

## “WINE” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, #2

In this article, we shall look at 3 major items. (1) The vain effort to justify the use of alcohol drinking based on it's use in the Old Testament. (2) The use of wine in the Lord's Supper. (3) The drinking of a "little wine" from the instructions of Paul to Timothy.

**First**, the vain effort to justify the use of drinking alcohol in the gospel age. The "Professor" constantly did so in our communication. I pressed him on it, and he finally declared that he was not trying to justify it today by looking into the Old Testament, but that was merely a "background study" to see how God looked at alcohol in times past, so as to see how He looks at it today. When one does such research, he should carefully consider how the pleasurable drinking of alcohol was **condemned**, rather than just looking at the passages where wine was poured out with burnt offerings. By looking at those passages in connection with burnt offerings, does that imply that we can use wine in our worship today?? What about it? We need to remember that God allowed things in the Old Testament that are not allowed today. Having multiple wives and concubines was once allowed, but it was a departure from God's original plan of one man for one woman for life. Now, Jesus takes us back to the standard God set even before the Mosaic age. Also, God once allowed the use of mechanical instruments in worship, but no longer authorizes such.

In Gal. 5:4, Paul said when we try to justify something in the Christian age, by going back to the law for that justification, we no longer have Christ with us, and have fallen from grace. True, it directly applied to seeking "justification" (from sin) by going back to the teachings of Moses' law, but in "principle" refers to the vain effort to justify oneself in **any action** today, just because it was authorized or practiced under the law of Moses. So, just because "wine" was authorized to be poured out on the offerings under Moses law **does not** mean that we are authorized to "drink" alcohol moderately ("using but not abusing") today. The Old Testament said nothing about "sober" living, but it is emphasized repeatedly in the New Testament. Anyone who tries to justify the drinking of alcoholic beverages by going back to law of Moses, has departed from the truth, and does not have the Lord with him.

**Second**, what about "wine" in the communion, or the Lord's Supper. In regards to the "cup" of the fruit of the vine? Jesus did **not** use the Greek word *oinos* (which may or may not be referring to intoxicating wine). He used the term "fruit of the vine," which can only refer to the pure juice of the grape. However, some look at 1 Cor. 11 where Paul rebuked some for making a feast of the Lord's Supper, by eating and drinking along with the observance of the Lord's Supper. While doing so, some were "hungry" and others were "drunken". So, they conclude that alcoholic wine **must** have been used in the communion. Now, it could be that if not in the supper, then in the love feast part of their gathering. We deny that it was used in either. A speaker at a Youth Gathering in north Texas declared that the problem at Corinth was that they ran out of wine and some couldn't have enough to drink, and that caused division. WOW!!

The "Professor" with whom I corresponded believed they were actually using intoxicating wine. He quoted from the early writings of Guy N. Woods, who in that writing said it could have been intoxicating wine. At a later time, bro. Woods said it was not intoxicating, and would be a sin for them to have used such. The Professor said bro. Woods

contradicted himself, so he was wrong when he said it could not be used. I disagree. If Bro. Woods had made both statements in the same speech or in the same day, it would have been a “contradiction”, but several years passed before bro. Woods said it would have been wrong for them to use it. The point is, bro. Woods changed his mind, realizing he had been wrong in his first statement.

The word for “drunken” is *methuel*, which means to “be filled”, and not necessarily with alcohol. The subject of 1 Cor. 11:21 was the “supper”, at which time some were hungry, and some were filled. It is used **in contrast** with each other. They were supposed to be taking the “Lord’s Supper,” but some were taking their “own supper”, and **that** was the “supper” in which some were hungry and some were “drunken” or filled. Whatever the elements of the “Lord’s Supper,” they had nothing to do with their “own supper” where some were hungry and some were drunken (filled). The word “hungry” does not describe the action of taking the elements of the Lord’s Supper, but the hunger of the natural appetite for food and drink. Paul said they had houses to “eat and drink in” (to satisfy their hunger). If “alcohol” was to be left out of the supper, then it should be left off “at home”. Truth is, it should be left out of both suppers—at worship or at home. The Lord’s Supper is contrasted with one’s “own supper” (vs. 20-21). Some were filled with food and drink while others were not, and it became a problem, but alcoholic wine did not enter into it in either situation. Being filled with food and drink is not “intoxication”, nor does it involve the use of alcoholic wine. The use of the word “wine” is not used at all in 1 Cor. 11. We are to be filled with knowledge, or the word of God, or the Spirit, but are never to be “intoxicated” with any of these.

Just for a moment, let’s **grant** that alcoholic wine WAS used in the Lord’s Supper observance. Whatever it was, they were to do IT “in their houses.” Were they actually being given authority to get “drunk” (intoxicated) AT HOME, rather than in the assembly?? This reminds me of the Professor’s argument about the priests of the Old Testament, that they could drink alcohol at home, but be sure they did not drink it while offering sacrifices in worship. Whatever the Corinthians were doing, in their assembly, Paul said “do it at home.” Time’s up. The “moment” we granted is up. There WAS no alcohol in the assemblies at Corinth. The expression “ye have houses to eat and drink in” demolishes the vain efforts of advocates of moderate drinking.

**Third**, let’s examine the passage of 1 Tim. 5:23. The KJV reads, “*Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.*” I was rather shocked when the Professor wrote that Paul told Timothy that if he was “thirsty”, he should drink some wine. This the lame excuse that beer drinkers use now, they’re “thirsty.” If Paul had to urge Timothy to put “some kind” of wine with his water (to purify it?), then Timothy must have been a teetotaler to begin with so as to have the personal admonition to use a “little” wine. The word “only” is **implied**, following the word water, not meaning that he had to give up water completely (for the human body **must** have water), but not **only** water, alluding to the custom of purifying their water by use of a little of a low-grade wine that had lost much of it’s intoxicating capabilities.

The language absolutely HAS to mean either (1) Water only, or (2) Absolutely no water at all. Which would the Professor prefer? **IF** it means “no water at all,” then he would have had more trouble than his “stomach’s sake” and infirmities. But he would have died

because the human body **has** to have water to stay alive. Now, if it was replaced with a little “wine” (Gr. *Oinos*, meaning it could be fermented or unfermented), then Timothy would soon become a total “sop” if wine is all he drank (unless it was pure juice of the grape where the water content was still there). Obviously, he **has** to mean “water only,” making it an elliptical statement, suggesting that the practice of that day sometimes involved adding a little wine with the water for stomach ailments.

Sometimes language implies an “only” for a proper understanding of a term. This is one of such statements. Please note the following translations of 1 Tim. 5:23.

NKJV: “No longer drink water **only**, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities.” NASB: “No longer drink water **exclusively**, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” MLV (Modern Literal Version): “No longer be a drinker of water **only**, but use a small amount of wine because of your stomach and your frequent infirmities.” **So, this takes care of the only legitimate use of wine for human consumption—for medical purposes if necessary.**

Our next writing will be an examination of three matters from the New Testament where some argue that moderate drinking is justified.

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