, and neutrally. It is our responsibility to discover what God has said.

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CHAPTER 2: WINEMAKING 101

The goal of Chapter 2 is to understand how the ancients, who lived prior to modern times, manufactured wine. Time and technology have changed methods and products. While beers and ciders were historically produced, we will not delve into the specifics of these products because the general principles of fermentation are the same. In this lesson, we will also learn how to make many different kinds of wine. We must explore this avenue as we try to determine what the Bible is referencing when it discusses wine. It would be helpful for the student to remember that the Bible uses six Hebrew words and four Greek words that can be translated into English as “wine,” which can be categorized into two forms: 1) intoxicating; 2) nonintoxicating.

Is the modern definition of “wine” only, “an alcoholic drink made from the juice of grapes?” The answer would depend on which dictionary one would choose to use.

- 🍷 **wine - an alcoholic drink made from the juice of grapes** [“Wine.” Merriam-Webster.com. 2014. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wine> (6 October 2014)]
- 🍷 **wine - the juice, fermented or unfermented, of various other fruits, used esp. as a beverage** [“Wine.” Def. 2. Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary. 2010. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/wine> (6 Oct. 2014).]
- 🍷 **wine - The expressed juice of grapes, esp. when fermented; a beverage or liquor prepared from grapes by squeezing out their juice, and (usually) allowing it to ferment.** [Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1913 ed., s.v. “wine.”]

In order to study the art of winemaking, we first must investigate what we are trying to make! Ancient authors have just as many different definitions of the word “wine” as English dictionaries. We began Lesson 1 by stating the need to employ the grammatical and historical method for the exact word that God chose to inspire in the Bible. It is therefore necessary to look at the writings of the ancients to understand what the word “wine” meant at the time of writing of Biblical texts.

It is not this writer's belief that all wine in the Bible is either intoxicating or nonintoxicating. This determination can only be made with an accurate exegesis of the word's definition, grammatical usage, context, and historical setting.

BIBLE TIMES

In ancient times knowledge of viniculture was very extensive. If the ancient Egyptians could build the pyramids to such perfection without modern science understanding their methods,

I suggest that those ancients knew how to manufacture and preserve intoxicating or nonintoxicating wine.

The general harvest time for grapes is the fall. Wine grapes were picked by hand and placed into a winepress. The winepress could have been either a permanent bowl hewn into rock or a portable vat the size of a modern bathtub. The grapes would be tread upon expressing their juice, which was usually a community or family event. The **must**, or new wine (fresh grape juice), would flow from the winepress into a vat (See Example #1).

Once the wine was freshly pressed, a decision would be needed as to whether the new wine was to be preserved in its nonintoxicating state or into an intoxicating state. Columella (c.AD 70), the most important writer on agriculture of the Roman Empire, wrote that “sweet wine” (nonintoxicating) would need to be preserved as soon as it was taken out of the vat. “Harsh wine” (intoxicating) would need to be preserved after several days to keep it from spoiling into vinegar.

It is important to realize at this point how wine ferments. God has designed a grape to have the right amount of yeast on the outside of its skin to begin fermentation. Within two hours of the juice of the grape coming in contact with the natural yeast (the white film on the grape skin), the yeast begins to feed off the sugars in the juice and begins a chemical reaction known as fermentation, which produces carbon dioxide and alcohol as byproducts. As this process is occurring, a vat of grape juice would bubble and froth with carbon dioxide bubbles. The liquid left over loses its sweetness and develops a sour/bitter taste. In fact, this is how the ancients could test if a wine was either intoxicating or nonintoxicating; Intoxicating wine was bitter while sweet wine was nonintoxicating.

Regardless of whether a wine was purposed to be intoxicating or not, it was often immediately boiled. The ancients did not have knowledge of microorganisms, but they did understand that boiling liquid would somehow cleanse it and make it safe. Fresh juice would have been boiled and prepared for different techniques of preservation, while intoxicating wine would have been boiled to slow down the wine from turning into vinegar. Heating did remove a portion of the alcohol in the intoxicating wine.

PRESERVATION

Many people attempt to argue that the ancients had no way of preserving fresh grape juice and that all juice had to have fermented into alcohol. The argument goes something like this:

“The Middle East is a hot climate. Since wine begins to ferment as soon as it is pressed out of the grapes, there was no way to prevent alcoholic fermentation. After all, the ancients had not discovered pasteurization, had no refrigeration, or electricity. Therefore, other than for a brief period of time, there was no unfermented wine to drink. In addition, their water was unsafe to drink. They had no choice but to drink intoxicating wine.”

This argument is misleading. First, if it were true, the Israelite men, women, and children would have been drunk all day, every day. After all, they would have had nothing to drink but intoxicating wine. Second, if intoxicating wine were the only beverage of choice, it would have been very expensive based upon supply and demand. Vineyards could never produce enough for the entire eastern population. Third, this assumes that the only wine that was available was alcoholic in nature. This assumption is historically inaccurate. The ancients had many ways of preserving grape juice to prevent alcoholic fermentation. Anyone who claims that the ancients could not prevent wine from fermenting are inserting their own agenda into the ancient world.

While the Bible says very little about food preservation, we know the ancients widely practiced it by their diet. The Bible mentions olive oil, milk, cheese, butter, honey, mutton, cabrito, grains, fruits, and many other foods that had to be preserved. There is no reason to think grapes or wine were any different. The ancients in Bible times were accomplished farmers and gardeners. They knew how to process and preserve the fruit of their labors. The following list details some of the methods the ancients used to preserve wine.

Method #1: The Long Shelf Life of Some Grapes

Several methods were used for preserving fresh grapes. It was not uncommon for Arabs to hang grapes in their cool cellars for up to a year. Missionaries in India wrote of receiving grapes 11 months after they were picked from the vines with the grapes still being fresh and clean due to the practice of wrapping the grapes in cotton. One method of preserving grapes consisted in cutting the grapes with lengthy branches and sealing the cut with pitch. The grapes were then placed in vessels filled with dry chaff or even boiled down must.

Columella, Roman Agriculturist (4-70 AD) - “In order that the grapes may remain green for as much as a year you will keep them in the following manner. When you have cut from the vine grapes . . . immediately treat their pedicles with hard pitch; then fill a new earthenware pan with the driest possible chaff, which has been sifted that it may be free from dust, and put the grapes upon it. Then cover it with another pan and daub it around with clay mixed with chaff, and then, after arranging the pans in a very dry loft, cover them with dry chaff.” [Columella, *On Agriculture* 12, 44, 1, trans. E. S. Forster and Edward H. Heffner, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955).]

Pliny the Elder, Roman Scholar & Naturalist (23-79 AD) - “Some grapes will last all through the winter if the clusters are hung by a string from the ceiling, and others will keep merely in their own natural vigor by being stood in earthenware jars with casks put over them, and packed round with fermenting grape-skins.” [Pliny, *Natural History* 14, 3, 16, trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960).]

Many other ancient authors could be cited, but the point is clear. The ancients knew how to preserve the correct breed of grapes for up to a whole year if necessary. Fresh grapes or grape juice was commonly available throughout the entire year. As the harvest of grapes

began in July and ended in December, the ancients would only have to preserve some at a maximum of 6 months.

Method #2: Sealed Wine Containers

This method of preservation is as simple and logical as can be; and not very different from modern methods. The juice was simply sealed in an air tight container. There are three general sets of ancient instructions on how to preserve new wine. Pay careful attention to the words “sweet” and “must” that indicate no process of fermentation.

1. Two centuries before the birth of Jesus, Cato the Elder, a Roman Statesman, wrote, “If you wish to keep grape juice through the whole year, put the grape juice in an amphora, seal the stopper with pitch, and sink it in a pond. Take it out after thirty days; it will remain sweet the whole year.” [Cato, *On Agriculture*, Loeb Classical Library; c. 170 BC.]
2. During the life of Jesus, the Roman writer Columella wrote, “That must may remain always sweets though it were fresh, do as follows. Before the grape-skins are put under the press, take from the vat some of the freshest possible must and put it in a new wine-jar; then daub it and cover it carefully with pitch, that thus no water may be able to get in. Then sink the whole flagon in a pool of cold, fresh water so that no part of it is above the surface. Then after forty days take it out of the water. The must will then keep sweet as much as a year.” [Columella, *Book XII*, Loeb Classical Library; c. AD 60.]
3. Approximately forty years after the death of Christ, Pliny wrote, “The liquor to which the Greeks give the name of ‘aigleucos,’ [always sweet] is of middle quality, between the sirops and what is properly called wine; with us it is called ‘semper mustum.’ It is only made by using great precaution, and taking care that the must does not ferment... To obtain this object, the must is taken from the vat and put into casks, which are immediately plunged into water, and there left to remain until the winter solstice is past, and frosty weather has made its appearance.” [Pliny, *Natural History*, 14.11; c. AD 70]

Method #3: Boiling New Wine into Grape Must

It was very common in ancient times to take wine (unfermented) from the pressing vat and boil the freshly expressed juice down to one-third or one-fifth consistency. This thick syrup keeps indefinitely just like honey or maple syrup because of the high sugar content, which acts as its own preservative. It is so thick that microorganisms cannot attack it and break it down. It is often referred to as grape must, musto cotto, saba, dibs, pekmez, defrutum, and simply wine. This concentrate was never intoxicating because it had to be reduced by boiling, which would have evaporated off all of the alcohol. Ancient evidence of boiling down wine into concentrate is extensive. When ready to drink, it would have been reconstituted with water, much like we do today with frozen concentrated orange juice. On

a practical note, the ancients did not have access to sugar cane like we do in modern times. The sweetest of tastes had to come from the natural sources available, being honey and grape must.

Aristotle, Greek Philosopher (384-322 BC) - “Wine is a liquid which raises a difficulty: for it is both liable to evaporation and it also thickens; for instance new wine does. The reason is that the word ‘wine’ is ambiguous and different ‘wines’ behave in different ways. New wine is more earthy than old, and for this reason it is more apt to be thickened by heat and less apt to be congealed by cold. For it contains much heat and a great proportion of earth, as in Arcadia, where it is so dried up in its skins by the smoke that you can scrape it to drink ... There is a kind of wine for instance, which both solidifies and thickens by boiling - I mean must.” [Meteorology, Book IV; c. 350 BC., vol. I; The Complete Works of Aristotle, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey; 1984]

Columella, Roman Agriculturist (4-70 AD) - “Let us be mindful, to preserve our wine with boiled-down must of a year old, the soundness of which has been already tested.” [Columella, On Agriculture 12, 19, 3, trans. E. S. Forster and Edward H. Heffner, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955)]

Virgil, Roman Poet (70-19 BC) - “With Vulcan’s aid boils the sweet must-juice down, and skims with leaves the quivering cauldron’s wave.” [The Georgics 1; c. 29 BC] “And roses-leaves dried, or must to thickness boiled by fierce fire, or juice of raisin grapes.” [The Georgics IV; c. 29 BC.]

Method #4: Reconstituted Raisins

Dehydration is one of the oldest methods of preserving food, and it is widely used today. In ancient times, grapes were naturally dried in the sun and covered at night to protect them from the dew. Grapes were also dried through heat and smoke. As we all know, dried grapes are called raisins. To produce reconstituted wine, the raisins were rehydrated by soaking or boiling in water and pressed into wine. This “raisin wine” was also referred to as “passum.” Raisin wine was often used in the ancient world and is still used in some places today. The documentation for the use of raisin wine is quite extensive. The Talmud (ancient Jewish writings) mentions raisin wine. The Greek historian Polybius (100 BC) wrote of nonintoxicating raisin wine. Even a medieval Arabian writer referred to raisin wine for use in the Lord’s Supper. Modern day Jews use raisin wine for Passover. While alcohol can be added to any liquid to make it intoxicating, raisin wine is not intoxicating because the yeast was killed in the dehydration process. Raisin wine was made year round and is yet another example of nonintoxicating wine.

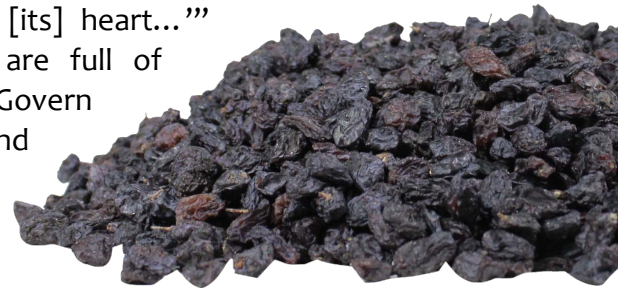
Polybius, Greek Historian (200-118 BC) - “Among the Romans women are forbidden to drink wine; and they drink what is called passim, which is made from raisins, and tastes

very much like the sweet wine of Aegosthena or Crete. This is what they drink to quench their thirst.” [Polybius, IV, 6, 2; c. 100 BC]

Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography - “The ancients frequently speak of the Cretan wines (Ael. VH 12.31; Athen.10.440; Plin.Nat. 14.9). Among these the ‘passum,’ or raisin wine, was the most highly prized (Mart. 13.106; Juv. 14.270).” [William Smith, LLD, Ed., 1854]

Patrick E. McGovern, Ancient Wine, Princeton University Press; 2003. - “The raisin was a crucial part of Hittite life, whether as a dry ration on a military campaign or as a special offering for the king or gods. These people had raisin wine, as one tablet puts it: ‘ [Behold] the raisin. Just as it holds its wine in [its] heart...’”

McGovern goes on to write that the Hittite texts are full of references of sweet wines like raisin wine. (Patrick E. McGovern is one of the foremost authorities on wines, modern and ancient. He is the Senior Research Scientist in the Museum Applied Science Center for Archaeology and is Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania.



Method #5: Lactic Acid Fermentation

This may come as a surprise, but not all fermented wine is intoxicating because not all types of fermentation produce alcohol. The ancients drank and made wine that was fermented, yet not intoxicating. How is that possible? There is more than one kind of fermentation. As mentioned, alcoholic fermentation occurs when yeast feeds on sugar to produce alcohol. Acetic fermentation is when the acids in fermented wine consume the alcohol and produce sour wine, or vinegar.

Another type of fermentation is lactic acid fermentation. It is caused when fungi, a live culture, or bacteria are added to foods for the purpose of preservation. While this may at first sound alarming, you are very familiar with modern day products that are fermented with this method: yogurt, buttermilk, sourdough breads, sauerkraut, types of cucumber pickles, olives, and pickled vegetables all use lactic fermentation.

The ancients preserved wine with lactic fermentation by introducing it to brine or salt water. The salt converts the natural sugars of the wine into lactic acid. Bacteria cannot spoil the wine because it cannot multiply in the acid. The result is a salty, sour wine that is fermented, yet nonintoxicating.

Marcus Porcius Cato (Cato the Elder 234-149 BC) - Cato was a Roman military leader writer, and agriculturalist. His book, *On Agriculture*, is an early farmer’s notebook that contains multiple recipes for lactic acid wine.

“Directions for making Greek wine: Gather carefully well-ripened Apician grapes, and add to the celledus of must two quadrantal [quadrantal=cubic foot] of old seawater, or modius of pure salt. If the latter is used, suspend it in a basket and let it dissolve in the new must.” “If your place is far from the sea, you may use this recipe for Greek wine: Pour 20 quadrantals of must into a copper or lead boiler and heat. As soon as the wine boils, remove the fire; and when the wine has cooled, pour into a jar holding 40 quadrantals. Pour 1 modius of salt and 1 quadrantal of fresh water into a separate vessel, and let the brine be made; and when the mixture is made pour it into the jar. Pound rush and calamus in a mortar to make a sufficient quantity, and pour 1 setarius into the jar to give it an odour. Thirty days later seal the jar, and rack off into amphorae in the spring. Let it stand for two years in the sun, then bring in under cover. This wine will not be inferior to the Coan.” [Cato, On Agriculture, Loeb Classical Library; c. 175 BC.]

Columella, Roman Agriculturist (4-70 AD) - “Since some people - and indeed almost all the Greeks - preserve must with salt or sea-water.” Columella also advises, “Also salt and spices, which he has been accustomed to use in the preservation of wine, ought to be stored up in good time beforehand.” [Columella, Book XII, Loeb Classical Library; c. AD 70.]

Athenaeus, Greek Grammarian (200 AD) - “Wines which are more carefully treated with sea water do not cause headache; they loosen the bowels, excite the stomach, cause inflations, and assist digestion.” [Athenaeus, in *Deipnosophistae*, or *The Sophist at Dinner*; c. AD 230.] “The Statan is one of the best kinds, resembling the Falernian, but lighter, and innocuous.”

Method #6: Fumigation

If you look at the label on many of your nonintoxicating foods or drinks, sulfur dioxide often appears on the list of ingredients. Sulfur dioxide and sulfites are used as preservatives. Sulfur prevents browning in alcoholic beverages, fruit juices, soft drinks, fruits, and vegetables. Sulfur also prevents yeast and bacteria from growing. Believe it or not, this modern day food preservative is not so modern. It was used to preserve wine well before Jesus’ time.

Horace, Roman Poet (65-8 BC) - Horace was the leading Roman lyrical poet during the time of Augustus, who also is known as Octavian. (Augustus was the founder of the Roman Empire and its first Emperor, ruling from 27BC -14 AD. He is mentioned once in the Bible in Luke 2:1.) Horace referenced sulphur wine in his poem dedicated to the celebration of a glad anniversary. [Odes 3.8]

This festal day, each time the year revolves,
shall draw a well-pitched cork forth from a
jar set to drink the smoke in Tullus’ consulship.

So drain, Maecenas, a hundred cyathi in
celebration of your friend's escape, and keep
the lamps alight till dawn! Banish far all angry brawls!

T. S. Carr, Roman Antiquities - "The application of the fumarium [sulphur fumes] to the mellowing of wines was borrowed from the Asiatics; and thus exhalation would go on until the wine was reduced to the state of syrup." [John Kitto's Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature, 1845 edition, s. v. "Wine," vol. 2, p. 956.]

John Kitto's Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature - "When the Mishna forbids smoked wines from being used in offerings (Manachoth, viii. 6, et comment.), it has chiefly reference to the Roman practice of fumigating them with sulphur, the vapor of which absorbed the oxygen, and thus arrested the fermentation. The Jews carefully eschewed the wines and vinegar of the Gentiles." [Ibid.]

Method #7: Filtration

If you recall in Example #1, grapes were pressed in a basin and the new wine would then flow into the vats below the wine press. The ancients were very resourceful and used as much of the grape as possible. After the grapes had been tread, a wet pulp was left over. This pulp still contained much wine, yet needed to be strained or filtered in order to be used. Because most of the yeast had washed away, the straining of the pulp produced a wine that was just as sweet, yet much less prone to fermentation. The ancient's basic method consisted of using a bag, in which grapes were placed, a container was placed under the bag while the bag was squeezed or "filtered," and out flowed the wine. Several writers refer to the use of such strainers or filters in the preparation of wines.

Pliny the Elder, Roman Scholar & Naturalist (23-79 AD) - "Wines are most beneficial when all their potency has been overcome by the strainer." [Pliny, Natural History 23, 24.]

Plutarch, Greek Historian (46-120 AD) - "Wine is rendered old, or feeble in strength, when it is frequently filtered. The strength being thus excluded, the wine neither inflames the brain nor infests the mind and passions, and is much more pleasant to drink." [Plutarch, Symposiacs 8, 7.]

CONCLUSION

We began this lesson with an incorrect proposition. Modern scholars, Bible commentators, pastors, and people who make their fame by responding to blog posts insist that the ancients had to drink intoxicating wine because there was no possible way to stop new wine from fermenting. Someone forgot to tell this incorrect theory to people who lived in ancient times. The ancients use the seven methods of preservation listed in this chapter, but many more are available.

1. Not only did the ancients know how to preserve new wine from becoming intoxicating, but they excelled in many methods of preservation. To claim that ALL the ancients drank intoxicating wine at ALL times in an argument of imagination.
2. The actual word “wine” had many different meanings as opposed to our modern definition. Wine was a generic term used to describe either intoxicating or nonintoxicating beverage. History easily records this to be true. One fair comparison would be our modern word “drink.” In one context, a mother could be offering her child water, while in another, two coworkers would be planning a trip to a bar after work. While the actual word is identical in both scenarios, the context determines the meaning.
3. A quality of a wine can be rated much differently according to a culture and does not need to be related to alcohol content. New wine, or must, was considered to be the most healthy of wines since it contains all the natural sugars and nutrients for the human body. The ancients did not simply prefer intoxicating wine because of its inebriating affects.
4. Nonintoxicating wine was quite common during Biblical times, particularly during the life of Jesus. Since the word “wine” had a generic meaning referring to the anything squeezed out of a grape, the context of the word used in a passage can only identify the writer’s meaning. Assigning a modern meaning to an ancient word is eisegesis.

A Winepress in Ancient Israel

An ancient winepress was a rock-hewn open-air system. Grapes were pressed by being trodden underfoot in a treading floor. The juice would pour through a channel into a vat, where it would ferment. It would then be collected in jars.



DRINKING & THRIVING?

CHAPTER 3: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

As a quick review, Chapter 1 established that the Bible uses 10 different words that can be translated into English as “wine” (6 Hebrew words in the Old Testament & 4 Greek words in the New Testament.) Lesson 2 abolished the idea that the ancients could only drink fermented wine all the time because they had no way to stop fresh juice (also called “wine” by the ancients) from turning into intoxicating beverage. In fact, the ancients were masters in viniculture. When referencing the wine, it is incorrect to always assume it was intoxicating. One particular point that should also be mentioned is that the alcoholic content of a naturally fermented wine would have been considerably lower than that of today’s modern, fortified wines. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, one the chiefest works ever published on Old Testament word Studies, states under *yayin*:

Wine was the most intoxicating drink known in ancient times. All the wine was light wine, i.e. not fortified with extra alcohol. Concentrated alcohol was only known in the Middle Ages when the Arabs invented distillation (“alcohol” is an Arabic word) so what is now called liquor or strong drink (i.e. whiskey, gin, etc.) and the twenty per cent fortified wines were unknown in Bible times. Beer was brewed by various methods, but its alcoholic content was light. The strength of natural wines is limited by two factors. The percentage of alcohol will be half of the percentage of the sugar in the juice. And if the alcoholic content is much above 10 or 11 percent, the yeast cells are killed and fermentation ceases. Probably ancient wines were 7-10 per cent. Drunkenness therefore was of course an ancient curse, but alcoholism was not as common or as severe as it is today. And in an agricultural age, its effects were less deadly than now. Still, even then it had its dangers and Proverbs 20:1 and Proverbs 23:29-35 are emphatic in their warnings. To avoid the sin of drunkenness, mingling of wine with water was practiced. This dilution was specified by the Rabbis in NT times for the wine then customary at Passover. The original Passover did not include wine (Deuteronomy 20:6).

Our goal in this lesson is to now apply what we have learned through the historical-grammatical method of interpretation and read the actual words that God verbally inspired and preserved in the Holy Bible. Our goal is not to include personal opinions, bias, or additions to the text of Scripture. We simply seek to say what the Scriptures say.

POSITIVE USAGE

As we discovered in Chapter 1, The Bible speaks of wine in a positive light the majority of time with 145 usages or 58%. On the positive side, there are 59 references to the commonly accepted practice of drinking wine with meals, 27 references to the abundance of wine as an example of God's blessing, 20 references to the loss of wine and as an example of God's curse, 25 references to the use of wine in offerings and sacrifices, nine references to wine being used as a gift, and five metaphorical references to wine as a basis for a favorable comparison.

When focusing on the positive usages of wine, confusion arises because our English Bibles translations use the word “wine” to refer to intoxicating and nonintoxicating beverages. Some claim that all positive references must refer to grape juice while others claim that all positive references refer to intoxicating wine. Neither of these statements are correct. It is this writer’s proposition that the Bible refers to intoxicating and nonintoxicating wine in a positive way, and always within the proper context. As a note of caution, this is not a statement of blanket permission for Christians to do whatever they want in defense of their Christian liberties. Now let us examine examples of positive usages of wine.

Examples of Positive Usages

The following list is not exhaustive in any manner. It is simply a small selection of verses as it is not practical for this class study to review all 145 references and their contexts.

- Wine (*tirosh*) has natural health benefits (Genesis 27:28) and brings joy (Isaiah 22:13 - *yayin*; Psalm 104:15 - *yayin*;
- Wine (intoxicating and nonintoxicating), along with a bounty of other agricultural harvests, is a blessings from God (Psalm 104:14-15 - *yayin*; Jeremiah 31:12-14 - *tirosh*; Deuteronomy 14:22-26 - *tirosh* & *yayin*; Joel 2:24-26 - *tirosh*; 3:18 - *awsees*; Amos 5:11 - *yayin*).
- Wine (intoxicating and nonintoxicating) was viewed as a symbolic blessing of a future Messianic Age (Amos 9:13-14 - *awsees* & *yayin*; Genesis 49:10-11 - *yayin*; Isaiah 55:1 - *yayin*)
- Wine was a staple in the diet of children and infants (Lamentations 2:11-12 - *yayin*).
- Wine was used (not consumed, but rather poured out) in drink offerings, tithing, and sacrifices to God (Leviticus 23:13 - *yayin*; Deuteronomy 14:22-26 - *tirosh* & *yayin*; Numbers 28:7 - *shekar*; Exodus 29:4 - *yayin*).
- Wine was used for medicinal needs and health purposes (Proverbs 31:6-7 - *shekar* & *yayin*; Luke 10:34 - *oinos*; 1 Timothy 5:23 - *oinos*).

Note: The medicinal usage of alcohol in Proverbs 31:6-7 demonstrates the pain killing effects of alcohol upon someone who is about to die. The victim will not remember his misery and poverty because he will die soon. This verse does not give permission for those who are depressed or anxious to use alcohol as “medicine” because as soon as the effects wear off, they certainly will remember their anguish. Finally, there is no permission for intoxication in this medical usage as stated in the text.

There are many other positive verses about intoxicating and nonintoxicating wine that can be discussed. If one were to read only the positives usages of alcohol in the Bible, he could certainly walk away with an uninhibited view of alcohol, but one must also understand that there are warnings and prohibitions of wine in the Bible as well.

THE PRECAUTIONS

Out of the 23 usages in the Bible for “strong drink” (*shekar*), it is only viewed positively once as medicine (Proverbs 31:6-7) and once as related to tithing (Deuteronomy 14:26). All other 21 usages are either vows of abstinence, warnings to avoid, or examples of consequences for usage. As seen earlier in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, wine’s natural ability to ferment is very limited, producing what modern society would label as lighter alcohol content (2%-10%) compared to hard liquors (20%+) produced by means of distillation, which was unavailable to the ancients. According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcohol_by_volume), the average modern wine contains 12.5%-14.5% alcohol, which would have been considered strong drink in Biblical times and avoided at all costs. To equate modern, infused wine with ancient wine is rather foolhardy.

Second, the purpose of wine in ancient times is radically different than that of modern times. Ancient wine, whether intoxicating or not, was a necessity of life for dietary nutrition, beverage, a sweetening agent, and purification. In the 39 years that this writer has been alive, there has never been an absolute need to consume wine. Intoxication and alcohol abuse in the Bible is rather minimal compared to modern times. In the totality of the Word of God that includes 66 books written over a period of 1,600 years, and out of the 3,237 different people mentioned by name, only 19 of them are listed as abusing alcohol. While the purpose of the Bible is certainly not a listing of everyone’s poor behavior, it is nevertheless true that alcohol was not generally abused. There was a set of moral standards that governed behavior. The modern usage of wine is one of pleasure or social status, and not necessity.

The Woes of Wine

There are 40 negative references to wine in the Bible (17 warnings against abusing alcohol, 19 examples of people abusing alcohol, three references to selecting leaders, and one verse advocating abstinence if drinking will cause a brother to stumble). The following is a list randomly selected:

- 🍷 **Proverbs 20:1** - Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging; and whosoever is deceived (led astray) thereby is not wise.
- 🍷 **Proverbs 23:29-30** - Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.
- 🍷 **Isaiah 5:11** - Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that* they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, *till* wine inflame them!
- 🍷 **Isaiah 5:22** - Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

- **Isaiah 28:7-8** - But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

The Bible gives ample warning to the effects that alcohol can bring upon a user.

THE PROHIBITIONS

It has often been said, “Scripture does not forbid Christians from drinking beer, wine, or any other drink containing alcohol. Alcohol is not, in and of itself, tainted by sin. It is drunkenness and addiction to alcohol that a Christian must absolutely refrain from.” Let us examine this statement and see if it squares up with Scripture.

The Bible Forbids Drunkenness.

There are an abundance of verses that forbid God’s children, whether Israel or the church, to be intoxicated.

- **Ephesians 5:18** - And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
- **Romans 13:13** - Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.
- **Galatians 5:19-21** - Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
- **1 Peter 4:3** - For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, reveling, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:
- **Romans 13:13** - Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.
- **Proverbs 23:20-21** - Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags.

The Bible Forbids Offending A Fellow Believer.

Romans 14:21

It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

The Bible Forbids a Christian's Body to be Mastered by Anything.

- **1 Corinthians 6:12** - All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.
- **2 Peter 2:17-19** - These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much wantonness*, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

The Bible Regulates the Consumption of Intoxicating Alcohol in Proverbs 23.

Proverbs 23 is one of the most misunderstood and passed over chapters in all of the Bible regarding its instructions for the use of intoxicating beverages, yet it is a vital chapter in discerning the behavior for every Christian. The reason it is so misunderstood is that it takes quite a bit of work to understand what the Hebrew language is saying because there are words written by the Holy Spirit that have no cultural or grammatical equivalent in the English language. This does not give any believer the right to pass over this chapter and ignore its commands. The verbal inspiration of Scripture still applies and the words are as authoritative as all of the rest of Scripture. We will examine 4 principles in Proverbs 23:20-35.

Principle 1: Do not be present among those who are abusing alcohol.

Proverbs 23:20-21

- 20. Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:
- 21. For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

Principle 2: There are two methods which lead to intoxication. Avoid Method 1.

Proverbs 23:29-32

29. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling?
who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?
30. They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.
31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup,
when it moveth itself aright.
32. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

The Question: Solomon begins this section of Scripture with a question that he will answer. Who has woe, sorrow, contention, babbling, and brawls for no reason? The answer is rather a simple one (drunkards), but Solomon does not answer it simplistically. He uses very technical terms that describe cultural practices unknown too much of the modern world.





The Answer: We would most likely answer Solomon's question by saying, "The drunkard." Instead, Solomon gives two specific answers.

1. "They that tarry long at the wine." This is understandable to most of us. The person who drinks a lot of alcohol (wine - *yayin*) gets drunk and has difficulty in life.
2. "They that go to seek mixed wine." This second answer to the questions is much more difficult. Literally, the answer is, "Those who seek the mixing bowl." Solomon used the Hebrew word *מִמְצָךְ* (*mamcak*) which has no real modern English equivalent. The ancient Greek and Roman equivalent to the *mamcak* was *krater*.

What modern culture does not understand about ancient, intoxicating wine is that the ancients would never drink wine without first using a *mamcak* or *krater*... aka, a mixing bowl. The Greeks, Romans, and Jews thought it was barbaric to drink intoxicating wine straight from the wine jars or skins. Water or sea water was poured first into a mixing bowl (The Greeks used a large bowl to dilute the wine and drank with small cups while the Romans used large cups and diluted the wine directly in the cup). It was the function of the master of the drinking (Greek *symposiarchos*, Latin magister *bibendi*) to decide the proportion of water to wine. The master of the drinking was elected by his fellows (Xenophon, *Anabasis* 6.1.30) or chosen by lot (Horace, *Odes* 1.4.18 and 2.7.25-26). It was imperative that the mixture was correct so that it not only tasted pleasant, but also did not intoxicate. Unlike most American parties, drunkenness was scandalous.

"Wine was almost always diluted, usually with water (or snow when the wine was to be served cold). The Greeks believed that only barbarians drank unmixed or

undiluted wine and that the Spartan king Cleomenes I was once driven insane after drinking wine this way. They also believed that undiluted wine could even kill the drinker: the Gallic chieftain Brennus was recorded as having committed suicide by drinking wine full-strength. Greeks asserted that the dilution of wine with water was a mark of civilized behavior, whose contrast was embodied in the myth of the battle of Lapiths with the Centaurs, inflamed to rape and mayhem because of wine drunk undiluted with water.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greece_and_wine]

-  **Herodotus, (Greek Historian 484-425 BC) - 6.84:** “The Argives say that Cleomenes lost his senses, and died so miserably, on account of these doings. But his own countrymen declare that his madness proceeded not from any supernatural cause whatever, but only from the habit of drinking wine unmixed with water, which he learnt of the Scyths. These nomads, from the time that Darius made his inroad into their country, had always had a wish for revenge. They therefore sent ambassadors to Sparta to conclude a league, proposing to endeavor themselves to enter Media by the Phasis, while the Spartans should march inland from Ephesus, and then the two armies should join together in one. When the Scyths came to Sparta on this errand Cleomenes was with them continually; and growing somewhat too familiar, learnt of them to drink his wine without water, a practice which is thought by the Spartans to have caused his madness. From this distance of time the Spartans, according to their own account, have been accustomed, when they want to drink purer wine than common, to give the order to fill ‘Scythian fashion’.”
-  **Plato (Greek Philosopher 428-348 BC) - Laws 637:** “But the Scythians and Thracians, both men and women, drink unmixed wine, which they pour on their garments, and this they think a happy and glorious institution.”
-  **Xenophanes (Greek Philosopher 570-475 BC) - fragment B 5 West:** “Nor would a man pour wine first into the cup when he mingled it, but water and thereafter the liquor.”
-  **Martial (Roman Poet 38-104 AD) - 1.11:** A Greek or Roman who drank wine neat (unmixed) was more likely than not a drunkard or a glutton. “While twice five wine-tokens are a knight's allowance, why do you, Sextilianus, all to yourself take twice ten drinks? By this time the warm water would have failed the attendants who bring it, were it not, Sextilianus, that you drink your wine unmixed.”

Question: Who has woe, sorrow, contention, babbling, and brawls for no reason?

Answer: Those who spend a long time at the mixing bowl.

Principle 3: There are two methods which lead to intoxication. Avoid Method 2.

Proverbs 23:31

31. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.

- 🕒 The word for *Look* in this verse is the common Hebrew word for looking, gazing, or viewing with affection. It is the usage of the eyes.
- 🕒 Wine is red. This is no surprise. When juice flows from the crushed grape, it gives off a red color.
- 🕒 The phrase, “when it giveth his color in the cup” is rather difficult to translate. It literally means, “to show its eye.” The idea is that of the wine giving a luster or sparkle. This sparkling affect is the natural carbonation of fermented wine.
- 🕒 The phrase, “when it moveth itself aright” is also difficult to translate. It literally means, “when it walks around in a straight path.” The idea is one of full potency. Solomon just discussed mixed wine.
- 🕒 **Literal Translation:** “Do not gaze with affection on wine when it manifests its deep red color, when it shows it eye in a cup, when it walks around in a straight path.
- 🕒 **Smoothed Translation:** “Do not even gaze upon wine that has a 1) deep red color, 2) when it shows carbonated fermentation, and 3) when it is full strength or smooth.
- 🕒 **Application:** Do not drink intoxicating wine unless it has been made safe so it does not cause intoxication. Remember that intoxicating wine could be anywhere from 2%-10% alcohol. The dilution process could have been anywhere from 3-20 parts water depending on the color of the wine. Some reds are deeper than others.



A krater from 750 BCE. It is nearly 4 feet tall and depicts a funeral procession. Fermented wine would have been mixed with water for the funeral feast.

Question: Who has woe, sorrow, contention, babbling, and brawls for no reason?

Answer 2: Those who drink undiluted wine.

Principle 4: Alcohol should be avoided on par with the “woman of ill repute.”

Proverbs 23:27-28, 33

27. For a [woman of ill repute] is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.
28. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.
33. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.

Notice the context in which Solomon discusses the consumption of wine. Context determines meaning! While a man may not be able to help seeing a woman of ill repute in the street as he passes by, he is to never look at her with a gaze of affection. Solomon says the same thing about wine when it is intoxicating!

CONCLUSION

The Bible is not silent when it comes to the discussion of alcohol. In fact, it has much to say. While the word “wine” can have many different meanings, it is nevertheless a gift from God that comes with great responsibility.

1. A believer is forbidden to be drunk.
2. A believer should never cast aside the warnings that the Bible gives and plunge into their own lust found in “Christian liberties.”
3. If Proverbs 23 is verbally inspired Scripture (I attest that it is 100%), the Christian is to obey its command and avoid the consumption of intoxicating beverages just as much as the woman of ill repute. Gazing with affection on intoxicating beverage is expressly forbidden.
4. Claiming that Scripture does not forbid Christians from drinking alcohol, but rather only focusses upon drunkenness and addiction is simply not true! Solomon is quite clear in his wording if we take the time to understand him.

“But Pastah, I’ve nevah heard this befoah.” That’s ok! All Christians are on a journey to become more like Jesus Christ each day. That process is dependent upon reading, learning, and applying the Scriptures. There are no “rules” that say, “Thou shalt not attend XYZ Baptist Church if thou disagreeeth with thy Pastah.” Rather, let us be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Let’s take Biblical material that is new to us and prove it on our knees with humble hearts led by the Spirit of God. We are created for God’s glory. Let’s always bathe the Scriptures carefully in prayer.

DRINKING & THRIVING?

CHAPTER 4: BUT WHAT ABOUT???

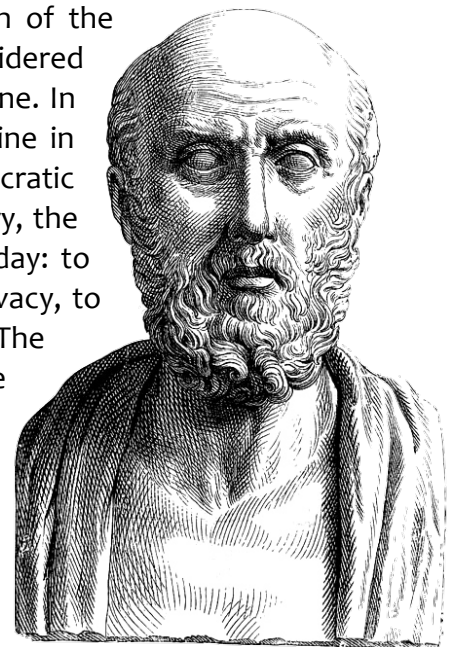
Thus far in our discussion on alcohol we have learned many truths. The Bible uses ten different words that can be translated into the English word for wine. The ancients not only built the pyramids, but they also knew how to preserve nonintoxicating wine so it could be consumed year round. The ancients are not silent on viniculture, but rather quite extensive in their writings, particularly at the time of Jesus. The Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews would never drink intoxicating wine undiluted as it was a sign of barbarianism and social contempt. Drunkenness is absolute sin. The Bible not only warns against the affects of intoxicating wine, but forbids the believer from consuming straight alcohol unless it is for medicinal usage.

Such a discussion always leads to questions about passages of Scripture where wine is mentioned, used, or even recommended. The goal of this lesson is to examine the most familiar passages and address their meaning.

MEDICINAL USAGE

Even though the ancients did not have knowledge of modern medicine, they certainly did know how to use what was available to them. As we begin this discussion, we must remember that ancient man from 6,000 years ago was not a dumb caveman, and we are not superior to him simply because we have better technology. Adam and Eve were created as genetically perfect prior to the Fall. Our genetic code has degraded over the last 6 millennia so that the diseases of today were unknown to Adam. I believe Adam's brain function, intelligence, and knowledge far surpassed modern man's.

Hippocrates of Cos (460-370 BC) was an ancient Greek physician of the Classical Greek Era. He was also a philosopher, naturalist, and considered to be one of the most outstanding figures in the history of medicine. In the western world, he is known as the Father of Modern Medicine in recognition of his lasting contributions as the founder of the Hippocratic School of Medicine. One of the oldest binding documents in history, the Oath written by Hippocrates, is still held sacred by physicians today: to treat the ill to the best of one's ability, to preserve a patient's privacy, to teach the secrets of medicine to the next generation, and so on. The Hippocratic Oath has been updated many times throughout the centuries, but there is no doubt of this man's impact on modern medicine. We will be citing Hippocrates often in this discussion.



PROVERBS 21:6-7

6. Give strong drink (*shekar*) unto him that is ready to perish, and wine (*yayin*) unto those that be of heavy hearts.
7. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

The medicinal usage of alcohol in Proverbs 31:6-7 demonstrates pain killing effects upon someone who is about to die. The victim will not remember his misery and poverty because he will die soon. This verse does not give permission for those who are depressed or anxious to use alcohol as “medicine” to drown their sorrow because as soon as the effects wear off, they certainly will remember their anguish and have an added hangover. Finally, there is no permission for intoxication in this medical usage as stated in the text.

On a side note, this verse is one strong reason why this pastor does not endorse the self-assigned usage of marijuana for “medicinal” reasons. The marijuana plant contains several chemicals that may prove useful for treating a range of illnesses or symptoms, leading many people to argue that it should be made readily available for medical purposes. Scientific study of the active chemicals in marijuana, called *cannabinoids*, has led to the development of two FDA-approved medications already, and is leading to the development of new pharmaceuticals that harness the therapeutic benefits of cannabinoids while minimizing or eliminating the harmful side effects (including the “high”) produced by eating or smoking marijuana leaves. The difficulty is that many proponents of “medical marijuana” want nothing to do with the approved FDA cannabinoids because they do not produce the “high” that the patient is seeking. I consider this “high” to be the same as intoxication, which the Bible strictly forbids! I fully support the usage of God’s naturally given medicines being used in a true medical form without the intention of experiencing impairment.

LUKE 10:34

34. And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine (*oinos*), and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

It is difficult to know whether this wine (*oinos*) is intoxicating or nonintoxicating. When we read of alcohol being poured onto a wound, our minds immediately go to the Wild West where someone has been shot in a gunfight, and whiskey is used to clean the wound until help arrives. This is one possible interpretation of the passage. Perhaps the Good Samaritan could have been using the alcohol in the wine as an antiseptic to destroy any bacteria in the Jew’s wounds.

Modern studies have shown that wine certainly does act as an antibacterial, but not as you would think. Alcohol as a cleansing or sterilizing agent needs to be extremely strong in order to be effective, far beyond what ancient wine could produce. According to the July 2007 issue of *The Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*, the acidity and alcohol isn't responsible for wine's germ-fighting properties. Instead, it's a collection of organic (carbon-containing) compounds found in the drink. After isolating the compounds from wine, which included lactic, malic, succinic, and tartaric acids, researchers neutralized the acidity. They then showed that the isolated antibacterial compounds were more successful than the alcohol alone at killing 99.9% of dental and sore throat bacteria, even when used in far lower concentrations than found in wine.

But did the ancients know this? No, probably not to this length of scientific explanation. However, the use of wine and vinegar in the dressing of wounds dates back to the Greek physician Hippocrates (460-370 BC). In his book, *Doctrines and Practice of Hippocrates* (1783), Dr. Francis Riollay describes Hippocrates methods as such:

If the wound is in good state, but the adjacent parts inflames, a cataplasm, composed of the flower of lentil, **boiled** in wine, will be found serviceable; but if you want to close and heal, you must employ leaves of the black-berry bulb, nasturtium, park leaves, or album macerated in **wine or vinegar**. [p.58-50]

1 TIMOTHY 5:23

23. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine (*oinos*) for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

The common theory and explanation of this verse is that Timothy was suffering because kept drinking polluted water in Ephesus. So Paul prescribed to him a medication of a little alcohol to heal Timothy's stomach issues. This may be a correct theory, however, it is based upon some assumptions that the text does not identify.

Assumption #1: Ephesus had polluted water. First, it is assumed that the water at Ephesus was polluted and sickened Timothy. Paul never mentioned the source or identity of Timothy's ailment, except that it was a stomach issue. Ephesus was an old city, being founded almost 1,000 years before Christ. Water was supplied to Ephesus from springs at different locations. In addition, water-well cisterns supplied water to the city. By Timothy's time, it is theorized by modern authors that the water had become tainted in the city because its sewerage system had degraded to the point of polluting the salt-water harbor that eventually backed up into the wells and cisterns. Many make the assumption that Timothy was sick from drinking this polluted water, and this could be the case, but it is not the only theory. Here are some questions to ponder:

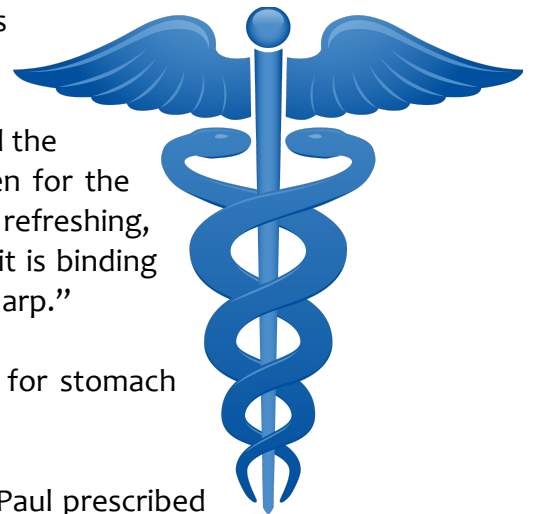
- Besides modern scholar's theorization, is there any ancient textual evidence that Ephesus had a polluted water system during Timothy's stay there?
- The ancients knew very well that boiling water removes harmful bacteria. If the problem was pollution, why didn't Paul simply tell Timothy to boil drinking water?

Assumption # 2: We know the identity of Timothy's ailment. Upon first glance of the KJV's translation, it seems Paul told Timothy to no longer drink water, but this is not the case in the original language. Paul's intention is for Timothy not to drink just water, but also add a little wine into his diet. The Greek word for *wine* here is the common term *oinos*, which can refer to either intoxicating or nonintoxicating wine as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Please notice that Timothy does not simply have a stomach ailment. The texts says "stomach's sake **and frequent ailments**." Here are some questions to ponder:

- What was Timothy's stomach problem and other ailments?
- Does Paul identify the wine as intoxicating or nonintoxicating?
- Did the ancients ever use wine for stomach ailments?

Hippocrates in his essay of wine as medicine writes, "Must [nonintoxicating] causes wine, disturbs the bowels and empties them. It causes wind because it heats; it empties the body because it purges; it disturbs by fermenting in the bowels and passes by stool. Acid wines cool, listen and attenuate; they cool the attenuate by emptying the body of its moisture; they moisten for the water that enters with the wine. Vinegar (sour wine) is refreshing, because it dissolves and consumes the moisture of the body; it is binding rather than laxative because it affords no nourishment and is sharp."

- Did Paul have access to ancient medical prescriptions for stomach ailments? Dr. Luke?



Final Thoughts: Does the text of 1 Timothy 5:23 demand that Paul prescribed alcohol for Timothy's health? That could be one possible interpretation, but whether Paul prescribed intoxicating or nonintoxicating wine is simply not revealed in the context.

WINE & JESUS

There is little doubt that the Greek word *oinos* is used frequently in the sayings, writings, and out of the mouth of Jesus. Let us examine some of the more controversial texts.

Argument 1: Jesus had to have consumed intoxicating wine because some people called him a winebibber (drunkard) in Matthew 11:19 & Luke 7:34.


Matthew 11:19

19. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children..

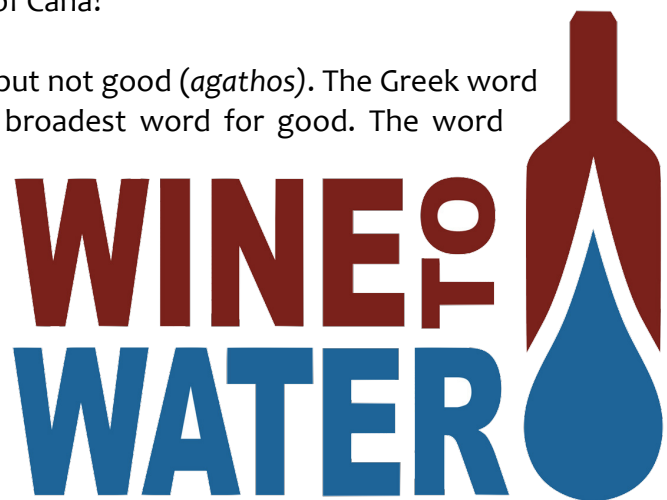
Counterpoint: If Jesus drank intoxicating wine because some accusers called him a drunkard, Jesus must have also weighed 500 pounds because they also called him a glutton. The whole point of the verse is not to provide evidence that Jesus drank intoxicating wine. It is a contrast of Jesus to John the Baptist who held a special vow to not even touch wine either in its intoxicating or nonintoxicating form (Luke 1:15). How did one tell the difference between intoxicating and nonintoxicating wine in the First Century? By taste! Did the accusers of Jesus taste the wine he was drinking proving that Jesus was a drunkard?

Argument 2: Jesus turned water into intoxicating wine at the wedding feast of Cana because only intoxicating wine would be considered of a higher quality than grape juice.

Counterpoint: It would seem that some modern scholars make it their pastime to scoff at those who disagree with their own personal viewpoints. Some will actually teach that this wedding feast was a drunken party. Let us attempt to examine what the text of Scripture says. Remember that *oinos* can either be intoxicating or nonintoxicating as demonstrated in Chapter 2.

-  The New International Version translation committee has done a great disservice in translating John 2:10. It reads, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.” Most other translations translate the idea as “drinking freely”, which is a sign of satisfaction, and not demanding intoxication. The host giving his best wine first was not for the purpose of getting people drunk; it was a statement of honor. If the host wanted to get people drunk, he would give them the “cheap stuff” first so the host can keep more of the good stuff for himself later. If the people at the wedding feast were really in the bag, bombed, or flat out wasted, how is it possible their pallets would have noticed the difference between the wines they were drinking and the wine Jesus made?

- No hint of drunkenness is mentioned in the text other than the NIV's poor translation.
- If Jesus were attending a drunken party, he would have been violating Proverbs 23:20, "Be not among winebibbers..." aka drunkards. Jesus would have therefore been a sinner because he violated his own law.
- Habakkuk 2:15 says, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness." If Jesus gave the wedding feasters intoxicating wine, he would have been ignoring the condemnation from Habakkuk.
- Since the word *oinos* was a generic word in the First Century, which wine did Jesus make (must; intoxicating wine; reconstituted grape molasses; raisin wine; lactic acid; fumigated sulphur; vinegar; something else)?
- Jesus made 120 gallons of wine. Saying "most serve the best first, but you have saved the best for last" in no way implies the wine had to be intoxicating. In Chapter 2, we witnessed a better quality wine through taste and preference that is not associated with alcohol. Jesus, who is God, made a product that tasted better than anything they had previously tasted. Isn't that just like God?
- There is no affirmation that Jesus drank of the wine he made, yet if he had, he and all the other Jews would not have violated Proverbs 23:31 if the wine were intoxicating. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."
- If wine (*yayin* - intoxicating wine) is a mocker (Proverbs 20:1), would Jesus have made a mockery for the wedding feast of Cana?
- The wine Jesus made was good (*kalos*) but not good (*agathos*). The Greek word *agathos* was used as the general and broadest word for good. The word *kalos* is a much more specific word for good that means "that which is morally excellent." In John 2:10, Jesus made *kalos* wine. Could intoxicating wine, which is a mocker, also be morally good and excellent?



Argument 3: Jesus clearly drank intoxicating wine because he mentioned that new wine is not put into old wineskins (Mark 2:22; Matthew 9:17; Luke 5:37-39).

Luke 5:37-39

37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles (wineskin); else the new wine will burst the bottles (wineskin), and be spilled, and the bottles (wineskin) shall perish.
 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles (wineskin); and both are preserved.
 39. No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

Many assume that this is a clear reference to the fermentation of grape juice into intoxicating wine. After all, we all know that fresh grape juice is always fermented in wineskins, right? Wrong! Fresh grape juice was not fermented in new wineskins in ancient times. The expressed juice of the grapes fermented in the wine vat from 6-21 days depending upon the sugar content of the grape being pressed. Consider the following:

- 🕒 New wine or sweet wine is not a reference to wine that has been purposed for fermentation, but rather just the opposite. New wine would have been boiled to kill off the yeast to prevent the wine from fermenting. The new wineskin protected the new wine from the natural yeast in the air that could cause fermentation. New wine is not a historical reference to intoxicating wine as demonstrated multiple times in Lesson 2.
- 🕒 What is a wineskin? The International Encyclopedia of the Bible (ISBE): “The skin is removed from the animal by drawing it over the body from the neck downward, half the skin on each of the limbs being also retained. It is then tanned, the hair cut close, turned inside out, and has all the openings save one closed with cords, when it is ready for use.” It is important to note that the animal skin was not tanned completely, keeping it partially raw and pliable. For this reason, wine “was never left for any length of time in the skin on account of its imparting a disagreeable flavor to the contents.”
- 🕒 What is an old wineskin? An old wineskin is leather that has dried out over time. Since a wineskin was considered more of a transportation vessel rather than a long term storage vessel, an old wineskin is one that would be dried out and unable to hold liquid, whether it is wine or water. The question needs to be answered, “Could old



wineskins hold water?” No, they could not. They were too dry to even hold water and would have burst under the weight.

- Can new wine ferment? New wine does not contain yeast because it has been boiled, but it can ferment if yeast is added back into the juice. The yeast will feed on the sugar initiating fermentation to produce carbon dioxide and alcohol. Yeast could be added in one of two ways. First, by exposing the juice to air. It may take longer, but open air has enough yeast spores to ferment juice if given enough time. Second, yeast could be intentionally added. This is yet another reason why new wine is not added to old wineskins. It is assumed that the old wine absorbed into the old skins contained enough active yeast to ferment the new wine, bursting the skin as fermentation took place.
- Notice that Jesus’ whole point was to prevent fermentation by putting new wine that was nonintoxicating into new skins so it remained nonintoxicating. If new wine is in new skins, the new skins do not burst because the new wine is not fermenting. Jesus simply demonstrated that cleanliness is crucial in preserving new wine.
- Jerome (Early Church Father 347-420 AD). - Commenting on Matthew 9:17 writes, “New skins, must be used for wine that is to be preserved as ‘must,’ because the remains of former ferment attaches to old skins.”
- The whole point of the illustration Jesus used has nothing to do with fermentation or drinking alcohol. It is that the New Covenant offered by Jesus is better than the Old Covenant given to the Jews. Jesus did not come to reestablish the Mosaic Law among the church, but rather he began a New Covenant with a new people under the new Church Age. Is Jesus saying that if a Jew becomes a Christian, he ferments the church so it bursts?
- In regards to Luke 5:39 stating that old wine tastes better, this is actually true of intoxicating and nonintoxicating wine. But this is not the point at all. Jesus was not condemning old wine if it was fermented. Rather, Jesus was condemning those who want to hold onto the old traditions of the Old Covenant instead of embracing His New Covenant.



PENTECOST

One final passage of consideration took place on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and then began to preach the Gospel in foreign languages. As the uneducated men from Galilee began to preach, Jews from many different parts of the ancient world were able to clearly hear the sermon in their own languages. This miraculous gift was called the gift of tongues. Those who did not understand what was happening made a strange accusation at the disciples:

Acts 2:12-15

12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?
13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine (*gluekos* not *oinos*).
14. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
15. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day [9:00am].

- First, it is important to notice who is speaking in verse 13. Mockers were making false, silly accusations at the disciples speaking in tongues. The words of mockers are never a credible source. Their intention is to mock and scoff in order to make people laugh and ridicule. If the Galilean fishermen were speaking in tongues, the mocker scoffed that they must be drunk from their grape juice. The sense was one of sarcasm.
- Second, the Greek word for wine in verse 13 is *gluekos*. We get our modern idea of sugar based upon this term of sweetness. *Gluekos* is not intoxicating because the sugars make the wine sweet since the yeast has not consumed the sugar to produce alcohol. *Gluekos* that is fermented is no longer *gluekos* because it changed into one form to *oinos*.
- If anything, the mockers were making fun of the disciples for drinking nonintoxicating *gluekos*. John Wycliffe translated verse 13 as, “And others scorned, and said, For these men must be full of must.”
- Is it possible that *gluekos* is fermented wine with honey or grape molasses added back into it to make it sweet? In theory, wine certainly could and would be sweetened at times, yet this drink was never referred to as *gluekos*. *Gluekos* is always nonintoxicating, sweet juice.

CONCLUSION

My hope is that this study on alcohol has been enlightening and educational. It is my desire that this study will drive you to research this topic further. Our ultimate goal has been to accurately portray a Biblical viewpoint and glorify God. This study was not meant to be an academic exercise, exhaustive research, or suited for publication. Rather, it is a labor of love from a New Testament shepherd to his precious flock. Please feel free to use this study to learn more about the Scriptures, but please to not republish it without permission.

Finally, let's always keep this goal in view when researching such sensitive topics. If you would like to read more, please consider the following sources:

Ancient Wine and the Bible: The Case for Abstinence by David Brumbelow and Paige Patterson, 2011.

The Christian and Drinking: A Biblical Perspective on Moderation and Abstinence by Randy Jaeggli, 2008.

Should Christians Drink?: The Case for Total Abstinence by Peter Masters, 1992.

Wine: The Biblical Imperative, Total Abstinence by Robert P. Teachout, 1986.

The New Christianity. An Appeal to the Clergy and to All Men in Behalf of Its Life of Charity; by John Ellis, M.D., 1888.