

“WINE” IN THE NEW TESTAMENT” #3

Before getting into the heart of this article, there are some additional thoughts that need to be added to article number 2, regarding “wine” in the Lord’s Supper in the church at Corinth.

“**The Lord’s Supper...his own supper**” (1 Cor. 11:20, 21). Keep in mind that two (2) “suppers” are involved. Be careful to make the distinction. The word “drunken” (meaning filled) is used in connection with the second supper, which was to be done in their houses as they were “to eat and to drink in.”

“**To eat and to drink**” (1 Cor. 11:22). This expression is normally used in the Bible to refer to a common meal. When the element of drinking is mentioned, it is usually named as “water”. Read Gen. 24:54; Exo. 32:6, 28; Deut. 9:28; Judges 9:27; 19:4; Ruth 2:9; 3:7; 1 Kings 18:41; 18:42; 19:6, 8; 2 Kings 6:22, 23; 1 Chron. 9:22; and Acts 10:41. In Ruth 2:9, Boaz told Ruth “When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants” were to draw.” Naomi later told Ruth to see a man “eating and drinking” (3:3). She saw where Boaz “had eaten and drunk” (3:7). He had been eating and drinking, and when finished it is said he “had eaten and drunk”, an instance where the idea is that of being **filled**, not **intoxicated**, the same as in 1 Cor. 11. Note also that what was to be drunk was “water.” Had the Professor been there, he might have said, When you are thirsty, get you some wine to drink.”

Now, in this article, we shall give attention to the word “wine” in the epistles of the New Testament, wherein claims are made by some today to justify social or moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages. The “Professor” of previous articles agreed with me on the matter of “much wine”, that **does** refer to intoxication. So, this article does not deal so much with the Professor’s claims, but to other brethren who stumble around with these verses. Bear in mind that the Greek word oinos means either “juice of the grape” or intoxicating wine. The context helps us determine which it may be in a given situation.

First, the matter of “much wine.” The term is used twice in the New Testament. In 1 Tim. 3:8 with reference to “deacons,” and in Tit. 2:3 with reference to “aged women”, and my Professor agrees that the “much” here alludes to a state of intoxication. Yet, many argue that the “much” implies that a “little” (moderate drinking) is acceptable. The **only** time a “little wine” is used in the New Testament is in 1 Tim. 5:23, where obviously it is used medicinally (for Timothy’s “stomach sake.”) So, a “little” wine (medicinally) when contrasted with “much” wine does not give strength to “little wine” or any other kind of alcoholic beverages being used a “little”, as long as one doesn’t get intoxicated. I recall in the 1930’s where a physician prescribed a little (1 teaspoon a day) of whiskey, with one drop of strychnine, (a poison) to help a young boy survive asthma. Anything more than that would have been fatal.

In 1 Tim. 4:14, Paul said Alexander the coppersmith did him “much evil.” Does that mean that Alexander could have been justified in just doing a “little evil?” The meaning is that Alexander did **“a lot”** of evil, and not just a little bit of evil. The nature of his conduct was “evil”, and it was not just a little, but a lot of it. Bear in mind, that elders are “not given to wine” (1 Tim. 3:2), as men who lead and set an example, **why** would deacons and aged

women be allowed to depart from the good example of elders, if they are allowed to drink moderately? Why even **have** an example if they are allowed to **not follow it?** Truly, a “little wine” (the one time the term is used) is found with reference to a medical situation, and nothing more, so when we use the term, we must use it as the scripture does, for medical purposes. Anything more than that (much wine) is forbidden. Peter says we are to “abstain” (avoid entirely) those things that “war against the soul.” (1 Pet. 2:11).

Second, the matter of “excess of wine.” Paul wrote, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18). Some argue that this means just don’t drink to excess, or too much, or to intoxication. Paul did not say “Do not drink to excess”, or too much, but just drink moderately. Paul said “be not drunk with wine,” so anytime one drinks any amount (2 or 3 drinks), he **is** affected by it, or is intoxicated to some degree. Obviously, the word “wine” here is indeed use to refer to more than grape juice. Paul said (following the prohibition), “wherein **is** excess,” not **to** excess. The word “drunk” in this passage is from the Greek *methusko*, which means, “to make drunk, or to grow drunk, an inceptive verb, making the process or the state...to become intoxicated.” Alcohol is a poison (not a food product to be digested) and goes immediately into the blood stream, affecting the brain and emotional part of man. Just as Cocaine is a poison, so is alcohol. It is a sin to destroy the human body or mind of man. Christians are to not defile the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

The word “excess” is from the Greek word *asotia*. A form of it is used in Matt. 23:25, where Jesus used it describing the corruption of hypocrites. The passage reads, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.*” Both “extortion” and “excess” are **things** that filled up their cup. A form of the word *asotia* is used in Luke 15:13 where the prodigal son wasted his substance in “riotous” living. Does it mean that he engaged in just “too much” riot, or just a little riotous living? It was not a matter of **degree**, but a matter of the kind of conduct in which he engaged. In 1 Pet. 4:4, Peter spoke of “excess of riot.” Does that mean that they just engaged in “too much” riotous conduct, and should just keep on rioting, but not too much of it? In Tit. 1:6, the elders’ children are not be accused of “riot”. Does that mean there is a degree of riot that is too much, or is it okay if they engaged in a little riot, for instance at night, but not in the day time because that would be “excessive?” Obviously, the word “excess” describes the **nature** of something evil, and not a degree of something, right within itself, but sinful if done too much.

Woe to those who put “excess” (just too much of something good) in their cup of justification in order to justify the pleasurable use of any kind of alcoholic drink? Our next article will be the condemnation of alcoholic drink on the basis of the kind of “fruit’ that it bears.

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