

## “WINE” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, #1

As far as I can remember in the last 70 years of my preaching, it is not new to hear of brethren who try to justify the use of alcoholic beverages, in a social way, with absolutely no claim of justifying drunkenness. I have never met the person who attempted to justify “moderate” drinking, or “using but not abusing” alcoholic beverages for himself, **who had not been intoxicated at least one time in life.** In such instances, drunkenness is admitted, at least once. To have an “intoxicating drink” in one’s body is to be “intoxicated,” or to feel the intoxicating effects of alcohol, or to be affected in any way, is contrary to the Christian obligation to soberness. Incidentally, the word “sober” is not in the Old Testament but is used over and over again in the New Testament, suggesting total abstinence of anything that would affect the mind adversely. VINE’S Dictionary of New Testament Words, lists the Adjectives, Verbs, and Adverbs of the words Sober, Soberly and Soberminded. The very first definition under “Verbs” is the Greek word *nepho*, and Vine states that it “signifies **‘to be free from the influence of intoxicants.’**” One cannot be “soberminded” while under any influence of intoxicants.

In my discussion with the Professor, we never got around to John 2, where it is said that Jesus turned water into wine, but I can give a calculated guess that he very likely would say that the wine upon that occasion **was** “intoxicating wine” and not just juice of the grape. So, I am not fighting a straw man in this writing, but at the same time realize that there are many brethren who **do** believe that the wine there was intoxicating in nature. So, there are a few things we shall notice without moving to other matters.

First, we know that the Greek word for “wine” is *oinos*, which is a general word for any juice of the grape, whether in fermented or unfermented state. Actually, juice of the grape is the fruit of the vine, and alcoholic “wine” is the fruit of grape juice, because it has changed in substance. Therefore, we can conclude that *oinos* absolutely **could refer** to the pure juice of the grape, and **not** be intoxicated at all. The contextual use of the word must always be considered. Advocates of the concept that the wine of John 2 being alcoholic, seemingly do not wish to allow for the smallest possibility of it **not** being alcoholic—perhaps because of the concept that we have today regarding modern day wine, which is alcoholic in nature.

Second, since Jesus was the only sinless Jew who ever lived, it is difficult to even imagine that He **sinned** in violation of the word of God, which even HE was the Author by inspiration. The prophet wrote, *“Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, Who mix in your venom even to make them drunk So as to look on their nakedness! You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your own nakedness. The cup in the Lord’s right hand will come around to you, And utter disgrace will come upon your glory.”* Hab. 2:15-16. **Note** that deity places a “woe” upon one who drinks alcohol as well as upon one who gives drink to others. Jesus did not sin against God. Note also that the words “drunk” and “drink” are used interchangeably in the passage. To drink is to be drunk, or intoxicated, to some degree.

Third, Jesus provided HIS “wine” after the guests had “well drunk” and it was still considered “good wine.” The word here for “drunk” is *methuo* which simply means “filled” and not necessarily intoxicated. If they had been intoxicated, how would they know that

Jesus' wine was better?? The word "good" (modifying wine) in this passage, is from the Greek word *kalos*, and means something "sweet, beautiful, new, pure and pleasing." Shame on anyone who tries to pervert the scripture on this point.

Obviously, Jesus, in His miracle here, merely hastened the process of turning water into the pure juice of the grape, which was the most popular drink in the Roman empire in the first century, even when often mixed with water and spices. John 2 deals with a situation under the Old Covenant, and even then Jesus kept the law perfectly.

We shall conclude this article at this point, and our next article will be more specific about other matters in the New Testament, about which there were and are some major issues between the Professor and myself in our communication.

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