

Intoxicating Beverages Recommended

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Intoxicating Beverages Recommended (Ps. 104:15; Prov. 31:6-7; 1Tim. 5:23).

Intoxicating Beverages Discouraged (Prov. 20:1; 23:31-32).

Intoxicating beverages are listed among many things that Almighty God created for the benefit of mankind,

He (Almighty God) causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, ¹⁵ **And wine that makes glad the heart of man**, oil to make his face shine, and bread that strengthens man's heart (Ps. 104:14-15; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Contrary to what some people claim, the context of Proverbs 31:1-7 is not a recommendation from God. Instead, it is a commentary from King Lemuel's mother who gave her son advice regarding his responsibilities. She admonished him not to drink for the wrong reasons, which would include drinking for the sole purpose of becoming drunk as opposed to having what we might refer to as "a social drink,"

It is not for kings (i.e. those with responsibility for the welfare of others), O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; ⁵ **Lest they drink and forget the law** (of God), and pervert the justice of all the afflicted (Prov. 31:4-5; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

It should be obvious that if a king in ancient Israel drank in excess, there is a high likelihood he would eventually forget about God's law and this was the crux of Lemuel's mother's advice. In her opinion, others may drink for various reasons but she wanted her son to err on the side of caution (Prov. 31:6-7).

King Solomon reaffirmed that rulers are not to drink for the sake of becoming drunk and out of control. If they do, the inhabitants of the land will suffer in one way or another,

Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your **princes feast at the proper time** – for strength and not for drunkenness! (Eccl. 10:17; emphasis added).

The rulers feasting and drinking at the proper time is a reference to celebrating on God's annual Holy Days,

You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. ²³ And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, **the**

tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always (Dt. 14:22-23; emphasis added).

And you shall spend that money (tithe converted to cash; cf. Dt. 14:24-25) for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, **for wine** (Heb. yayin; wine; banqueting) **or similar drink** (Heb. shikar; strong drink; intoxicating liquor) (Dt. 14:26a; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

When on duty in God's Temple, the Levitical priests were not to drink any intoxicating liquor,

Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: ⁹ **Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink**, you, nor your sons with you, **when you go into the tabernacle of meeting**, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations (Lev. 10:8-9; emphasis added).

If God prohibited alcohol altogether, He would **not** have made a distinction regarding consuming wine in the tabernacle. Instead, God would have omitted mentioning the tabernacle and stated that alcoholic beverages were banned completely at all times, and in all locations.

However, God's instruction regarding the consumption of alcoholic beverages does not include overindulgence,

Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow (pursue) **intoxicating drink**; who continue until night, till wine inflames them! (Isa. 5:11; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

It is important to note that the apostle Paul differentiated between having a social drink and becoming drunk when he addressed health problems that Timothy was experiencing,

No longer drink only water, but **use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities** (illnesses) (1Tim. 5:23; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

It is possible that Timothy suffered from peptic ulcers or gastric ulcers which are sores on the lining of the stomach. Peptic ulcer disease is a common condition resulting from an acid-pepsin imbalance. The bacteria *Helicobacter pylori*, also known as *H. pylori*, is said to be a predisposing factor for a peptic ulcer. A moderate amount of red wine decreases the development of peptic ulcer disease. One study showed that individuals who have one glass of wine per day have seven percent fewer *H. pylori* bacteria than non-wine drinkers. Most bacteria and virus harmful to the human body are inhibited or destroyed by the acids and alcohols in wine.

Those in positions of leadership in the early church were not to abuse alcohol, but neither were they prohibited from having a social drink,

For a bishop (overseer) must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, nor quick-tempered, not given to wine (SGD 3943 – one who sits long at his wine, drunken, quarrelsome over wine; hence brawling, abusive), not violent, not greedy for money (Ti. 1:7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, **not given to much wine**, teachers of good things (Ti. 2:3; emphasis added).

The key to consuming alcoholic beverages is self-control, which equates to drinking potentially intoxicating drinks in moderation. Paul compared a professional athlete who desires to win a race with someone who practices self-control in order to remain sober in a spiritual sense,

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate (exercises self-control) in all things. Now they (professional athletes) do it to obtain a perishable crown (1Cor. 9:25; Ed. notes in parentheses).

But I (Paul) discipline my body (practice self-control) and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1Cor. 9:27; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The apostle Peter warned that Satan can exploit those who are unable to control themselves, and this would include alcoholism,

Be sober (self-controlled), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1Pet. 5:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

God states plainly that anyone who allows alcohol to take control of their lives is unwise because it will lead to a multitude of problems,

Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and **whoever is led astray by it is not wise** (Prov. 20:1; emphasis added).

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? **Who has redness of eyes?** ³⁰ **Those who linger long at the wine**, those who go in search of mixed wine. ³¹ Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; ³² At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. ³³ Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. ³⁴ Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: ³⁵ 'They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, But I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?' (Prov. 23:29-35; emphasis added).

Some, who consider themselves religious, claim that no one should consume alcoholic beverages, despite many scriptures that prove the problem is not with alcohol but rather with those who cannot control their own urges. When confronted with Biblical examples, such as Christ 's first miracle when he turned water into wine, these same people claim it was grape juice, which is contrary to God's word,

And he (the master of the feast) said to him (Christ), 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then that which is inferior; but you have kept the good wine until now' (Jn. 2:10; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Claiming that the master of the feast would offer his best grape juice at the beginning of the celebrations and then substitute inferior grape juice toward the end of the festivities is quite a departure from reality but, according to the Prohibitionist view, any time God approves the use of wine in the Bible He is referring to grape juice, and conversely if He disapproves of wine it is fermented grape juice (Wine in the Bible; p. 12; Samuele

Bacchiocchi; published by Signal Press and Biblical Perspectives; see also; www.biblicalpherspectives.com/books/wine_in_the_bible/1.html).

The belief that no one should drink an alcoholic beverage removes any responsibility on the part of the consumer because it will always be the wine's fault if a brawl breaks out. More importantly, this point of view nullifies the symbolism associated with Christ's shed blood, which was pictured by drink offerings of wine (Ex. 29:38-40). Christ was a living, breathing, human being and his life was in his blood (Lev. 17:11). Grape juice does not represent Christ's living blood because unfermented grape juice has no life in it. It can only begin having life when fermentation commences. Therefore, wine being part of the animal sacrificial system was to picture Christ's blood which was shed to cover the sins of all the world (Jn. 1:29),

Then he (Christ) took the cup (of wine), and gave thanks, and gave it to them (his disciples), saying, 'Drink from it, all of you.'²⁸ For **this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many for the remission (forgiveness) of sins** (Mt. 26:27-28; cf. Mk. 14:23-24; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

When Christ stated that his followers had to drink his blood, he was referring to the symbolism associated with the drink offerings of wine because it is against God's law to drink blood (Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-16; 19:26; Dt. 12:23). This is why his disciples drank the cup of wine during their last meal with Jesus Christ,

Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.**'⁵⁴ **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,** and I will raise him up at the last day.⁵⁵ For my flesh is food indeed, and **my blood is drink indeed.**⁵⁶ **He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him'** (Jn. 6:53-56; emphasis added).

Commenting on whether the wine of the drink offerings was fermented grape juice, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, who has taught in Jerusalem for over twenty years, stated the following, "Exodus 29:38-40 says quite clearly that it was wine. It is true that today, either wine or non-alcoholic grape juice can be used for sacramental purposes but **in Temple times the grape juice was always fermented. All references in the Torah are to fermented grape juice with the exception of the Laws of the Nazir** (cf. Nu. 6:2-4) that refer to both fermented and non-fermented."

Another scripture describes the drink offering as being strong wine. If grape juice were substituted, it is unclear what strong grape juice would be,

And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of a hin for the one lamb; in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine (SHD 7941; Heb. shekar; strong drink, intoxicating liquor) to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering (Nu. 28:7; KJV; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

Therefore anyone drinking grape juice, when they keep the New Covenant Passover service (see study: Christ's New Covenant Passover), cannot be part of the Body of Christ because unfermented grape juice has no life in it and, as a consequence, does not symbolize Christ's shed blood.

In conclusion to state that God contradicts Himself, regarding the consumption of wine, demonstrates a pre-existing bias against the consumption of alcoholic beverages or an ignorance of God's word. Instead of prohibiting wine consumption, God lays out conditions for its use with warnings about overindulgence. He leaves the final choice up to us because He has always allowed mankind the freedom to obey His word, or ignore it.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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