

Is Drinking a SIN?

by Roderick C. Meredith

JESUS CHRIST set us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Peter 2:21). "Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). Jesus has *not changed!* He would still be living the *same* kind of life if He were to come in the flesh today as He did live 1900 years ago.

Now notice His *example* in John 2:1-11. Here is the account of how Jesus turned water into *wine*. If you will look up the meaning of the word "firkin" (verse 6), you will see that this amounted to many gallons of wine!

The account is very clear. It simply shows that — according to Jewish custom — they were having real *wine* at the wedding feast, and ran out. Jesus helped them out, for it was a time of rejoicing, and there were probably several hundred people there.

So He turned the water into *wine* — and it was real, *fermented wine*. They would NEVER have said to the bridegroom, "Thou hast kept the *good wine* until now" — if Jesus had provided only *grape juice*, which they would have regarded as an inferior beverage for this occasion.

Also, the original Greek word used here is *oinos*, and it *always* means the *fermented* juice of the grape — nothing else.

Jesus was here only carrying out the principle He gave through Solomon: "A feast is made for laughter, and *wine* maketh merry" (Eccl. 10:19). If properly used, wine is an aid to relaxation and affability at a special occasion.

But being "merry" is NOT being "tight" or "drunk" — which God's Word condemns (I Cor. 6:10).

Prohibitionists object, saying, "But how do you know that the original Hebrew and Greek words mean *fermented* wine? Historians say the wine used was nothing more than molasses — that this grape drink was non-intoxicating and the ordinary drink of people in Christ's time."

Here is the truth about this false idea!

There are thirteen original Hebrew and Greek words translated "wine" in our English Bible. How can we know which ones mean fermented wine? To find the answer, do not go to Aristotle or Pliny, but go to the *Bible itself*. By comparing its usage, the Scriptural meaning of *wine* can be defined.

One of the original Hebrew words for wine is *yayin*. This word is first used in Genesis 9:21 where Noah "drank of the wine and was *drunken*." This wine caused *drunkenness!* Was it just grape juice or was it molasses?

In the New Testament, one original Greek word translated "wine" is *oinos*. Proof that it is *alcoholic* is given in the story of the good Samaritan. The Samaritan poured oil and *wine* on the man's wounds (Luke 10:34), showing that the wine had enough alcoholic content to be used as an antiseptic. Would you pour grape juice or molasses on a wound?

The Greek word *oinos* is also used in John 2 where Jesus turned water into wine by a miracle. This Greek word is also used in Ephesians 5:18, "And *be not drunk* with wine, wherein is excess."

Paul instructed Timothy about the medicinal and health value of wine when he wrote: "Drink no longer water, but use a *little wine* for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities" (I Tim. 5:23).

Again, the Greek word is *oinos* — *fermented wine*, not grape juice!

There are many, many examples in the Old Testament where God's servants used *wine* in a proper way and with God's blessing. Perhaps the most significant one is given in Genesis 14:18. Here we read of Melchizedek — whom we have *proved* in our free article, "The Mystery of Melchizedek Solved!" to be none other than *Christ* — "brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God." This seems to be a type of the observance

later called the Passover — which many mistakenly call the "Lord's Supper" today.

God Himself here gave *wine* to Abraham — *the father of the faithful*. And again, the original Hebrew word used *proves* that it was *fermented* wine — NOT grape juice. The original word is *yayin* — and *always* means *fermented* wine.

This same Hebrew word is used in Amos 9:14 to show that when Christ frees our people from captivity after His return and brings them to the land of Palestine, they will "plant vineyards, and drink the *wine* thereof."

So Christ — who is the *same* always — is going to *bless* His people with good food and *wine* in the millennial rule!

In ancient times it was impossible to preserve grape juice. Except for a short season the "fruit of the vine" was either made into a thick molasses or into wine. Check *Hastings' Bible Dictionary* for the full proof.

Some are confused by certain texts which *appear* to condemn wine, but in reality condemn only the wrong USE of alcohol.

One of these is Proverbs 20:1: "Wine is a *mock*, strong drink is *raging*; and whosoever is *deceived* thereby is not wise."

The simple explanation is that wine certainly does *mock* and *deceive* many individuals who have not learned the proper, temperate USE of such beverages. Yes, God's way is *moderation* and *temperance* — NOT prohibition! And there is a *great difference* between these, which so-called "temperance" people seem unable to recognize.

Another text which is often misunderstood is Proverbs 23:29-32. Here is a warning to those who "tarry long" at wine. Of course! One who "*tarrys long*" at wine is a "winebibber," or in modern terminology a "barfly" or an "alcoholic."

Such *excessive use* of wine is bound

to bring harm on the person involved and on others. Therefore, it is breaking the spirit of God's Law and is SIN. But this is *no condemnation* WHATEVER against the moderate, sensible use of wine, following Jesus' example.

The latter part of this passage warns us not to "look" upon the wine when it is "red," when it "moveth itself aright."

In the *first* place, it is not a sin to LOOK on *anything* except in *lust*. *Secondly*, the terms "red" and "moveth itself" refer to wine when it is in the *process of fermentation*. This is BEFORE it is fully fermented. And if at this time you "look" on it so as to finally *drink*

it, you will become violently ill and possibly even DIE!

Even today, the term "red" is often applied to wine which is in the midst of the process of fermentation. Again, this has NOTHING to do with the proper use of fully aged wine.

There are many other texts which *some* people will want to argue about. But the *principle* should be clear to any honest person from the examples we have covered.

Drunkenness and *alcoholism* are breaking God's Law and are therefore SIN — which leads to *death!* (Rom. 6:23.) No *drunkard* shall inherit God's kingdom (Gal. 5:21).

But on the other hand, wine has been given as a *blessing* from God. It can help one *relax* at a meal or *rejoice* at a social occasion, and it can be a definite aid in building up one's blood and health — as Paul advised Timothy. It is a thing which *glorifies* God when it is used *sensibly* and *moderately*.

Incidentally, true *moderation* means drinking a great deal LESS than do many who call themselves "moderate drinkers" today. Overindulgence in drink is NOT to be tampered with! *Alcoholism* is a growing CURSE in our land today! For further information about this increasing problem, request our *free* reprint "Alcoholism — A Worldwide Curse!" □