

THE CASE FOR TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM ALCOHOL

(by George Battey)

There is a hesitancy on the part of some of our people to condemn all non-medicinal use of alcohol.

The common idea is that *drunkenness* is condemned, but not necessarily “*taking a drink.*”

- *No one seems to know exactly what constitutes drunkenness. (For example, is one drunk only when he passes out? Is he drunk when his vision is blurred? Is he drunk when his speech begins to slur? At what point is a person drunk? Those advocating “drinking-but-not-getting-drunk” do not know how to answer these questions.)*
- *No one will say what constitutes “a drink.” (For example, is “a drink” a shot-glass of whiskey? A glass of wine? How large can the glass be? A can of beer? How large can the container be? Is “a drink” one swallow? Those advocating “drinking-but-not-getting-drunk” do not know how to answer these questions.)*

It’s not surprising, then, that we have members of the church who drink.

ILL: I asked one Christian: Why do you believe it’s okay to drink alcohol – at least to a limited degree?

To my surprise, no scripture was ever given. Instead, I was referred to several books written by authors who were not Christians and I was told, “*These books make a compelling case that some alcohol may be drunk by a Christian.*”

I was shocked. I thought only scripture could be compelling to a Christian. I suspect we have not only a problem with alcohol, but also with attitudes about authority in religion.

Isaiah 8:20 (NKJV)

20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

ILL: Another Christian carefully distinguishes between “*social drinking*” and “*taking a drink*.” He teaches that “*social drinking*” is a sin, but he cannot say “*taking a drink*” is a sin.

When I inquired about this unusual position I learned this: “*Social drinking*” means when other people are present. “*Taking a drink*” means all alone in a house with no one present.

- *The one (“social drinking”) is sinful – implying you will be lost if you do it.*
- *The other (“taking a drink”) is not necessarily sinful.*

He wrote the following:

I am adamantly opposed to Christians drinking any form of alcoholic beverages at any time. I have stated to people before, however, that because of the different uses of the word wine in the bible (sometimes alcoholic and sometimes not), and because of the differences in wine made and used in the first century as compared to today, it is difficult to prove from scripture that it is a sin to take a drink.

I always remind people in such contexts of my fierce opposition to a Christian drinking any form of alcohol today because of influence, the fruits of alcohol, wisdom, the exhortation to be sober, etc... (A brother in a letter to Ronny Wade, 4/12/06)

I wrote this preacher and accused him of teaching “social” drinking. He became very angry because I added the word “social” to the equation. Here’s what he wrote back:

You say, “I don’t see where the misrepresentation has occurred.” The misrepresentation is your leap from the sentence, “taking a drink cannot be proven to be sinful” to “it’s okay to drink socially.” Can you not see that you’ve added the word “socially?” I have never taught anyone in any context that I believe it to be acceptable for a Christian to drink socially. Whenever a person asks me if it is a sin for a person to take a drink in the privacy of their home, I do not think one can prove from scripture that it is. If you believe that you can, I will gladly look at what you have to say. (A brother in a letter to George Battey, 8/15/06)

So this Christian is “*adamantly opposed*” to “*social drinking*.” He will not tolerate that. But he hesitates to say “*taking a drink*” is wrong.

THE CASE **FOR ABSTINENCE**

I wish to present to you the case for total abstinence.

I ask you to consider **8 passages** which indicate that “*taking a drink*” (*even a single drink*) for non-medicinal purposes is sinful.

In other words, when alcohol is consumed by a Christian:

- *It must be only a measured dose and*
- *It must be for medicinal purposes.*

PASSAGE #1:

1 Peter 4:3-4 (NKJV)

*3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles — when we walked in lewdness, lusts, **drunkenness**, **revelries**, **drinking parties**, and abominable idolatries.*

4 In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

This passage lists things which Christians may have done before conversion, but which they no longer participate in.

Three of these things have to do with drinking alcohol:

Drunkenness (οἰνοφλυγία) – “*an overflow or surplus of wine, i.e. vinolence, drunkenness*” (Strong’s, #3632). This refers to someone who is an alcoholic. They have to have a drink to start the day. They have a drink during the day. They drink in the evening. They drink just before they go to bed. They are addicted.

Revelries (κῶμος) – “*revel, carousal ... feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry*” (Thayer, 367). This refers to someone who drinks until they become revelrous. They drink at a “*Superbowl Party*” and get loud and obnoxious.

Drinking parties (πότος) – “a drinking-bout” (Strong’s, #4224); “the drinking bout, the banquet, the symposium, not of necessity excessive, but giving opportunity for excess” (Trench, Synonyms, p. 225). This refers to someone who simply has a drink at a cocktail party. Since it is listed separately from someone who becomes “tipsy” and also separately from someone who is an addict. It refers to someone who simply has a martini at the end of a day or a glass of wine with supper.

These three terms cover all possible drinking scenarios – including *taking* “a drink.”

PASSAGE #2:

Luke 12:45-46 (NKJV)

45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and **begins to** beat the male and female servants, and to eat and **drink and be drunk,**

46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

This passage describes a wicked servant who cares not about the things of his master.

The servant is condemned because:

- *He begins to beat servants.*
- *He begins to drink.*
- *He becomes drunk.*

The problem was not just the final state of drunkenness, but the process involved in becoming drunk.

“Be drunk” (μεθύσκω) – “... to make drunk, or to grow drunk (*an inceptive verb, marking the process of the state expressed in μεθύω*), to become intoxicated, Lk 12:45; Eph 5:18; 1 Th 5:7a.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary, 1:341)

NOTE: An “*inceptive verb*” means not just the final state of drunkenness is being condemned, but the process involved.

In other words, the wicked servant is wicked simply because he began to drink alcohol (period)!

If he never got “*drunk*” (whatever that means), he sinned anyway.

PASSAGE #3:

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

18 *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,*

This has the same *inceptive verb*.

Literally, “*Do not begin to be drunk with wine ...*”

“*Do not **become** drunk with wine ...*”

“*Do not **grow** drunk with wine ...*”

Again, not merely the final state of drunkenness is forbidden, but also the process which leads to drunkenness – i.e. *taking “a drink.”*

PASSAGE #4:

1 Thessalonians 5:7 (NKJV)

7 *For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.*

“**get drunk are drunk**” – this passage not only makes the final state of drunkenness sinful, but the process of getting there is also sinful.

Q: How does one “*get drunk*”?

R: One “*gets drunk*” (according to this passage) by drinking alcohol for non-medical purposes.

Again, not merely the final state of drunkenness is forbidden, but also the process which leads to drunkenness – i.e. *taking “a drink.”*

PASSAGE #5:

Acts 24:25 (NKJV)
25 Now as [Paul] reasoned about righteousness, **self-control**, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”

“self-control” – this is something a Christian does for himself. The Holy Spirit isn’t going to do this for you. This is why it’s called **self-control**.

The very first drink of alcohol begins to affect one’s ability to make rational judgment.

The Anheuser Busch Company created a slogan: “*Know when to say when.*” The problem is, the more one drinks, the less likely he will know when to stop because his judgment is impaired with each drink he takes.

All Bible passages teaching “*self-control*” are Bible passages which forbid non-medical usage of alcohol because alcohol destroys one’s ability to control himself.

PASSAGE #6:

1 Corinthians 9:25 (NKJV)
25 And everyone who competes for the prize is **temperate in all things**. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

“temperate” (ἐγκρατεύομαι) – is the verb form of “*self-control*” which we saw in Acts 24:25. This means to “*exercise self-restraint*” (Strong’s #1467). Alcohol destroys one’s ability to control himself.

Leviticus 10:9-11 (NKJV)

9 **"Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink,** you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations,

10 **that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean,**

11 **and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."**

Isaiah 28:7 (NKJV)

7 **But they also have erred through wine,**

And through intoxicating drink are out of the way;

The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink,

They are swallowed up by wine,

They are out of the way through intoxicating drink;

They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

These passages teach clearly that alcohol destroys one's ability to distinguish between right and wrong. This has not changed with the changing of the covenants.

It is wrong and illogical to argue about being "**temperate**" **in drinking**. Temperance, according to the Bible, can be exercised only on things that are lawful.

It's as logical to speak of a "**temperate drinker**" as it is to speak of a "**temperate luster**."

All Bible passages teaching "**temperance**" are Bible passages which forbid non-medical usage of alcohol because alcohol destroys one's ability to restrain himself.

PASSAGE #7:

1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV)

8 **Be sober, be vigilant;** because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Every passage in the NT about soberness, vigilance, and temperance is a passage forbidding non-medical usage of alcohol.

ILL: Can you imagine being placed in a jungle where you know for a fact a lion is lurking behind the forest growth. You know for a fact the lion is hungry and his intentions are to eat YOU.

Suppose also you have a sword or gun in your hand to defend yourself (cf. Eph 6:17). In all honesty, will you want a drink to “*calm your nerves*” or will you want to stay nervous so your reflexes are as sharp as possible?

As for me, I will want to stay as alert as possible. I want my finger to be on the trigger and I want lightening-fast reflexes so that, when the moment comes, I will be ready to shoot the lion when he bounds toward me. Sobriety is opposed to all recreational (casual) drinking.

All Bible passages teaching “*vigilance*” are Bible passages which forbid non-medicinal usage of alcohol because alcohol destroys one’s alertness and sound judgment.

PASSAGE #8:

1 Timothy 5:23 (NKJV)

23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

Timothy was being an example of believers (1 Tim 4:12). He drank “*only water.*”

This passage destroys the oft-repeated but unsubstantiated argument that drinking water in those days was unfit for consumption.

Timothy drank nothing but water (non-intoxicating drink). Paul now instructs him to use a “*little*” wine and it must be only for medicinal purposes.

Q: If Christians were already drinking a little wine non-medicinally, why would Paul need to give these instructions?

ARGUMENTS

Let me now address six common arguments:

ARGUMENT #1: Jesus turned water into wine in Jn 2.

An assumption is being made: *Jesus turned water into alcoholic wine.*

But the Bible uses “*wine*” to mean both fermented and unfermented drink. Only the context can decide which kind of wine is under consideration.

Observe:

Isaiah 65:8 (NKJV)

*8 Thus says the LORD: "As the **new wine is found in the cluster**, And one says, 'Do not destroy it, For a blessing is in it,' So will I do for My servants' sake, That I may not destroy them all.*

According to this passage, if I take a cluster of grapes and squeeze them, “new wine” will come out.

Q: What would you and I call this “*new wine*” today?

R: We would call it simply grape juice.

In the Bible 13 words are translated “wine” – (11 Hebrew, 2 Greek). If the word “wine” always meant alcoholic beverage, why use 13 words in the original language?

- **“Wine” can mean intoxicating drink.**
- **“Wine” can mean non-intoxicating drink.**

Isaiah 16:10 (NKJV)

*10 Gladness is taken away, And joy from the plentiful field; In the vineyards there will be no singing, Nor will there be shouting; No treaders will tread out **wine in the presses**; I have made their shouting cease.*

Jeremiah 48:33 (NKJV)

*33 Joy and gladness are taken From the plentiful field And from the land of Moab; I have caused **wine to fail from the winepresses**; No one will tread with joyous shouting; Not joyous shouting!*

Here it is obvious that “*wine*” refers to non-intoxicating drink.

- *When Bible says something good about wine, it is always non-intoxicating.*
- *When it says something bad, it is fermented.*

More passages could be given (Hos 9:2; Mt 21:33), but this is sufficient to prove the point.

I am confident that the Lord Jesus did not convert water into fermented wine and then give it to people at a wedding party to drink. How may I be so confident? Because here is the law Jesus lived under:

Habakkuk 2:15 (NKJV)

15 "Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor, Pressing him to your bottle, Even to make him drunk, That you may look on his nakedness!"

Since Jesus lived under a law that forbade giving alcohol to people that they may be drunk, I am confident Jesus did not make fermented wine in Jn 2.

BTW: Turning water into pure grape juice is just as much of a miracle as turning water into fermented wine.

Some people act like turning water into grape juice would be no miracle at all. I assure you that it is!

ARGUMENT #2: Jesus “ate and drank” (Mt 11:18-19; Lk 7:33-35).

Matthew 11:18-19 (NKJV)

18 For John came **neither eating nor drinking**, and they say, 'He has a demon.'

19 The Son of Man came **eating and drinking**, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."

Luke 7:33-35 (NKJV)

33 For John the Baptist came **neither eating bread nor drinking wine**, and you say, 'He has a demon.'

34 The Son of Man has come **eating and drinking**, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

35 But wisdom is justified by all her children."

Some think they see here evidence that Jesus drank alcoholic wine at least in moderation. The argument goes something like this: “John drank no wine, while Christ did. Therefore we may drink.”

Is this a valid argument? Is the conclusion sound? NO, for the following six reasons:

1st) The word “wine” is not repeated in reference to Jesus.

Notice Luke’s rendition of the passage carefully: “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking.” It does not say: “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking wine.”

As much as someone might want to argue that “wine” is implied in reference to Jesus, still the fact remains the passage does not explicitly use wine in reference to Jesus nor is it necessarily inferred. If Jesus had wanted it known that, in contrast with John, He drank wine, He could have repeated the word “wine” for the sake of emphasis and clarity. But He did not do this.

2nd) An assumption is being made that John refused only fermented wine.

In other words, when the passage says, “John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine,” it is being assumed the wine John refused to drink was fermented wine and fermented wine only. Once this assumption is made, the second assumption made is that Jesus, in contrast with John, came drinking fermented wine.

Let’s start with the first assumption – that the only wine John refused was fermented wine. The fact is, John drank no wine of any kind. He drank neither fermented nor unfermented wine. He drank and ate nothing produced from the grapevine. John was a

Nazarite from the day of his birth (Lk 1:15). A Nazarite was not to eat nor drink anything produced from the grapevine:

Numbers 6:3-4 (NKJV)

3 *'he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; **neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.***

4 *'All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.*

So the statement, "John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine" (Lk 7:33) does not mean John abstained only from fermented wine. John abstained from wine period – whether fermented or unfermented. He drank nothing from the grapevine.

3rd) An assumption is being made that Jesus came drinking fermented wine.

Keep in mind the word "wine" is not repeated in reference to Jesus. The scripture never says, "*The Son of Man has come eating and drinking wine.*" Men are assuming Jesus drank wine.

However, for the sake of discussion, let it be assumed momentarily the scripture is implying Jesus actually drank wine. Since scripture uses the word "*wine*" to refer to unfermented, fresh-squeezed grape juice (cf. Isa 65:8; 16:10; Jer 48:33), the scripture (Mt 11:19; Lk 7:34) could be merely saying Jesus came eating bread and drinking grape juice. It is an assumption to argue Jesus was drinking fermented wine.

Americans of the twenty-first century are so accustomed to restricting "wine" to fermented drink only that they cannot conceive of "wine" being used to refer to non-alcoholic grape juice. Yet the fact remains, fresh-squeezed, non-alcoholic grape juice was called "wine" in the Bible.

Could it be possible the Pharisees saw Jesus drinking something and concluded it was fermented wine? Did the enemies of Jesus ever treat Him unfairly and on many occasions draw conclusions about Him which were not true? If so, is it possible the same thing could be happening in Mt 11?

4th) The enemies of Jesus are wrongly being accepted as right.

The enemies of Jesus were accusing Him of being a "winebibber" (οἰνοπότης) which means "wine drinker, drunkard" (Perschbacher).

To conclude Jesus must have drunk fermented wine because His critics accused Him of being a glutton and winebibber is to accept as truth the word of Jesus' enemies! On one occasion the Lord's enemies said, "You have a demon" (Jn 7:20). Later they would say, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" (Jn 8:48). Shall we conclude Jesus was a Samaritan and had a demon because His critics accused Him of such? All of these charges are baseless and untrue. Jesus was no more a "winebibber" than He was a "glutton." If He was guilty of one, He was guilty of the other. But, the truth is, He was guilty of neither (1 Pet 2:22). Jesus was sinless.

5th) An assumption is being made that the charge has some validity.

Unwittingly, some are assuming this:

"If Jesus were not drinking fermented wine at all, how could anyone even begin to accuse Him of being a winebibber or drunkard? He must have been drinking fermented wine in moderation."

Can the same logic be applied to the charge of possessing a demon (Jn 7:20)? Could someone assume:

"If Jesus was not in league with demons at least to some degree, how could anyone even begin to accuse Him of being possessed by a demon? He must have had some moderate connection with demons."

Is any Christian willing to argue this? Hopefully not. Or what about the charge of blasphemy (Mt 9:3). Could someone assume:

"If Jesus was not blaspheming at all, how could anyone even begin to accuse Him of being a blasphemer. He must have been blaspheming at least in moderation."

Again, no true believer would assume such an outrageous conclusion. Why then are some willing to assume there must have been some basis to the accusation of being a winebibber? The charge is ludicrous and absolutely baseless.

6th) The contrast is between lifestyles, not eating and drinking habits.

John lived in isolation from everyone. He associated with no one. When Mt 11:18 says, "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'", it means John came neither eating nor drinking ***with others***. He avoided human companionship.

If Mt 11:18 is taken literally, John ate and drank absolutely nothing at all. If such were the case, he would have died because John was a human and humans have to eat and drink something. The passage means John neither ate nor drank ***with others***.

When someone does not associate with others (will not eat or drink with them), people conclude something must be wrong with that person. Those who were anti-social were either insane or demon-possessed and were driven into the wilderness. (See Mk 5:1-3; Lk 8:29).

Here, then, is John. He associates with no one. He “neither eats nor drinks” with anyone. He lives in the wilderness where only the insane and demon-possessed live. He must be demon possessed, the Pharisees wrongfully concluded.

On the other hand, Jesus was eminently social. He associated with people. He ate and drank with them. Even if He was drinking only unfermented grape juice, the passage would still be accurate in stating, “*The Son of man came eating bread and drinking.*” Yet the Pharisees were never satisfied.

No matter what course of action one took, the Pharisees could not be pleased. They were like children in the market (Mt 11:16-17) who did not want to play “wedding.” But when someone suggested playing “funeral” instead, they still were not happy.

Conclusion: Neither Mt 11:19 nor Lk 7:34 proves Jesus drank alcohol in moderation nor do these passages prove a disciple of the Lord may drink alcohol in moderation.

ARGUMENT #3 Deacons are told in **1 Tim 3:8** to “*not be given to much wine.*” This implies that a little wine may be consumed.

R: “*Not given to much wine*” does, in fact, imply that a little may be used.

Q: Is there a Bible passage which clearly teaches “*a little wine*” may be consumed and if so, for what purpose may “*a little wine*” be used?

1 Timothy 5:23 (NKJV)
23 No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

Clearly the passage in 1 Tim 3:8 harmonizes with this passage.

Christians may indeed use “*a little wine,*” but it must be for medicinal purposes only. Otherwise, Christians must drink non-alcoholic drinks only.

ARGUMENT #4: Paul implies wine may be consumed by Christians in Rom 14:21.

Romans 14:21 (NKJV)

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

It is assumed this “*wine*” is fermented, but this must be proven – not assumed.

It has already been demonstrated that “*wine*” can mean only grape juice (cf. Isa 65:8; 16:10; Jer 48:33).

Q: If Rom 14:21 is referring to mere grape juice, how could drinking mere grape juice cause anyone to “*stumble*” or be “*offended*” or “*made weak*”?

R: The same way eating meat could cause someone to sin. In context, this refers to liquid libations (“*drink offerings*”) used in sacrifice to idols.

Deuteronomy 32:37-38 (NKJV)

37 [The Lord] will say: 'Where are their gods, The rock in which they sought refuge?

*38 Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, And **drank the wine of their drink offering?** Let them rise and help you, And be your refuge.*

The point of Rom 14:21 is that if anything used in pagan worship causes someone to get weak:

- *I will not even eat meat.*
- *I will not even drink grape juice.*

ARGUMENT #5: “New wine” can mean alcoholic wine (Acts 2:13).

Acts 2:13 (NKJV)

13 Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

The conclusion is foolish.

- *Alcoholic wine does not enable men to speak in new languages they never studied. In fact, it slurs the one language they do know.*
- *“New wine,” (as used in the NT) does not make anyone drunk.*

“New wine” (γλεῦκος) – *“sweet new wine”* (Perschbacher); *“must, the sweet juice pressed from the grape; sweet wine”* (Thayer, p. 118)

Judges 9:13 (NKJV)

*13 But the vine said to them, ‘Should I cease my **new wine**, Which cheers both God and men, And go to sway over trees?’*

Proverbs 3:10 (NKJV)

*10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with **new wine**.*

Isaiah 65:8 (NKJV)

*8 Thus says the LORD: “As the **new wine is found in the cluster**, And one says, ‘Do not destroy it, For a blessing is in it,’ So will I do for My servants’ sake, That I may not destroy them all.*

“New wine” is simply grape juice.

ARGUMENT #6: Wine must be used in communion – therefore it’s acceptable for a Christian to drink a little alcohol.

Fermented wine was not used in the communion – according to the Bible. Nor does any passage ever say Jesus used fermented wine. In fact, the word “wine” is never used in any passage discussing the Lord’s supper. The expression is always “fruit of the vine.”

Think about this carefully: *Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper* (communion) *during the Jewish Passover*. Notice:

Matthew 26:17-18 (NKJV)

*17 Now on the first day of **the Feast of the Unleavened Bread** the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat **the Passover**?”*

18 And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The

*Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep **the Passover** at your house with My disciples.""*

Q: When God's people ate the Passover and observed the "*Feast of Unleavened Bread*," what were the rules?

R: The rules explicitly stated all leaven had to be removed from the house.

Exodus 12:19-20 (NKJV)

*19 For seven days **no leaven shall be found in your houses**, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.*

*20 You shall **eat nothing leavened**; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."*

Did you hear that? Nothing leavened shall be eaten during the feast.

Q: Do you know what fermented wine is?

R: It is "leavened" grape juice.

We can know for a fact that no fermented wine was used when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper (communion).

NOTE: I am discussing what the Bible says. I am not discussing what Jews today do.

If you want to know what Jews do today, then go ask a Jew. But if you want to know what the Bible says about Passover, then forget about asking a Jew and open up your Bible.

Let's face it: ***The Jews rejected their own law and their own Savior.*** Looking to them to discover how to observe Passover is unreasonable. Jesus said they do many things contrary to the law of God (Mt 15:9).

Passover, in the Bible, actually had no drink element whatsoever prescribed – and it certainly did not authorize the consumption of leavened wine.

Jesus used grape juice:

Matthew 26:29 (NKJV)

*29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this **fruit of the vine** from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

“fruit of the vine” – fruit which is produced on the vine.

Q: What does the vine produce? Fermented wine or grape juice?

R: There is no vine on earth which ever produced fermented wine. The vine produces grape juice and that is what Jesus used.

SUMMARY

No NT passage allows the use of alcohol for recreational purposes. Only a small amount may be taken medicinally.

Romans 13:13 (NKJV)

13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

The same prohibition placed on revelry and lewdness is also placed on drunkenness.

- *May we revel moderately?*
- *May we lust and be lewd moderately?*

Again: The condemnation of excess does not mean moderation is allowed.

CONCLUSION

Q: Is taking a single, non-medicinal drink of alcohol a sin?

R: Absolutely.

I have worked with alcoholics and drug addicts through the years to know the folly of “*moderate usage*.” It does not work.

If a leader in the church holds to the “*moderate usage*” position on drugs or alcohol, that leader will eventually find he has encouraged one to stumble into sin – something strictly forbidden (1 Cor 8:13).

Matthew 18:6-7 (NKJV)

6 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

THE CASE FOR TOTAL ABSTINENCE FROM ALCOHOL

QUESTIONS:

- 1) According to some, what is “*social drinking*”?
- 2) What is an “*inceptive verb*”?
- 3) What does alcohol begin to affect on a person?
- 4) What’s the problem with the slogan, “*Know when to say when*”?
- 5) When might a person want to be nervous?
- 6) When 1 Tim 3:8 says Deacons must not be “*given to much wine,*” does this imply a “*little wine*” may be consumed? If so, under what circumstances?
- 7) What is grape juice called in Isa 65:8?
- 8) If Rom 14:21 refers to mere grape juice, how could drinking grape juice cause someone to “*grow weak*” or “*stumble*”?