

BIBLE “EXCUSES” FOR DRINKING ALCOHOL

Our society is plagued with the use and consequences of drinking of alcoholic beverages, in the form of wine, beer and whiskey. Hundreds of souls leave the earth daily for eternity as a result of drinking. Homes are destroyed and health is ruined because of alcohol. Virtually, every TV program and movie involves the practice of “drinking”, with an implied approval or endorsement of the practice. Hardly a day passes without a tragic story of some kind that involves drinking. Watch the news and see if this is not true. YET, much effort is given by preachers and others in the church to defend its practice and make “arguments” supposedly from the Bible to justify their position. This writing will be an expose’ of some of the absurd and anti-Bible arguments made in the brotherhood today.

FIRST, it is said that it WAS allowed in the Old Testament, which is background for the NEW Testament today, and we should be hesitant to condemn the use of alcohol in today’s world. After all, there is much “good” that actually comes from the sale and use of alcohol—even in America. Admittedly, alcohol does contribute something to our society today. Think of the tax money that comes in whereby we can pave our roads, build extra large hospitals to treat the alcoholics and those who in other ways need healing, especially because of the use of alcohol. Many health issues are caused by drinking, that demand the practice of those trained to specialize in treatment of these diseases. If we did not have alcoholic drinks, we would have to live without the winos that sleep on the sidewalks of our large cities at night, and beg for money to buy more liquor. If it is so wonderful here because of alcohol, then SURELY it will be available in heaven (?). Hardly!

Remember, God did not give ALL His warnings and prohibitions before or at one time to mankind. To Eve, He said that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would “know good and evil.” She, and then her offspring would many times know “evil” before “good” by experiencing the evil in doing wrong, and then learning how to correct it and do good. Cain committed murder, but we have no record of God specifically forbidding it, and Noah got drunk before it was condemned. God revealed His will little by little in the development of His will for the ultimate “good”, **especially** by the time of the gospel age. Before this time there would be many partial expressions of His will, upon which we could come to a complete knowledge of what He wants of all mankind. In the Old Testament, we have much warning against the use of alcohol, and in the New we have further prohibitions. Let’s look at some of the passages in the Old Testament (not necessarily from the Ten Commandments, or Law of Moses, but in the revelation of events before Moses, and after ward. We are going to see the full text of these passages lest we carelessly just pass by the import of truth by just seeing a reference to the passage, using the New King James version in the Old Testament.

We begin by looking at **Josh. 6:18**. *“By all means **abstain from the accursed things**, lest you become cursed when you take of the accursed things”* Now, the context was regarding certain things in day as they came to the city of Ai, but the word in principle serves as a warning against other things from which we are to abstain from that God has forbidden, lest we become cursed. As the “Virginian” on the TV series is often quoted as saying, **“If it’s wrong, you need to fight it. If you don’t, you become part of it.”** Alcohol is an enemy of God and happiness, and we must not compromise with it’s use.

Now to the principle book dealing with “wisdom” in the Bible, Proverbs. **Prov. 20:1**, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, And whoever it led astray by it is not wise.”* Next, Solomon writes in **Prov. 23:29-35**, *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who do so in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly? At the last it bits like a serpent, And strings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea. Or like one who dies at the top of the mast, saying, ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt. They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink.’”*

Isa. 5:11. *“Woe to those who rise early in the morning, That they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night, till wine inflames them.”* **Isa. 5:20**. continues, *“Woe to those call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness, Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.”* **Hab. 2:15** declares, *“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to making him drink, That you may look on his nakedness. You are filled with shame instead instead of glory. You also—drink*

as uncircumcised! The cup of the Lord's right hand will be turned against you; And utter shame will be on your glory."

Now to the New Testament. **Rom. 12:2** orders, "And be not conformed to the world." **1 John 2:15-17**. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." **Rom. 13:14** counsels, "But ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." **Eph. 5:11** demands "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." **1 Thes. 5:21-22** admonishes, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil." **Matt. 7:16** states "Ye shall know them by their fruits. **Now, do these passages express the will of God or not?** We must not handle the word of God deceitfully in order to justify ourselves or someone close to us. (2 Cor. 4:2; Luke 16:15).

SECOND, "Early disciples did not have refrigeration to keep their grape juice from fermenting, so they HAD to drink it fermented."

This "argument" is not made by anyone who is acquainted with wine making in the first century. Your computer will help in learning this. Samuel Bacchiocchi. Phd, of Andrews University of Michigan has some fine material on this subject. He lists (and goes into detail) on four (4) ways the ancients had to keep grape juice fresh for long periods of time. (1) By **boiling**, (2) By **filtration**, (3) By **cold storage**, and (4) By **sulphur fumigation**. William Patton, in *Bible Wines*, explains how they would put grape juice in sealed containers and keep them submerged in cold water for time, and upon removal they would remain fresh for a year at a time.

Even **if** they did **not** have a method of keeping juice alcohol free, that would not mean Christians HAD to drink it, which they were taught not to do. They did have fresh juice and other things they could drink, unless they were drinking for much the same reason a majority of folks do in our time—for the "pleasure" of exhilaration or intoxication, which is against God's will for man's soberness.

THIRD, "Jesus endorsed the making of fermented wine, so it is okay for us drink it." Where and when did He do this? The Scripture brought forth is from Matt. 9 and Luke 5, where Jesus referred to what "man" does to preserve wine and wine skins, by putting new wine in new bottles, for if put in old bottles it would cause the bottles to burst and lose the wine. However, the context of what Jesus said is in reference to Pharisees John's disciples questioning as to why they and the Pharisees fasted often, but Jesus' disciples did NOT fast. Their inquiry had nothing to do with Jesus endorsing "wine making." It was simply an illustration from what happens in wine making, that fasting was likened to—it would be **like** those in the world who **might** (but who probably knew better) be like those who would do so with new wine. In essence, what Jesus **did** was to present a common sense argument **against** wine making, rather than **for** it. For His disciples to "fast" would be **like** the making of wine in old bottles.

By referring to those who **might** (if not very smart) vainly by putting new wine (I.e. juice of the grape) into old bottles) would be incorporating a judaistic custom or practice into His teaching and work, at least at this time. Just because Jesus introduced a possible dumb practice **does not mean** he was endorsing **that** practice for something else in the Christian era. For instance;

- 1) To refer to what the hypocritical Pharisees did no covering up their corruption by painting their sepulchers white. Matt. 23:25-28
- 2) To refer to what **Satan** does in blinding the minds of men, does not mean that Jesus endorsed Satan's action (2 Cor. 4:4).
- 3) To refer to what men of the world do in getting drunk at night does not mean that Jesus approves of getting drunk at night or any other time) (1 Thes. 5:7).

FOURTH, JESUS TURNED WATER INTO WINE SO IT IS OKAY FOR US TO DRINK IT.

In John 2:1-11, we have the record of Jesus' first miracle in Cana of Galilee, in which He manifested

His glory. It is indeed a stretch to attempt to prove that Jesus turned water into intoxicating wine. There are several words of special interest in this passage as we shall consider.

“Wine.” The first word is the word which is from the Greek word *oinos*, which is a general word for any juice or product of the grape or grape vine. The context in which the word (oinos) is used determines whether the “oinos” is fermented or not, but it is usually used to describe the fresh juice of the grape. We believe that this “usual” meaning of clearly in favor of it referring to the latter, as we shall see, for several reasons as seen below.

“Good” is the second word. The occasion was wedding feast. The custom was to begin the feast with the best wine, and afterward bring on one one of a lesser quality. Here, the wine was gone, as we know not how many people were in attendance. Mary, the Lord’s mother, referred the alerted the servants of the feast, telling them, to do as He would instruct them. The ruler of the feast called for six waterpots full of water. He tasted the wine, and was amazed that it was “so” good that he compared it to what was normally done on such an occasion, but this was different somehow. The word “good” comes from the Greek word *kalos* which **always** refers to “that which is intrinsically good” according to VINE’S Word Study of New Testament Words, (page 274.), This wine had not been corrupted or changed with yeast.

“Drunk” is the third word, and is from the Greek word *methuo* which simply means “filled”, but that which some are filled has to be named. Here, they were filled with inferior wine, and could taste that this new wine was better (see Eph 5:18). The word here does **not** describe folks who were “well intoxicated.” The word simply new means “filled” in its general sense. It does not mean they were “well intoxicated”, for they all had to be sober to know that there was something better before them, contrary to many other wedding feasts of the day.

“Well” is the fourth word, which describes that there was more involved than merely tasting the “wine” originally served, although they were “well filled”, yet the “new wine” was still better to the taste.. All in all, we have a word picture of a civilized social event.

“Glory” is the fifth word. Now, **if** this had been a drunken feast, with Jesus contributing to it by **providing wine for everyone there**, what would God do about His Son’s conduct?? Note that John 2:11 states that what was done here was a manifestation of His “glory” and not to “shame. In Habakkuk 2:15 God said the drinker AND the one who provides such for others do it to “shame instead of glory.” Not only would Jesus have failed to glorify God, but would have donate a “shameful” thing, and was to be a recipient of the “woe” God pronounced upon such a person. Would it have been a sinful thing for the Lord to have done such?? Would God have overlooked the actions of Jesus because He was His “Son” (as many fathers try to justify the actions of their sons, whether good OR bad). Yet, we know that Jesus **never sinned** or done anything that would have brought shame to God. (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; John 17:1-4) It borders on blasphemy to contend that the Only Begotten Son of God created intoxicating wine, thus endorsing and encouraging drunkenness.

Perhaps there are other “excuses” that are used for Christians being allowed to drink alcohol, but one of the main “reasons” for their efforts **is** exhilaration, or intoxication—the feeling it brings to the drinker. Let us never, for one moment, bring shame to God instead of glory, by drinking alcohol or encouraging others to do so.

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