

The Bible makes it clear that God wants people to enjoy food and drink.

For example, Ecclesiastes 9:7 says, “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.”

God is not a cosmic killjoy nor a heavenly Scrooge, for He gives “us richly all things to enjoy;” (1 Tim. 6:17). But does this mean that Christians can drink alcoholic beverages for enjoyment? Precisely what does the Bible say about the use of wine and the drinking of wine today?

What the Bible teaches on Wine or Alcohol Drinking

I. Drunkenness is a Sin

1. Deu 21:20-21 “a glutton, a drunkard... stone him, that he die...”
2. Although the Old Testament was a system of Law – we are now under God’s Grace.
3. BUT even in both the Old Testament and the New Testament GOD hates drunkenness and expects Christians to stay away from it and a person who claims to be a Christian but gets drunk
 - (1) 1 Corinthians 5:11 “...not to keep company, [with] a drunkard”.
 - (2) Ephesians 5:18 “do not get drunk with wine”
 - (3) And in Galatians 5:19-21 - drunkenness is a deed of the flesh

II. Strong drink is deceptive and sinful

1. Leviticus 10:8-9 priests are ordered to avoid strong drink
2. Proverbs 20:1, Alcohol is a “... mocker, ...raging: [it] is not wise.”
3. Isaiah 5:11 “Woe to those who rise early... to pursue strong drink”
4. God is opposed to using strong drink as a beverage
 - (1) Some in the world will say Dueteronomy 14:26, allows it
⇒*No! for 3 reasons:*
⇒The Old Testament clearly condemns drinking Strong drinks,
⇒The verse does not say they should drink it but buy it, &
⇒strong drink was used for medicinal purposes (See Below)

III. Drinking in excess is wrong

1. Amos 6:1,6 “woe to you who are complacent... drinking wine by bowlful”
 - (1) Drinking in excess results in a slowing of the thinking processes (Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 28:7; Hos. 4:11), a stupor (Jer. 25:27; 51:39), sickness (Isa. 19:14; 28:7-8; Jer. 48:26), staggering (loss of balance and mental control) (Job 12:25; Isa. 28:7-8; 29:9), arrogance (Hab. 2:5), forgetfulness (Prov. 31:6-7),

confusion and delirious dreams (Prov. 23:31, 33), sleepiness (Gen. 9:20-24; 19:33), lack of feeling (Prov. 23:31, 35), bloodshot eyes (Prov. 23:29-30), and poverty (Prov. 23:20-21).

IV. Wine was used as a medicine

1. In the Bible, alcoholic beverages were recommended for medicinal purposes.
2. Paul told Timothy to use a little wine because of an illnesses (1 Tim. 5:23).
3. Wine is medicinal as a
 - (1) Antiseptic - The antiseptic quality of wine has long been known.
⇒Today we have triple antibiotic
 - (2) Anesthetic - The anesthetic qualities of wine and spirits were also known. Before an operation the patient would be made quite drunk so that the pain of amputating a limb, for example, could be endured.
⇒Today we have anesthesiologists
 - (3) Healing - The beneficial qualities of various flower, vegetable and other wines of the biblical and early church era were beneficial. Celery, Fig, Elderberry, and Dandelion wine helped many suffering from various ailments.
⇒Today we have pharmaceuticals
4. The Good Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds of the man who had been beaten by thieves (Luke 10:34).
 - (1) Today we have Emergency Rooms, Doctors, and other Health Care providers that can administer better forms of medicine.

What the Bible Does Not Teach about Alcohol

I. The bible does not teach that NT communion wine was unfermented

1. All wine was fermented wine; even "new wine" was fermented wine
 - (1) Some Corinthians were drunk at the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:21).
⇒Because of drunkenness, God was bringing sickness to some Christians and some of them were dying.
⇒Drunkenness at the Lord's Supper was such an abuse that God took the lives of some of the saints in Corinth (11:30). – that’s why we don’t use fermented wine for Communion!
⇒If they were drunk at communion, then the wine must have been fermented. This seems to be the most reasonable conclusion to draw from this passage.

II. The bible does not teach that new wine was unfermented

1. Some have held that old wine is fermented but that "new wine" was always unfermented. Two passages clearly oppose this theory.

(1) Hosea 4:11 says both "old wine" and "new wine" takes away understanding.

⇒So even "new wine" can cause drunkenness.

(2) Acts 2:13 on the day of Pentecost when the people were filled with the Holy Spirit, the crowd said, "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2:13).

(3) So new wine in the Bible was just as fermented as old wine.

III. It is false to say that Jesus made unfermented wine

1. As a matter of fact, He made wine that tasted so good the people at the wedding feast in Cana said it was better than the wine they had just drunk.
2. Surely they would not have said this if it had tasted flat to them.
3. In John 2:9-10 it is called "wine" (οἶνος) and "good wine" (καλὸν οἶνον).
4. These are the same Greek words used for fermented wine elsewhere in the New Testament, (cf. Mark 2:22; Eph. 5:18).

IV. It is incorrect to say that the New Testament teaches that first-century Christians were not to use wine at any time

1. That is not what the New Testament says, and in all honesty to the Scriptures, one should say PRECISELY what the Scriptures teach on this topic.
2. No verse states that Christians AT THAT TIME should abstain from all wine at all times.
3. The exhortations were against STRONG DRINK and much wine.

Is Wine Today like New Testament Wine?

I. Many wine-drinking Christians today assume that what the New Testament meant by wine is identical to wine used today.

1. This is false! Today's wine is by biblical definitions "STRONG DRINK," and hence is forbidden in the Bible!
2. What the Bible frequently meant by wine was basically PURIFIED WATER.
3. Robert Stein
 - (1) an associate professor of New Testament at Bethel College, St. Paul, Minnesota (B.D. from Fuller Seminary, S.T.M. from Andover Newton Theological School, and Ph.D. from Princeton Seminary - pretty smart fella),
⇒wine in Homer's day was twenty parts water and one part wine (Odyssey 9.208-9).
4. Gaius Plinius Secundus (23 CE – August 25, 79),
 - (1) Pliny referred to wine as eight parts water and one part wine (written in his Natural History 14.6.54).
5. Aristophanes (ca. 446 – ca. 386 BC)
 - (1) According to Aristophanes, wine was stronger: three parts water and two parts wine.

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- (2) Other classical Greek writers spoke of other mixtures:
 ⇒Euenos — three parts water, one part wine; Hesiod — three to one, water to wine; Alexis — four to one; Diodes and Anacreon — two to one; and Ion — three to one.

6. So, the average Biblical Wine was about three or four parts of water to one part of wine. And if that were the mixture today, it would be only 1.75% Alcohol, or 3.5 proof! Not worth drinking to most folks!

II. Stein also observes that "in several instances in the Old Testament a distinction is made between 'wine' and 'strong drink'" (e.g., Lev. 10:8-9).

1. Strong drink is one thing, wine is another thing.
 - (1) The same distinction is made in Deuteronomy 14:26; 29:6; Judges 13:4; and elsewhere. According to the Jewish Talmud (Jewish Holy Texts of History and Law) the "wine" used in the Passover mead was three parts water and one part wine.
2. It may also be that the wine Jesus miraculously provided at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11) was a similar drink, that is, wine mixed with water.
 - (1) The word οἶνος ("wine") refers sometimes to fermented grape juice (e.g., Eph. 5:18) and sometimes to fresh, not fully fermented grape juice (e.g., Rev. 19:15).
3. Furthermore, in ancient times, not many beverages were safe to drink.
 - (1) Stein indicates that in the ancient world water could be made safe in one of several ways.
 - ⇒It could be boiled, but this was tedious and costly. Or
 - ⇒it could be filtered, but this was not a safe method. Or
 - ⇒some wine could be put in the water to kill the germs — one part wine with three or four parts water.
 - (2) Though the Bible approved of wine-drinking,
 - ⇒one needs to remember that the alcoholic content was much less than that of wine today.
4. What is used today is not the wine of the New Testament!
 - (1) Therefore Christians ought not drink wine, beer, or other alcoholic beverages for they are actually "strong drink" and are forbidden in Scripture.

Why Christians Need Not Drink Wine

I. Several reasons may be offered as to why Christians ought to refrain from wine-drinking.

1. First, people in the United States have plenty of wholesome, nonaddictive beverages.
 - (1) The situation today is unlike biblical times when there were not many wholesome beverages.
 - (2) People often did not have good water available; it was often polluted.

- (3) Travelers today know that in many foreign countries pure drinking water is difficult to obtain.
- (4) In many foreign places, travelers become sick from drinking the water. This is similar to biblical times.
 - ⇒Thus it is wrong to argue that since people in Bible times drank wine, Christians today can do the same.
- (5) Properly speaking, people then drank purified water.
 - ⇒It was not an unsafe liquor; it was a safe liquid. But in America purifying water with wine is unnecessary, and plenty of nonaddictive beverages are available.

2. Second, America is an alcoholic culture, but the New Testament culture was not.
 - (1) Ten million Americans are alcoholics, with more than three million of them teenagers.
 - (2) In New Testament times, there were comparatively few drunks, and
 - (3) alcohol was not a problem in their culture to the extent it is in this nation.
3. The main reason people drink wine is that it provides relaxation and enjoyment.
 - (1) Does abstinence, then, suggest that God is a cosmic killjoy? Is He against peace and enjoyment?
 - (2) By no means. However, He wants people to have genuine peace and real joy — the peace of God and the joy of Christ.
 - (3) In this regard, the Bible says Eph 5:18 "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"
 - (4) God wants Christians to have peace without going to pieces.
 - ⇒David said, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. 16:11).
 - (5) It is a shameful testimony for a believer in Christ to resort to alcohol in order to relax, when the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7) is available to him.
 - (6) And it is an insult to the Holy Spirit for Christians to seek the superficial pleasure of stimulants when they can have the permanent joy of the Holy Spirit.
4. God wants people to eat and drink with joy, but without jeopardy.
 - (1) He desires that man's pleasures be Spirit-directed, not self-centered; that they be helpful, but not harmful.

II. But what does the Bible say about drinking moderate amounts of alcohol?

- (1) First Corinthians 6:12 lays down a principle for borderline, questionable areas such as this.
- (2) Even if it is lawful, if it takes power over you, it is a SIN
 - ⇒This also applies to other things of addiction.

