

What is New Wine?

I often hear professing Christians justify social drinking because Jesus turned the water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).

However, this is shortsighted and does not differentiate between “new wine” and fermented wine. They are not one and the same.

There are about 17 references in the Bible to “new wine.” For example, Proverbs 3:10 states, “*So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*”

This is actually a promise of blessing for those who honor the Lord with the firstfruits of all their increase. But please notice the reference to “new wine.”

New wine results from the flow of fresh pressed grape juice from ripe grapes placed in the wine press. It should be obvious that until the fermentation process has time to work on the fresh juice the new wine is not intoxicating at all.

*(*See the article at the end of this lesson for a lengthy compilation demonstrating the historic use of the word wine was often referring to unfermented grape juice)*

The time necessary to produce intoxicating wine varies, but it is normal for the process to take several weeks.

Thus, new wine is NOT synonymous with the common usage of the word wine in our culture. We automatically equate the word wine as a beverage that contains a certain amount of alcohol and is intoxicating if consumed in excess. However, it is a mistake to think of “new wine” in that light.

Let me call your attention to a verse of Scripture in Isaiah that clearly defines “new wine.” In Isaiah 65:8 we read, *“Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all.”*

The focus of this promise is future blessing for Israel but note the statement about new wine. New wine is found in the cluster (of grapes). Again, it is obvious that fresh pressed juice from the cluster is not immediately intoxicating. This defines “new wine” as from the cluster before it is allowed to ferment.

Our Lord gave a parable that also sheds light on the usage of the term “new wine.” In Matthew 9:17 Jesus said, *“Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.”*

The bottles of which Jesus spoke were made of animal skins. Unused skins had the ability to stretch as the new wine fermented over time.

Thus, new wine (fresh pressed grape juice) was placed into new bottles to accommodate the fermenting process that would most definitely stretch those skins. If placed into old bottles the process would stretch them again to the breaking point and both the wine and bottle would be ruined.

This is not really hard to understand. Clearly the title “new wine” is not referring to intoxicating beverage. So, those consuming “new wine” were in no danger of becoming drunk.

Now in time, those consuming the beverage would need to take steps to dilute it to a point that it was not intoxicating. In fact, this step was taken to prevent drunkenness. Of course, the old wine thus handled was not as good as the fresher, “new wine.”

In John chapter two it is interesting to note that the governor of the feast said the wine Jesus made from water was the “good wine.” It was alive with flavor and I am sure it tasted better than anything the governor of the feast tasted that day!

This wine was good because it was “new wine.” There was no need to water it down to protect against strong drink. And of course, because it was freshly made its taste was not watered down in any way.

I would instruct Christians everywhere to be cautious about accusing the Lord Jesus of putting intoxicating beverage to the lips of these people at the marriage of Cana. In the first place, Proverbs 23 clearly warns against *“looking upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth it color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.”*

This language is clearly describing the fermentation process.

Thus, to say that Jesus turned the water into intoxicating drink means he violated his own word. That is NOT possible! To be consistent we must conclude Jesus

turned the water into “new wine” which was perfect with no corruption (fermentation).

Furthermore, the holy character of the Son of God could not lend itself to such sloppy behavior. Listen, a spirit-filled believer would never intentionally put intoxicating beverage to the lips of any man. How much more the undefiled, sinless, spotless Son of God!

My friend, if you justify social drinking on the basis that Jesus turned the water into wine your ignorance is showing.

Notice another statement of Jesus in Matthew 26:29. In this verse Jesus says, *“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*

Think carefully about this statement. Jesus clearly says he will drink the “fruit of the vine” in the coming kingdom. Do you think there will be a need to “water down” this drink in order to avoid drunkenness?

Do you think the “wine” in the coming eternal kingdom will see “corruption,” which is exactly what the leavening process amounts to now? Can anything enter the kingdom that has the potential of “defiling” that holy place?

The answer to these questions is a resounding NO!

In fact, Jesus says he will drink it “new” with his disciples in his Father’s kingdom. The fruit of the vine in the coming kingdom is “new wine.” It will be perfect, will

never ferment, and cannot possibly be the source of any kind of wrong doing. I trust you see the point.

Also, every spiritual minded believer needs to take careful steps to avoid the sin of drunkenness. A good starting point is to stop the justification of drinking intoxicating beverages in “moderation.”

Often such justification is found by ignorantly accusing Jesus of creating fully fermented wine at the wedding of Cana. ***He did no such thing!***

And by the way, how can any believer stretch what our Lord did at Cana to justify the consumption of hard liquors? Jesus did not turn the water into Jack Daniels number seven!

In fact, the fresh wine created by the miracle Jesus performed had no alcohol content at all. Such reasoning on the part of professed believers is nothing more than an attempt to justify behavior they know should be avoided.

I challenge you to stop looking for an excuse to compromise with one of the great evils that has troubled the world at least since the time of Noah. Instead, I challenge you to abstain from the casual consumption of alcoholic beverages in the interest of glorifying the Lord and maintaining the best possible example before your children and grandchildren.

The following article compiled by a gentleman named Jeff Belknap is very insightful and certainly demonstrates the use of the word wine is not exclusively referring to intoxicating drink.

Christians should be abstainers: Proof that "wine" often referred to non-alcoholic drinks

Wine Defined "whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Prov. 20:1

Today we have a serious problem in our society with drinking alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately, it even seems to be a perplexing issue in the body of Christ. There is a great deal of ignorance (lack of knowledge) concerning this subject, as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. For this reason, I have compiled the following truths in hopes of eradicating much of the misunderstanding and deception that prevails throughout this country and abroad. The old saying "Tell a lie long enough, and everyone will eventually believe it" is true with a great number of Bible subjects, and the topic of wine is no exception.

In this compilation, I would like to prove that usage of the word "wine" does NOT always infer a fermented beverage. It is a generic word (meaning fermented or unfermented), not only in the old & new testaments, but also in the secular world. Let's begin by acknowledging just a few reputable sources. The following material is just a portion of a list which comes from F. R. Lees' work, The Bible Wine Question.

1. Aristotle ...new wine "it is WINE in name, but not in effect..." (4th century B.C.)
2. Callixenus ...they "were trampling on the grapes, and the NEW-WINE (gleukos) ran out over the whole road..." (300 B.C.)
3. Papias ..."Each grape shall yield 21`five and twenty measures of WINE (oinos)..." (90 A.D.)

4. Babylonian paraphrase on Genesis 27:25 speaks of "WINE reserved in its grapes."
5. The Gemara speaks of "WINE preserved in its grapes."
6. Suidas... "GLEUKUS ...the droppings of the grapes before being trodden..." (950 A.D.)
7. Sir Thomas Herbert speaks of WINE gotten from wounding the Toddy Tree and catching the juice (1638 A.D.)
8. John Parkinson under the heading "Vines" says: "The juice or liquor pressed out of the ripe grape is called VINUM, WINE..." (1640 A.D.)
9. Henry Southwell speaking of martyrs said that they were "like grapes when pressed, they yield luxuriant WINE" (1660 A.D.)
10. Thomas Blount speaks of must as NEW-WINE, or, "that which is first pressed out of the grape." (1670 A.D.)
11. Edward Phillips says of must, "WINE newly pressed from the grapes (1670 A.D.)
12. J.W. Gent speaks of "WINE-cinder" and "cherry-WINE." The juice of the cherry is "gently pressed" and makes "a very pleasant WINE" (1676 A.D.)
13. W. Robertson, "WINE; Vinum ... New-WINE; Mustum - New WINE that runs out with-out pressing." (1693 A.D.)
14. Thomas Sprat speaks of vessels into which is put "cote or unfermented WINE." (1702 A.D.)
15. J.M. Gesner says: "Once for all it must be observed, that the words VINUM (wine), VITIS (vine), UVAE (grape-clusters), and VINEA (vineyard), as kindred terms are sometimes used synonymously..." and "The juice of apples, pears, pomegranates, and sorbs, was called VINUM." (1730 A.D.)
16. Miller's Gardener's Dictionary: "The first time they lower the great beams upon the grapes, they (the French) call the WINE that runs out the WINE of Guotte, because it is the finest and most exquisite in the grape ... The WINE strains

from the press into a puncheon ... Vin Bourra, as they call it, i.e., a new and sweet white WINE that has not worked..." (1748 A.D.)

17.E. Chambers speaks of, "Sweet WINE" which has not yet fermented; WINE which is called "Mere-goutte," mother-drop, which is the virgin-WINE; Burnt WINE is "boiled up with sugar." (1750 A.D.)

18.Samuel Johnson speaks of Must as "New WINE" (1773 A.D.)

19.John Parkhurst tells of Ovid applying the Latin "mecum" to mean "pure WINE as it is pressed out of the grapes."

20.J.F. Schleusner: "OINOS; generally VINUM liquor expressed from grapes whether new or old ...OINOS neos, VINUM novum i.e., must, alias gleukos...GLEUKOS, prop erly the liquor which drops from the grape before treading." (1810 A.D.)

21.Gesenius (in the last edition of his lexicon, 1844): "TIROSH, must, of the juice of the grape." (1844 A.D.)

22.James Donegan: "GLEUKOS; new, unfermented WINE, must ...SIRAION...a WINE prepared by boiling grapes..." (1826A.D.)

23.Noah Webster: "Must, New WINE; wine pressed from the grape but not fermented." (1828 A.D.)

24.S. Lee: "Ahsis; Literally, trodden. New WINE; the juice of the grape..." (1830 A.D.)

25.John Avenarius has: "Ahsis - mustum, which is recently expressed juice. German susz: susur WEIN..." (1588 A.D.)

26.Dr. Ure: "Juice, when newly expressed, and before it has begun to ferment, is called must, and in common language sweet WINE." (1836 A.D.)

27.H. Bullinger speaks of WINE running out of the wine-press (1573 A.D.)

28.Bretschneider: "Oinos neos, mustum. Sept. for ahsis and tirosh. 2...Gleukos, mustum. That which drops from the grapes before being trodden. Acts 2:13. Job 32:19 where the Hebrew is yayin." (1840A.D.)

29. Baron Liebig: "If a flask be filled with grape juice and made air-tight, and then kept for a few hours in boiling water. .. THE WINE does not now ferment."
(1844 A.D.)

30. Encyclopedia Americana (1855): "The juice of the grape, when newly expressed, and before it has begun to ferment, is called must, and, in common language, SWEET WINE."

Hopefully, these authorities will help offset some of the unqualified statements of others. Just because we (today in America) use the word "wine" to indicate that which is intoxicating doesn't mean that it was always used in that way! Fairness and honesty demand that we understand this topic from their perspective, not ours.

by Jeff Belknap

Final Note

I am sure every sincere Christian certainly intends to avoid the sin of drunkenness. However, believers who justify the consumption of intoxicating beverage in moderation (social drinking) are opening the door to the sin of drunkenness.

Is that wise?

Proverbs 20 verse one says it is NOT wise. In fact it declares wine (strong drink; intoxicating drink in this context) is a mocker and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

The simple truth is abstinence from strong drink is the only way to be assured drunkenness will never occur.

Another important consideration is the destructive influence of alcoholic drink upon those who begin with the social drink and end up bound by alcoholism (drunkenness). Millions have travelled that road. God forbid we get them started on that hellish journey!

May the Spirit of the Lord stir you to the high ground of avoiding the devil's brew is my prayer.

Pastor Rusty