

# The "Wine" Of The Bible

When it comes to the consumption of alcohol and the Christian, many so called "proof texts" are given to justify that consumption. They are offered unto the reason that if they can justify it with scripture, then it is okay in God's sight, and they get away with it. Never mind the dozens of other scriptures condemning "*strong drink*" and even the consumption of it, they find one even remotely close to their side of the argument, that good enough for them. The problem with that is generally that scripture is taken out of context, to make their justification. So just what is meant by the word "*wine*" in the scriptures? Is it fermented or unfermented? Alcoholic or non-alcoholic? This will be our study for this article as we look at the meanings of the word "*wine*" in the Bible.

The Old Testament and the New Testament were written originally in two different languages. Hebrew was the language of the OT, and Greek was the language of the NT. Therefore, the word for wine in the Old Testament will differ from that of the NT. The Hebrew words for wine are "*yayin*," "*tiyrosh*," and "*aciyc*." The main word for wine in the Greek is "*oinos*," but the word "*gluekos*" is used once (Acts 2:13). In total the three Hebrew words are used in the Old Testament (KJV) 193 times. The word "*yayin*" is used 139 times, "*tiyrosh*" is used 38 times, and "*aciyc*" only 3 times. In total, the Greek words are used 36 times in the New Testament (KJV), "*oinos*" is used 32 times, "*gluekos*" is used only once, and then the exaggerated counterparts of "*oinos*," "*oinophlugia*" and "*paroinos*," are used 3 times.

When the Old Testament uses these words to describe wine, it always makes a clear distinction from which we can draw an application. "*Yayin*" is the word used to describe fermented or intoxicating wine, but also is used to describe the unfermented type of wine. Therefore we have an alcoholic version (Genesis 9:21-24; 19:32-35; Isaiah 28:7-8) and a non-alcoholic version (Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 40:10-12; Amos 9:14). The other two mentioned ("*tiyrosh*" and "*aciyc*") describe the wine as it comes out of the grape, hence grape juice, and is non-fermented (Deuteronomy 18:4; Isaiah 24:7; 65:8). Therefore every time you see the word wine in the Old Testament, don't always assume it means intoxicating wine, because it may not. As we read the Old Testament we find that the Lord speaks against the consumption of intoxicating drink (Leviticus 10:9; Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:31-35; Isaiah 56:11-12). We see that wine has deceiving effects within it; you may think you are under control with one glass of wine; however the alcohol is already working on your body without you even knowing it.

As we look at the New Testament, we find that the word "*oinos*" becomes the Greek word for wine. Like the word *yayin*, which can be used to describe either fermented or unfermented wine, *oinos* also has quality about it. Many times throughout the New Testament, the use of *oinos* is used in the negative (fermented) way (Ephesians 5:18; Mark 15:23; Revelation 14:8, 17:2) It is also used in a positive (unfermented) way (Matthew 9:17; John 2:10). So as we see from the scriptures, sometimes these words are used in the alcoholic sense and other times in the non-alcoholic sense. To make the word "*wine*" of the Old and New Testaments signify fermented wine every time makes a mess of the scriptures, where some passages won't even make a lick of sense! When Jesus turned the water to wine in John 2, did Jesus make alcohol? Put another way would Jesus Christ, our Savior, Sinless Redeemer, Bread of Life, and Holy One, who was the purest person to ever walk the earth, create something the scriptures describe as intoxicating, unclean, a mocker and brawler, deceitful, and a venomous viper? And then proceed to give it to His disciples and other guests? Such is not correct morally or scripturally. To make our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ a Vintner, Bartender, and a Carouser of alcohol goes against the very nature of Christ Himself!

The use of wine in the Bible can differ depending on the subject and context of the passage, as with all biblical subjects, but we can use other scriptures to form a consistent pattern about the use of wine. The references to wine do not always mean alcoholic, but also non-alcoholic too. May we always strive to make scriptural applications of God's word, and not ever put our opinions into something that is already the "*good and acceptable, and perfect will of God*" (Romans 12:2).

Scott Vanderwood