

# Should Christians Drink Alcohol?

By Britt Williams

This weekend I surprisingly found this to be a hot topic in a thread on a brother's FB Wall. I thought I would re-post this article to further examine the issue. To be honest, I was a bit shocked at how passionately some professing Christians defended the use of alcohol.

Below is a consolidation of what I posted and the arguments I presented...

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."

-Proverbs 20:1



The abuse of alcohol is a great evil that contributes to many, many other sins. No doubt, alcohol use is at the root of the demise of many in America today. Multitudes are sent to an early grave, families are destroyed, children are brutalized, and hell is enlarged all due to its insidious influence. Hence, it is beyond me that Christians would somehow defend its use. I certainly believe Christians should refrain from drinking alcohol, if not for fear of falling into drunkenness, to abstain from all appearances of

evil (1 Thess 5:22). If we truly walk in love, we will be very keen not to cast a stumbling-block before others (Rom 14:21).

For the record, in my years as a Christian and pastor, I have never encountered one man who drinks alcohol socially who I have found to be actually spiritual; not one. Now, I certainly realize this argument is subjective, but it has been my observation. On the contrary, as I preach the gospel open-air, I find religious hypocrites, drunkards, perverts, fornicators, sodomites, and god-haters constantly offering the same arguments presented by "religious wine-bibbers" to excuse their love for alcohol. In all honesty, to see professing Christians attempting to justify the use of alcohol is heart-breaking.

Consider the following facts regarding drunkenness: on average, an alcohol measurement of .08% BAC (breath alcohol content) constitutes legal intoxication. A man, weighing between 130 – 189 pounds, who consumes three or more 12 ounce cans of beer, or two or more glasses of wine, or three or more drinks made with 1.25 ounces of 80 proof liquor, will generally have a BAC of .08% or higher, and be legally drunk. And remember, this is only man's standard for drunkenness. Throughout the Bible, God's standard is typically higher than man's standard. Hence, since drunkenness is a sin inconsistent with eternal life (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21) and the line between sobriety and intoxication is apparently so thin, why would professing Christians carelessly and foolishly either participate in, defend, or promote the use of alcohol?

It is important to remember, the Greek word "wine" in the New Testament does not necessarily constitute fermented wine, but indeed, can and often does mean "new wine" or "fresh juice of the vine." Hence, I maintain that many of the references in the New Testament using the word "wine," particularly when associated with Jesus and the Apostles, refer to unfermented wine. Hence, contrary to popular opinion, to assume Jesus or the Apostles drank intoxicating beverages should not be seen as a given.

For those who assume Jesus drank fermented wine, please consider the following points:

1. Alcohol is made by the process of fermentation. Fermentation is basically the same thing as leavening. Thus, intoxicating beverages contain leaven

(yeast).

"Traditionally, wine has been produced by the natural fermentation of grape juice by yeasts that originate from the grapes..."

-Gillian M. Heard, School of Food Science and Technology, Applied and Environmental Microbiology

2. Jesus is our High Priest (Heb. 5:1; 7:25). He is forever and always interceding for us, thus, He has been eternally and perpetually our Intercessor (Heb 13:8). Therefore, since Jesus is a High Priest, it stands to reason, during His earthly ministry He was obligated to fulfill the ceremonial law regarding the priesthood (Lev 16:4; Matt 3:15). Leviticus 10:9 says priests would die if they attempted to execute the priestly office while drinking intoxicating wine or strong drink. Thus, if Jesus drank fermented wine He would have broken the law and would therefore be disqualified from His Messianic office.

3. Many believe Jesus and Apostles drank fermented wine at the last supper. But this is impossible as the book of Exodus forbids leaven, in any form, during the Passover. All leaven/yeast was removed from the house of every Israelite and anyone who consumed leaven was "cut off from Israel" (Ex 12:19-20). Thus, if Jesus drank wine at the last supper He broke the law, which He certainly did not do. Likewise, this is why Jesus refused to accept or swallow the wine or vinegar (also leavened) drinks that were offered to Him when He was crucified. The four Gospel accounts of His crucifixion tell us that He either refused it after He tasted it (Matt 27:34; Mk 15:23); that it was offered but doesn't say if He took it (Matt. 27:48); or that it wasn't given to Him even though someone wanted to give it to him but was stopped by others (Mark 15:35-36); or that it was offered to Him but it doesn't say if He took it (Luke 23:36); or that He 'received' it (John 19:29-30), but, based on the authority of the other accounts, most likely spit it out, even though John doesn't communicate this. Therefore, we may conclude, based on the ceremonial laws of the Passover, that the wine at the last supper was unfermented wine, or new wine and Jesus did not drink any fermented drink at Calvary. Finally, considering that leaven generally represents "sin," it seems strange that Jesus would institute "fermented, or leavened wine" as a type of His sinless blood. Why? Because it would be inconsistent with the holy and sober nature of the Lord's Supper to use something therein which was

typically a symbol of evil (1 Cor 5:7-8).

4. Moreover, Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7). Has there ever been a time when Jesus was not the Lamb of God? He is referred to as the "Lamb" in eternity past (Rev 13:8). John the Baptist called Him the "Lamb of God" in the beginning of His ministry (Jn 1:36). No one can doubt He was the "Lamb of God" at the end of His earthly ministry as He was sacrificed on Calvary's bloody cross. And finally, He is called the "Lamb" in eternity future (Rev 5:6; 7:17; 14:10). Thus, considering ceremonial law coupled with the proper application of typology, I cannot believe Jesus, our Passover Lamb, drank leavened, or fermented wine.

5. Finally, not only is Jesus a Priest, but He is also King and Prince (Isa 9:6; Rev 19:16). Proverbs 31:4-5 says, "It is not for Kings to drink wine, nor for Princes strong drink. Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." I do not believe the King of Kings and the Prince of Peace would violate His own Word, therefore, I do not believe Jesus drank intoxicating wine.

There are many Scriptures that condemn alcohol and would seem to encourage abstinence. On the other hand, there are others that seem to paint alcohol in a neutral light. For example, I consider Paul's advice to Timothy, "use a little wine for thy stomach's sake" akin to prescribing a pharmaceutical, hardly a license for social drinking (1 Tim 5:23).

However, the following is what the Scriptures irrefutably declare...

- Drunkenness is a sin (Dt 21:20; 1 Cor 5:11).
- No drunkard shall inherit eternal life (1 Cor 6:10).
- We are commanded to avoid temptation (Lk 22:40; Rom 13:13-14; 2 Tim 2:22).
- We are to abstain from the very appearance of evil (1 Thess 5:22).
- We are commanded to walk in love (Eph 5:2; Rom 14:5).

- We are to maintain a holy testimony (Gal 5:13).
- Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should glorify God (1 Cor 10:31).

Frankly, it would be difficult to prove, according to the Bible, that drinking one, very small glass of wine is sinful in and of itself. However, in light of the above Scriptural absolutes, the decision to drink alcohol must pass through many Biblical governing principles. Namely, we must consider...

1. If we drink alcohol we are opening ourselves up to temptation, potential sin, and bondage.
2. By drinking alcohol, we may leave others with the impression that we are, could be, or will be intoxicated. This could cause others to stumble, which is unloving.
3. By drinking alcohol, it is possible that we could encourage alcohol use, contributing to the demise of others. This also is unloving.

With these sobering truths in mind, can we truly drink alcohol to the glory of God? I think not. On these grounds, I contend it is best for Christians to refrain from alcoholic beverages. Therefore, I believe abstinence is obviously the most Scriptural position.

In light of the above facts, would anyone be so bold as to suggest the Holy Ghost is actually leading them to drink alcohol?

What do you think?

-B.W.