

# “BOOZE AND THE BIBLE”

Notes

From Pastor Chambers’ Teaching

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## Booze & the Bible

Matt. 26:27-29

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Was the fruit of the vine intoxicating wine or was it grape juice? Notice that Jesus said, "this is my blood of the New Testament". Notice also the phrase, "this fruit of the vine". The blood is the life giving substance of the human body. Truly, the life of the flesh is in the blood.

Lev. 17:11 The blood carries not only life giving oxygen to every cell in the body, it also brings all the life sustaining nutrients, etc. and further, it removes the waste products from the cells.

The fruit of the vine (or grape juice) is one of nature's richest sources of vitamins and minerals essential to the growth and maintaining of vital health. On the other hand, the process of fermentation or rotting and decaying actually destroys the vital elements God created for the health and benefit of mankind. The general content of grapes is 2.8 percent albumen, 83.7 percent carbohydrates, 1.1 percent acids and extractives, and 2.3 percent mineral salts.

Fermentation destroys 98.5 percent of the albumen, 98 percent of the carbohydrates, 47 percent of the acids and extractives, and 76 percent of the mineral salts. The life is gone. As long as the skin of the grape remains unbroken, as God created and intended it for man's healthful benefit, it is not intoxicating. However, if the skin of the grape is broken, the yeast or bacteria cells which give the grape a white dust like coating can enter the food created by God and set up their process of fermentation or decay. Alcoholic beverages are but the outcome of decay and rotting of fruit, grain or vegetable God created.

Nothing good in the Bible ever came from anyone drinking strong drink. Noah got drunk and naked and his son came under a curse. Lot got drunk and committed incest with his two daughters. Israel was drinking when they worshipped a golden calf at the base of the mountain. David tried to cover up adultery by making the husband drunk. Belshazzar was drinking out of the temple vessels when God overthrew his kingdom in one night.

Out of the 627 references in the Bible to drinking alcohol only 3 times is there any question, all other references are warnings against its use. More is said in the Bible about drinking alcohol than adultery, lying, cheating, idolatry, and blasphemy. *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise."* Prov.20:1 *"Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Don't let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you. For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like a viper. You will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they bet me up. When will I wake up so I can have another drink?"* Prov. 23: 29-

*“Indeed, because he transgresses by wine, He is a proud man. And he does not stay at home. Because he enlarges his desire as hell. And he is like death, and cannot be satisfied.” Hab.2:5 “How terrible it will be for you who make your neighbors drunk! You force your cup on them so that you can gloat over their nakedness and shame. But soon it will be your turn! Come, drink and be exposed! Drink from the cup of the Lord’s judgment, and all your glory will be turned to shame. Hab. 2:1517*

From the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day, most theologians, scholars, and commentaries, almost all agree that the scripture meant intoxicating wine when it refers to wine. However, their theory tends to lie in the fact that they try to prove that there was no refrigeration and because of that, the grape juice could not have been preserved. Such a claim is but to display their ignorance of the laws of fermentation. Ancient history has many references from Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Plutarch, and others who point out that there are several ways by which grape juice or any fruit juice could be kept in an unfermented state for upwards of 200 years: Boiling- by boiling, the water is evaporated leaving a thick syrupy liquid which would not ferment. Dr. Casper Newman, Professor of Chemistry, Berlin, 1759 said, “It is observable that when sweet juices are boiled down to a thick consistency, they not only do not ferment in this state, but are not easily brought into fermentation when diluted with as much water as they had lost in the evaporation. The ancient’s mixed their wine with water before serving. Aristotle 384 to 322 B.C. The great philosopher writing about Arcadian Wines said, “The wine of Arcadia was so thick, it was necessary to scrape it from the skin bottles in which it was contained and dissolve the scrapings in water.” Pliny 23 to 79 A.D. The roman scholar mentioned that the celebrated Opimian Wine had the consistency of honey after 2 centuries of preservation and storage.

The Great authority on agriculture in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Columella wrote, “Take fresh grape juice, put it in a new container, cover it up very carefully with pitch, then sink it in a cistern or pond of cold water and allow no part to remain above the surface. It will remain sweet for 1 year. (This is out of book 12, Chapter 20)

The following 6 facts support the conclusion that the juice of the vine was unfermented for the Lord’s Supper.

1. Unfermented wine is the only true “fruit” of the vine. Fermented wine is an altered condition of the juice.
2. The Lord’s Supper was instituted at Passover time. The Passover law in Ex. 12:14-20 forbade the use of anything fermented during the Passover week and during the Supper.
3. Jesus, as the bread represented the Body of Christ and thus had to be unleavened i.e. uncorrupted with fermentation. The fruit of the vine which represented the incorruptible blood of Christ would have best been represented by juice which was unfermented. Scripture states that the process of corruption was not allowed to work in either the body or blood of Christ. Psalms 16:10, Acts 2:27. And is therefore properly symbolized by that which is not fermented.

4. In the Old Testament, fermented wine and strong drinks were never used in the house of God. Lev. 10:9-11
5. Paul instructed the Corinthians to put away spiritual leaven, i.e. the fermenting agent of malice and wickedness, while partaking of the Lord's Supper. I Cor. 5:6-8
6. In Prov. 23:29-35, God prohibited the use of wine that had been fermented. Christ would never have sanctioned what God had previously condemned.

Before we go further in this study of wine and the Bible, I think it would be good for us to look at the names for wine in both the Old and New Testaments and to get a definition of them. Then, we will go on to other problem passages, especially in the New Testament.

There are basically 3 words for wine in the Old Testament. The 1<sup>st</sup> is "Yayin." It is found 141 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a generic word and stands for the juice of the grape whether fermented or unfermented. This is where the chief problem comes in and is the main source for all the confusion regarding the Bible wine question. If the word "yayin" always stood for one specific type of juice of the grape, there would be no question regarding the translation, but such is not the case. Note the following text which are but a few which show the different connotation placed on the word "yayin": sometimes having divine favor and other times, disfavor. Gen. 9:21 "Noah drank of the wine, and was drunken." I Sam. 1:14 "How long Wilt thou be drunken? Put away they wine."

Isaiah 5:11 "Woe to them that continue til wine inflame them!"

I. Sam. 1:24 "Hannah took Samuel and a bottle of wine to Shiloh."

II. Sam. 16:2 "Wine for such as be faint in the wilderness." The only reasonable explanation of this, seeming inconsistency is that the word "yayin" is a general term used for all kinds of beverages produced from the vine whether fermented or unfermented. When the writers of the scriptures, seek to make a distinction that the grape juice is either intoxicating (fermented), or non-intoxicating (unfermented), they usually resort to two other Hebrew words. The 2<sup>nd</sup> word is "Tirosh." It is used for unfermented wine. "Tirosh" is used 38 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is never the cause nor is it associated with drunkenness. Its use is never prohibited, but always commended. It is constantly associated with wheat, corn and oil. I will give 4 places where this word is found:

Gen. 27:28 "Therefore give thee plenty of corn and wine."

Num. 18:12 "The best of the oil and the wine and the wheat." Deut. 18:4 "Give the first fruits of thy corn, of thine wine, and of thine oil."

Hosea 2:22 "Earth shall bear the corn, the wine, and the oil." These scriptures point out that "Yayin" and "Tirosh" are not the same although both are from the same source "grapes." The 3<sup>rd</sup> word is "Shakar." It refers to the liquid or juice from dates and other fruits. The word "shakar" is found 42 times in the Hebrew Bible. 23 times as a noun, 19 times as a verb form. "Shakar" is usually translated "strong drink" and nowhere in the Bible does this word enjoy divine approval as a name of a beverage. The following texts confirm this:

Lev. 10:9 “Drink not wine nor strong drink.” Note this, that whenever in scripture, this expression “wine and strong drink” is found, the Hebrew terms are invariably “yayin” and “shakar.” Judges 13:14 “Neither let her drink wine nor strong drink.”

Isaiah 5:22 “Woe unto me of strength to mingle strong drink.”

Micah 2:11 “Lying Spirit prophesy wine and strong drink.”

Prov. 20:1 “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging.”

Judges 13:7 “Drink no wine nor strong drink.” Isa. 5:11 “Woe to them that follow strong drink.”

Now to take these 3 words and bring them over into the New Testament setting. The Greek language has no specific word for unfermented wine. Therefore, the word “oinos” is used, which includes everything in the nature of a beverage from the vine.

Matt. 9:17- “Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.” To correctly understand the purpose of Jesus’ analogy, six facts must be kept in mind: 1. The “new wine” i.e. fresh unfermented grape juice represents the original saving message of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit that it thrusts forth. 2. Jesus’ overriding concern was that the original Gospel and redemptive power of the Holy Spirit “be preserved” from all change, corruption, or loss. It was to be kept pure, intact, and unimpaired. 3. The above interpretation is supported by Jesus’ concern that the “new wine” and the fresh wine skins both be preserved. 4. Fermentation is the opposite of the preservation that Jesus was seeking for the new wine of the Gospel. Fermentation results in the new wine losing its sweetness and energy (its life giving sustenance), and changing into life destroying alcohol. 5. In ancient times, fresh wine skins, free from all residual fermenting matter, were used for the purpose of preserving the new wine (fresh grape juice), in its sweet taste as long as possible. If placed in old wine skins, new wine would immediately begin to ferment. The subsequent fermentation would then cause the loss of both the new unfermented wine and the wine skins which would burst from pressure. Jesus’ foremost concern that the “new wine”, the gospel, not become altered by the leaven “the teachings” of the Pharisees “leaven” being a fermenting agent. 6. With regards to fresh wine skins, Jesus recommended that they be used for new wine “fresh grape juice” because A. The new skins would not activate quick fermentation since they would be free from old fermenting yeast cells. B. The unfermented juice would be preserved in its original state for an adequate period of time; and C. The new wine skins themselves would be preserved.

John 2:10- “And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” Jesus made wine out of water and the translation of the word, of course, is “oinos”. Was the “oinos” He created intoxicating or non-intoxicating? The following facts should be looked at when asking this question. 1. Jesus, perfect obedience to his heavenly father’s command. Prov. 23:31 “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup.” Also, Habakkuk 2:15 “Woe to you who make your neighbors drink.” i.e. intoxicating beverages. 2. The Jewish custom in ancient Palestine of boiling grape juice to syrup and later adding water, when desiring a beverage. 3. If Jesus had made and served fully fermented wine, he would have consented to a

lower standard than the Jewish Rabbis, who, because of the fermented wine, would have refused to bless the festivities. 4. “The best wine” according to the Roman writer, Pliny, was not an alcoholic wine, but grape juice boiled to 1/3 its bulk to increase its sweet flavor. To the Jews, “the best wine”, was the sweetest wine, on that could be drunk freely in large quantities without harm, not wine that had its sugar content destroyed through fermentation. The poorer wine was that which had been diluted with much water. 5. Current medical experts on human birth defects have found unmistakable evidence that moderate alcohol consumption is damaging to the reproductive system of a child bearing woman, causing miscarriages and the birth of babies with incurable mental and physical defects. In the light of this evidence, it would be theologically impossible to maintain that Christ served and encouraged the use of alcoholic beverages at a wedding where the bride would soon have the possibility of conception.

In 1969, the mystery of how alcohol deprives the brain of oxygen, was solved by Prof. Melvin Knisely at the Medical University of South Carolina. Dr Knisely is recognized throughout the scientific world as one of the outstanding experts in the study of blood, and particularly in regard to the subject blood sludging or agglutination. This eminent research scientist is very positive in his documentation. He concludes that even one drink kills brain cells. Under questioning, he further disclosed that a pregnant mother who sips beer, wine, or cocktails is placing in her body the toxic drug that can by the process of agglutination destroy brain cells within the embryo or fetus she carries.

Let us consider I Tim. 5:23 where Paul recommends to Timothy to “drink a little wine for the stomachs sake.” Was it fermented or intoxicating wine which commentators say that Paul suggested for Timothy’s ulcers? Hardly, for alcohol would only irritate the condition, while on the other hand, unfermented grape juice is one of the richest sources of vitamins and minerals and very beneficial to many gastric and intestinal problems. Timothy had stomach problems probably due to the alkali in the water at Ephesus. Wine for the stomach, or stomach wine, according to writers of the old Greek medicines prepared as thick unfermented syrup or jam made by boiling of the grape juice. It was not an intoxicant. If it was fermented, the wine would only further irritate a sensitive stomach. In fact, alcohol is a depressant chemically related to ether. The only reason it has an initial stimulating effect, is because it irritates the lining of the stomach.

In the late 1800’s, the Welch C. found a preservative that would keep wine from fermenting and they bottled it as Welch’s Wine. Six years later the Federal Gov. stepped in because of the “liquor lobby” and made them rename it grape juice for wine that wouldn’t ferment.

Conclusion: While we cannot go into all ramifications or scriptures concerning wine in the Bible and intoxicating beverages, surely we have covered a broad area and hopefully given you principles that you can apply to any particular passage whatsoever.