



by Jeffrey Maxwell

## Part II ~ According to Faith

What justification hails throughout the faith community to promote the use of moderate amounts of wine? In faith-based circles, particularly in Christendom, the cry is commonly heard, “Jesus turned water into wine; it has to be good.” Let us take a more than surface look at this topic of faith.

“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.” Isa. 65:8. The Bible says that a blessing is found in the new wine. But in another place, the Bible says, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.” Prov. 23:31. Here, the Bible is telling us to not even gaze upon it lest we be captivated by it. Is this a contradiction of principles?

The answer is actually really simple. When we read about the wine that the blessing is in, the original Hebrew word is *tiyrowsh*, meaning mainly the unfermented juice of the grape. This is why it is called “new wine” because it is freshly pressed. This is also referred to as “the pure blood of the grape.” Deut. 32:14. Never is this word used when the Bible warns about the use of wine. This is the wine that God promised to bless and multiply (Gen. 27:28; Deut. 7:13; 33:28), cheereth man (Jdg. 9:13), and is used for tithes and offerings (Deut. 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; Neh. 10:39).

The other word used in the Old Testament for wine is *yayin*, meaning many times the fermented variety that would cause intoxication. Whenever there is a Biblical warning against the use of wine, this word is *always* used. “Wine [*yayin*] is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” Prov. 20:1. This is used for the “wine of

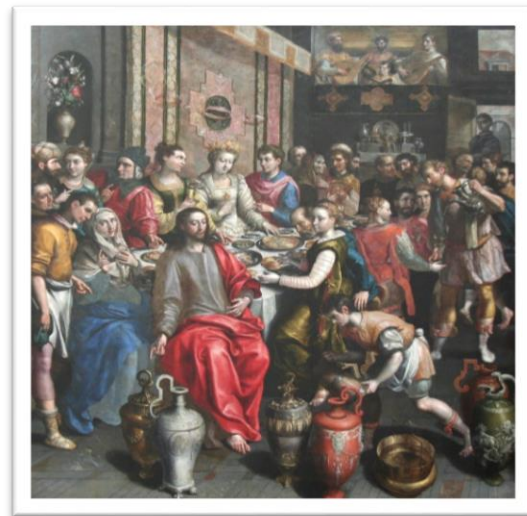
violence.” Ibid. 4:17. It is also used as ‘winebibber’ (ibid. 23:20). And another warning: “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.” Ibid. 31:4.

There is some overlap with *yayin*, where it is used in a more positive light (but never with *tiyrowsh* in a negative sense). Perhaps this has to do with the fact that when grape juice was stored in olden times, they did not have refrigerators so natural fermentation would occur creating a very small content of ethanol that would increase over time. But it is evident that whenever enough ethanol is produced to cause intoxication, the Bible never condoned its casual use.

This brings us to the New Testament, and to Jesus. The turning of water into wine being the first miracle that Jesus performed shows God’s desire for us to be happy, and that He wants us to be social creatures, and that He is delighted for us to enjoy life together as the human family. One of the main urges of Christian advocates of wine (fermented) is that we must drink it in moderation to have the benefits, for the Bible advocates all things in moderation. Consider what the ruler of the feast said to the bridegroom when he tasted of the wine that Jesus made: “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men *have well drunk*, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” Jn. 2:10. The feast had already been carrying on for some time before Jesus did this miracle; therefore, the guests had already time to have “well drunk” of the wine prior to this. In other words, the

feasters had already well drunk; therefore this is not dealing with “moderate” amounts.

The New Testament is not as clear cut with the original term for wine as the Old Testament. In the Greek, there was only one word used: *oinos*. This word can be translated for either the unfermented grape juice or fermented wine. It is as if God has left it up to us to decide whether or not Jesus, He who came to bring “life and life more abundantly” would have created a beverage containing a substance that has wrecked the lives of millions, and destroyed untold thousands of families, undermines our overall health, and has been a plague to society in general since near the beginning of time.



The Marriage at Cana by Marten de Vos, c. 1596

Paul counseled Timothy, “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.” 1 Tim. 5:23. Notice that it was to be drunk for his stomach’s sake. When many have an upset stomach, heartburn, or indigestion (usually from what they have been eating), what do they run to? to the nearest liquor store and grab a bottle of

wine? No, they usually dig for their packets of Alka-Seltzer or antacids. Notice the titles “Alka-Seltzer” denoting that it is alkaline, and “antacids” denoting that they are anti-acidic. The common denominator is that they are not acidic, but neutralize the hyper-acidity. Grape juice is slightly base (alkaline), and therefore would tend to help the stomach along with all of its other healthful properties. Wine is notoriously acidic, having a pH from around 3-

you, they are spirit, and they are life.” Vs. 63. We are to drink deeply of the pure and cleansing blood of Christ, through the Spirit of truth, that makes whole the soul, just as the cleansing pure blood of the grape can help make whole the physical body. As we partake of Christ, His purity, holiness, and righteousness becomes a part of us and dwells in us.

Christ offers you the cup of His blood, for your salvation. What will you choose? □

4. You be the judge which wine the New Testament was referring to.

Jesus told us to use wine as a symbol of His blood to be used in the Lord’s Supper. Jesus said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Jn. 6:53. Many were offended by these sayings, but Jesus explained to His disciples, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto

