

# ALCOHOL

## I. Numerous Biblical references to "wine" and "strong drink"

- A. 231 references to "wine" in Bible.
- B. 22 references to "strong drink" in Bible.
- C. Wine was typically made from juice of grapes, dates, figs, pomegranates, and honey mixtures, allowing for fermentation processes. Distilling process developed later by Arabs.
- D. "New wine" referred to wine from most recent harvest - (Matt. 9:17; Acts 2:13)
- E. "Sour wine" was wine exposed to air, like vinegar - (Matt 27:48; John 19:29)
- F. "Strong drink" may have referred to barley beer, or to "mixed wine" with additives - (Song of Solomon. 8:2; Prov. 23:29, 30)

## II. Use of alcohol in Biblical times

### A. Personal use.

- 1. Part of common diet - (Gen. 14:18; Judg. 19:19; I Sam 16:20; II Chron. 11:11)
- 2. Times of joy and feasting – (Gen. 27:25; Isa. 22:13)
- 3. Coronations and weddings – (I Chron. 12:39; John 2)
- 4. Gifts - I Sam 25:18; II Sam. 16:1

### B. Religious activity.

- 1. Hebrew word for "feast" literally means "a drinking" - Esther 2:6; 8:17
- 2. Wine used in feasts, offerings, and in temple - Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7, 10; 28:14; I Sam. 1:24; 10:3,8; I Chron. 9:29.
- 3. Christian observance of Lord's Supper - Mark 14:12-16

### C. Medical use - II Sam. 16:2 (fainting); Luke 10:34 (wounds); I Tim. 5:23 (gastro-intestinal); Prov. 31:6; Matt. 27:34 (sedative, anesthetic).

### III. Abuse of alcohol.

- A. Intemperance and consequences - (Prov. 20:1; 21:17; 23:21, 21, 30-34; Isa. 5:11, 22; Hosea 4:11; Hab. 2:5; Eph. 5:18)
- B. By priests - (Lev. 10:9; Num. 6:3; Ezek. 44:21; Lk. 1:15; Matt. 11:18)
- C. By leaders - (Prov. 31:4, 5; Isa. 28:7; Micah 2:11; I Tim. 3:3, 8; I Peter 4:3)
- D. Addictive tendency - Prov. 23:28-35
  - 1. Drunkenness - Prov. 23:21; I Cor. 6:10; Gal. 5:21
  - 2. Alcoholism - "disease model"

### IV. Figurative references to "wine"

- A. Symbol of blessing, goodness, joy - Gen. 27:28,37; Joel 2:24; Isa. 16:10; 24:9; 55:1; Jere. 48:33; Ezek 10:19; Zech. 10:7
- B. Symbol of judgment - Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22; Jere. 25:15,27; 49:12; Ezek. 23:31-34; Rev. 14:10; 16:19
- C. Mixed wine as symbol of spiritual adulteration - Isa. 1:22
- D. Symbol of Christian gospel - Amos 9:13,14; Matt. 9:17

### V. Conclusions

- A. Jesus did not disapprove of or abstain from the use of wine.
- B. Total abstinence from alcohol is not mandated for Christians.
- C. Moderation - I Cor. 8:8-13; Rom. 14:13-21
- D. Beware of invalid and subjective interpretations
  - 1. Misuse of Greek word *oinos*
  - 2. Legalism - Col. 2:20-23; I Cor. 10:23-33; I Tim. 4:3, 4

© 1999 JAMES A. FOWLER