

# The Spartan Sower

The sower soweth the word... Mark 4:14



Dec. 17, 2006 (Vol. 6)

## Is It Wrong To Drink Alcoholic Beverages?

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In "Awake!" pages 18-19, a magazine produced by Jehovah's Witnesses, there is an article about alcohol. The gist of the article is to assert that "The Bible Viewpoint" is in **support** of "moderate" drinking of alcohol. When viewing all the fancy glasses and colorful concoctions they show - we must really ask two questions. First, does the Bible really support moderate drinking of alcohol? And secondly, are the Jehovah's Witnesses misrepresenting the Bible AGAIN?

Concerning alcohol, the article acknowledges that passages like Proverbs 20:1 are seen by many as condemning the drinking of alcohol. And, they add, that it can be pointed out that there are bad results from the "misuse" of alcohol, such as Noah's drunkenness (Gen. 9:20-25). Yet they proceed to assert that it is just "many religious denominations" that view drinking as immoral, and not really condemned by God.

Let us start first of all with a note about the word "wine" in the Bible. A HUGE and common mistake is made when we approach the Bible word "wine" with modern usage as the definition. Modern usage is, as far as I can tell, exclusively referring to alcohol. If you go to any restaurant or store and ask for "wine" - you will get alcohol. But this is NOT the case in the Bible.

In Bible terms, there are words translated "wine" (both in the Old Testament and in the New) that are very generic in nature. What I mean by this is that "wine" can refer to anything that comes from the grape. It can refer to the juice still in the grape cluster (Is. 65:8), to "new" (Neh. 10:39; Prov. 3:10) or freshly prepared grape juice (Num. 18:12) or even to fermented juice (alcohol).

For example, one Hebrew word that is translated as "wine" is [tiyros] (Strong 08492). It is summarized as "from 3423 in the sense of expulsion; **must or fresh grape-juice (as just squeezed out)**; by

implication (**rarely**) fermented wine:--(new, sweet) wine." Note this point closely! This word is primarily describing fresh grape juice, and RARELY refers to fermented wine. Its principle meaning refers to "new" or "sweet" wine, i.e. fresh grape juice.

A second Hebrew word that is translated as "wine" is [yayin] (Strong 03196). It means, "from an unused root meaning to effervesce; wine (as **fermented**); by implication, **intoxication**:--banqueting, wine, wine(-bibber)." One word primarily means grape juice, another means fermented juice - but both are translated into English as the one word "wine". So, it is very wrong to read the positive statements about "wine" as approval of moderate drinking of alcohol.

Also, in Bible times they had no means of extracting the alcohol OR the vinegar that occurred during fermentation. Thus, the older the "wine", the more alcoholic it was AND the more SOUR! The "sweetest" wine was the new, unfermented, fresh grape juice. Also, because distillation had not yet been invented, alcohol in Bible times was not as strong as in modern times. So as alcohol & vinegar increased, the yeast would be killed and fermentation halted. The passages that refer to fermented alcohol are not speaking of modern distilled and concentrated stuff, but the comparatively weaker wine of Bible times. So, when we read of the condemnation of "strong drink" (the modern equivalent of "Near Beer"), how can we think that modern alcoholic drinks are justifiable? If the "light" alcohol of Bible times was condemned as "strong", then what would God say of modern distilled alcoholic drinks?

Even so the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that "The Bible also mentions the pleasures and benefits of drinking moderately." Really? The Bible depicts moderate drinking of alcohol as beneficial? Consider Ephesians 5:18 - "And be not drunken with wine, **wherein is riot**, but be filled with the Spirit". Clearly intoxicating wine is referred to and it leads to the "benefit" of "riot". Note also, if you are FILLED with the Spirit, do you have any room left for this alcoholic wine? No! If you are full of what the Spirit brings, there is no space left for the other! Does the Bible really allow "moderate" alcoholic drinking, and describe it as beneficial?

They also try to justify moderate drinking based upon medicinal benefits, such as 1 Tim. 5:23. We all understand that medicine has a place. As Paul told Timothy, "Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine **for thy stomach's sake** and thine often **infirmities**." Paul prescribed it in order to alleviate genuine stomach problems; not for general relaxation, not for entertainment, not "in moderation", etc. When you travel in different countries and you drink the water -

you can get anywhere from light to horrific stomach problems. I speak from personal experience! I accidentally drank some unboiled water in Guatemala one time. Apart from the stomach pain, I was weak for about 3 days. It is a fact that a little alcohol can purify water. If kept at this level, then this is in no way a justification of "moderate" drinking of alcohol.

The Jehovah's Witnesses go on in their article trying to make Jesus a moderate drinker as well. They refer to where Jesus turned the water to "wine" (John 2:9-10). But consider this: (1) the people had already been drinking freely of whatever had been provided (John 2:10) & (2) Jesus then turned about 120 gallons of water into "wine" (2:5-9). Do you think Jesus would approve of a full blown keg party? Did Jesus create 120 gallons of alcohol?

Note also the statement of the ruler of the feast. The tradition was to bring the best "wine" first, then use the worse; but in this case they brought the best last (2:10). What was the "best" wine in Bible times? Was it the older, fermented, vinegar tasting alcoholic wine or was it the new & fresh grape juice? The answer is amazingly simple once the facts are in place. Jesus didn't create a decayed intoxicant, but did create very fresh grape juice.

Of course, they assert that Jesus used fermented grape juice from the Passover when He instituted the "Lord's Evening Meal". But again, this shows they know not the Scriptures, for the Passover was during the week that they were to cast out all leaven (Ex. 12:15-20). If they were forbidden from eating anything that was leavened during that week, do you think Jesus would then use fermented (leavened) juice for the Passover & Lord's Supper?

It is also interesting to see what they do with their newfound liberty for "moderate" drinking. I quote, "A Christian would not want to be a stumbling

block to anyone whose conscience condemns drinking. (Romans 14:21)" IF moderate drinking of alcohol were a liberty, then it would fit in Romans 14. But it is not a liberty to drink "moderately", so it does not fit in Romans 14. It seems Romans 14 is a favorite passage into which mankind wishes to cast every stripe and color of "acceptable" sin. There is indeed, nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9).

In conclusion, who can say it better than God?

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; And **whosoever erreth thereby is not wise.**" (Prov. 20:1)

"And **be not** drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but **be filled with the Spirit**" (Eph. 5:18).

#### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Home Bible Study** – Sat., Jan. 6 & 20.
- **Business Meeting** – Sun. Jan. 7.
- **GM** - Jeff Smith, April 15-20, 2007.
- **GM** - R. McPherson, Oct.14-19, 2007.
- **GM** - Brian Yeager, April 13-18, 2008.
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

#### PRAY FOR

Othena Kinnard, Mag Bumbalough (At home), Thelma Cunningham, Mary Cox (Awaiting the results of tests), Monie Petty, Dave Poteet, Joshua & Misty Poteet, Rose Taylor, Dorris Williams, Robert England, Johanna Fletcher, Ed Williams, Joe Smith (cancer), Lydia Poe, Mike Tenpenny (back), Thelma Klein. Also, Reba Jones (Dorris Williams' niece), Jackie Tindle (cancer, relative of the Sims), John Ross Key (Mary Cox's son), Marci Miller (Alisa Fletcher's mother), Ocia Bell Jones (Doris William's mother), Ruth Williams (Betty England's niece), Pauline Hickey, Nanny Witaker, Dylan Roberts (grandson of Marilyn's friend); Kitty Mahan (Kathy Tenpenny's mother), Dwayne Williams (Dorris William's son), Jeff England (Robert & Betty's son).

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