

Wine in the Bible

With about half of all murders and half of traffic deaths being alcohol related and alcohol being a huge factor in broken homes and in holding communities in poverty and in numerous medical problems caused by alcohol, we need to proclaim the Word of God on the subject!

There are severe warnings in the Bible. This one is extreme: drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Everlasting fire is far worse than all the trouble and pain and death caused by alcoholic drink!

But that warning is for drunkards. How about moderate drinking? How much can I drink? Where do we draw the line? “Don’t even look at it” is the Bible answer (Prov. 23:31).

In fact, don’t even hang around with people who drink a lot (Prov. 23:20). Many people would never have become alcoholics or gotten locked into a horrible marriage to an alcoholic, if they had avoided people who drink.

But didn’t Jesus make wine? Yes, about 150 gallons! But there are several facts that will clear up widespread confusion about wine in the Bible.

1. In the Bible the word wine can mean fermented or unfermented grape juice. In modern usage wine means an alcoholic drink, usually above 10% alcohol.
2. When grape juice ferments it produces alcohol until the juice is a little above 10% alcohol; then the alcohol prevents further fermentation.
3. As far as we know, the art of distilling was not invented until the 12th Century. So wine or even strong drink in the Bible could not be much above 10% alcohol.
4. According to the encyclopaedia, the Greeks always diluted their alcoholic wine.
5. So the warnings in the Bible about wine and strong drink were warnings about a product much weaker than modern wine and especially whiskey.
6. Therefore verses in the New Testament about Jesus making wine or Paul’s admonition to Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach’s sake

cannot refer to the modern use of the word wine, that is, distilled wine, wine that is stronger than ancients could make.

7. Neither can one prove that these verses refer even to weaker fermented wine that has not been distilled, since the word wine sometimes means fresh grape juice.

The general principle, at least, is “Look not thou upon the wine” when it is intoxicating, even if it is rather weak.

A certain case is mentioned in the Law of Moses in which they were allowed to drink strong, fermented drink (Dt. 14:26), but it was weaker than most modern wines since distilling was not yet practised. However, God allowed some things in the Law of Moses that were not ideal, Jesus said, because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19:8).

Some say that since Ephesians 5:18 commands, “Be not drunk with wine,” drinking moderately is ok. That’s like saying that the command, “Thou shalt not kill” means you can beat and torture someone as long as you don’t kill him. Actually there are other commands like “Love your neighbour as yourself.” There is also the command to not even look at wine when it is even mildly (by modern standards) intoxicating. Jesus said that the command, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” includes looking at a woman with lust. And looking lustfully at women is so serious that it would be better to cut out your eye and still enter into life, than to keep both eyes and to be cast into hell. So, with alcoholic wine, God commands us to not even look at it.

Wine is deceptive (Prov. 20:1). Whoever intended to become a drunk lying in the gutter in his vomit? Whoever intended to become an alcoholic? They never intended these sorry conditions. They were deceived. Satan and the liquor industry make it look glamorous. They don’t want you to consider the thousands of cases each year of alcohol related murder, sickness, fatal accidents, broken marriages and homes and premature exits to hell. Wine, even the relatively weak wine often warned about in the Bible, is deceptive. So let’s obey God’s Word and stay away from alcoholic drink. Don’t even look at it.