
Difficult Scriptures

I. Scripture: Proverbs 23:19-31

II. How This Verse Is Misused By Some

These verses are quoted by those who believe it is wrong to drink alcoholic beverages. They say this passage proves it is wrong to drink wine, and, by extension, any drink containing alcohol.

III. True Explanation

- A. This scripture does not say it is wrong to drink wine. It does say we should not tarry long at the wine (verse 30). One who tarries long at wine becomes a winebibber, or, in plain English, a drunkard, and no drunkard will inherit God's Kingdom (Galatians 5:21).
- B. Verse 31 says not to look upon the wine "when it is red...when it moveth itself aright." The terms red and moveth itself refer to wine when it is in the process of fermentation. This is before the wine is fully fermented. If at this time you "look on it" so as to finally drink it, you will become sick and possibly even die. In fact, instances are recorded of winery workers becoming asphyxiated by merely leaning over the wine vats "looking on" the fermenting wine and being overcome by the poisonous gases, then falling into the vats and drowning.
- C. God's Word shows it is perfectly all right to drink wine in moderation. The first miracle Jesus performed was to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11). The Greek word translated wine in John 2:1-11 is oinos. It means fermented wine. The apostle Paul even advised Timothy to drink some wine for his stomach problems (I Timothy 5:23).
- D. God gave us wine and alcoholic beverages so we may learn to use them properly. We develop character by properly exercising wisdom and self-control with them. The proper use of alcohol is a great responsibility, but it is only the wrong use of it that is sin.

