

Wine and the Bible

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Introduction

These are, to say the very least sad days for the Christian Church. This is especially true of Christians in America. Many of us pass our days thinking how rich and blessed we are. We go faithfully to places of worship, read our Bibles and pray. Some of us are teachers or preaches of the Word and think we have reached a measure of maturity. I would ask a very serious question: What Bible and what God do we worship and follow? Is it a Bible and God of our own creation, tailored to fit our needs and desires? Sad to say in many if not most cases this is the actual truth. I would like to present the following study as a test of your belief. Are you able to accept the word of God as it is written in the original languages or must you first alter it to fit you preconceived needs and desires? The true Christian life is a life of obedience and faith in God through Jesus Christ His only Son. The Bible is our only map or guide on how to fulfill this goal. If we willingly allow ourselves to be deceived and reject its clear teaching to follow some other path where will we end up?

This is the first in a planned series of articles designed to bring out the truth of the Word of God by examining in detail specific words. Some may question the wisdom of choosing the word WINE as a starting point. I have done this deliberately because so many American Christians believe that wine as used in the Bible means unfermented grape juice. This is typical of many beliefs held by the majority of Christians today. The actual facts are so different and so graphically presented in the Bible that this is an ideal starting point. If you are not able to accept the milk of the Word of God how will you accept the meat?

Part One Word Study WINE:

*Section A. Cultural and Historical Background*¹

The time during which the Bible was written was very different to the times we live in today. That is not to say that the people themselves were all that different, they were not. They were however forced to work much harder to exist than we do today, life revolved around the planting and harvest time. There were no modern stores, refrigeration, ice or rapid transport systems. In addition the climate in Biblical lands is very hot and dry. If we fail to take these facts into account we will most likely fail to interpret the Bible correctly. We simply cannot superimpose our life style upon the Jews of the Old and New Testament times and expect to understand the Bible correctly.

It is all but impossible to preserve fresh unfermented grape juice in a hot dry climate without refrigeration or modern bottling techniques. In order to keep freshly pressed grape juice as grape juice it would have to be immediately protected from the air. There is simply no indication in the Bible that this was ever done. Biblical verses that speak of wine being stored in large quantities or being provided daily over long periods of time can only refer to fermented wine. This is not a question of one interpretation as opposed to another. These are matters of pure fact. Travel by land, for instance, was either on foot or by donkey. It took a considerable amount of time to travel even a short distance of say ten miles. We cannot alter this fact even if it interferes with some pet theory we may have. God sometimes over rules the normal course of events as He did with Philip in the book of Acts. Aside from miracles we must adhere to the conditions that prevailed at the time any given book was written. In order to correctly understand the Bible things like this must be taken into consideration. You cannot superimpose refrigeration into the daily life of the Old or New Testament times.

¹ I am basing my information in this section from two sources 1. An article on wine making from Volume III of "A Religious Encyclopaedia: or Dictionary of Biblical, Historical, Doctrinal, and Practical Theology". Edited by Philip Schaff, D.D. LL.D. Published by Funk & Wagnalls in 1883 2. An article on the same subject from the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia – 10 Volumes, electronic version from The Master Christian Library Version 6 (1998 on CD ROM)

The making of wine had not changed for many centuries at that time. The juice was pressed from the grapes. This was done in hollow stone pits. There were usually two parts, a wine press or upper part and a lower part called a vat. The juice was pressed both by its own weight and by the grapes being trodden down with the worker's feet. The juice would run down into the lower vat and be collected there. Needless to say this was not a sanitary procedure and the juice would have quickly gone bad unless it was allowed to ferment.

In this region, at this time, there was a specific growing season. This varied somewhat depending on the part of the country you were in. The regular vintage started from June to September depending again on the exact part of the country. While it was possible to harvest the grapes over some weeks or even months the custom was to do so quickly by a concentrated effort. The majority of the people would leave their houses and camp in booths (a type of tent) in the vineyards. In this way the pressing would continue from start to finish without interruption. This was a time of great joy and celebration. The Bible refers to it as "The Feast of Tabernacles".

Isaiah 16:10 demonstrates this.

And gladness <08057> is taken away <0622> (8738), and joy <01524> out of the plentiful field <03759>; and in the vineyards <03754> there shall be no singing <07442> (8792), neither shall there be shouting <07321> (8783): the treaders <01869> (8802) shall tread out <01869> (8799) no wine <03196> in their presses <03342>; I have made their vintage shouting <01959> to cease <07673> (8689).

This means that there was a very short period of time when fresh grape juice was available in any given location. Even then it could only be consumed shortly after being pressed and close to where the pressing took place. If wine means unfermented grape juice how was it obtained during the rest of the year?

Quite simply, the Bible shows us that no effort was made in the wine making process to prevent the juice from fermenting. In fact this would defeat the whole purpose, provision for the coming months until the next harvest. Once the grapes were pressed the fermentation process started and it was only a matter of a day, or at the very most two, before the "new wine" had some alcoholic content. Once this took place the wine could be drunk immediately or it could be allowed to mature into a more drinkable state. Either way it would produce intoxication if used in excess. The normal practice was to leave the wine ferment for forty days, after which time it was transferred into stone jars for storage or wineskins for transport. Wine was seldom kept for more than three years, as there was a constant danger of its turning into vinegar at any time.

Section B. The Old Testament

The first thing we notice is the abundance of words used by the Holy Spirit for the English word "wine". As we shall clearly see this is no accident. There are specific words for each state or condition that the grape juice undergoes from being freshly pressed to becoming vintage or mature wine. This will be examined below.

08492 tiyroshe tee-roshe'

Used thirty-eight times in the A.V., eleven of which as "new wine". The American Standard Revised Version uses "new wine" in every instance where tiyroshe is used. This is a most important word in regard to the present study. The proper meaning of this word is 'must' or grape juice. In the Old Testament this word is used to refer wine in its early stages of development: from being freshly pressed by the pressure of feet in the winepress to becoming (3196) yayin or mature wine. Perhaps the best way of summarizing this word would be "The current year's vintage" as opposed to "Aged wine".

Tiyroshe as alcoholic wine

Direct Proof

We do not have to look far for proof of this fact. The Hebrew word Yarin is commonly translated as wine (see below). Yarin must come from somewhere. It is not a product like milk, which is fully developed, as it comes from its source. The fact is that Yarin comes from tiyrosch, "new wine" produces wine. Yarin is the primary word for wine in the Old Testament. If tiyrosch means unfermented grape juice then what is Yarin? It would also have to be unfermented grape juice. In this case we would need some explanation for the two different words. The obvious meaning of these words is that as alcoholic wine ages it matures into a more mature drinkable product, tiyrosch into yarin.

Micah 6:15 brings this out in a striking way:

Thou shalt sow <02232> (8799), but thou shalt not reap <07114> (8799); thou shalt tread <01869> (8799) the olives <02132>, but thou shalt not anoint <05480> (8799) thee with oil <08081>; and sweet wine <08492>, but shalt not drink <08354> (8799) wine <03196>.

Here olive oil comes from the olives and yarin or mature wine is derived from tiyrosch, not the grapes themselves but a product of the grapes. How specific the Word of God is. If tiyrosch is not allowed to mature there will be no yarin.

Proof, in a different form is found in four other verses.

Judges 9:13 And the vine <01612> said <0559> (8799) unto them, Should I leave <02308> (8804) my wine <08492>, which cheereth <08055> (8764) God <0430> and man <0582>, and go <01980> (8804) to be promoted <05128> (8800) over the trees <06086>?

Isaiah 24:7 The new wine <08492> mourneth <056> (8804), the vine <01612> languisheth <0535> (8797), all the merryhearted <08056> <03820> do sigh <0584> (8738).

Joel 1:5 Awake <06974> (8685), ye drunkards <07910>, and weep <01058> (8798); and howl <03213> (8685), all ye drinkers <08354> (8802) of wine <03196>, because of the new wine <06071>; for it is cut off <03772> (8738) from your mouth <06310>.

Hosea 4:11 Whoredom <02184> and wine <03196> and new wine <08492> take away <03947> (8799) the heart <03820>.

It would be absurd to think that tiyrosch in Judges 9:13 means anything less than alcoholic wine in the process of maturing. Again in Isaiah 24:7 when the tiyrosch is cut off the merrymaking stops. In Joel 1:5 both the immature (tiyrosch) and mature (yarin) wine caused drunkenness. This is even more emphatically stated in Hosea 4:11, when used in excess both types of wine will lead us astray.

Indirect Proof

Again there is separate set of verses, which offer proof in yet another way. There are thirty-three verses, which use this word that we have not examined yet. Twenty-eight (really thirty-one as shown below) show a striking comparison, which has to have some significance or the Holy Spirit would not have written the verses in this way. These verses are the following (see the three others below):

Genesis 27:28, Genesis 27:37, Deuteronomy 7:13, Deuteronomy 11:14, Deuteronomy 12:17, Deuteronomy 14:23, Deuteronomy 18:4, Deuteronomy 28:51, Deuteronomy 33:28, 2 Kings 18:32, 2 Chronicles 31:5, 2 Chronicles 32:28, Nehemiah 5:11, Nehemiah 10:37, Nehemiah 10:39, Nehemiah 13:5, Nehemiah 13:12, Psalms 4:7, Isaiah 36:17, Hosea 2:8, Hosea 2:9, Hosea 2:22, Hosea 7:14, Hosea 9:2 (with 9:1), Joel 1:10, Joel 2:19, Haggai 1:11, Zechariah 9:17

The following verses provide a good example of all the rest.

Genesis 27:28 Therefore God <0430> give <05414> (8799) thee of the dew <02919> of heaven <08064>, and the fatness <04924> of the earth <0776>, and plenty <07230> of corn <01715> and wine <08492>:

Deuteronomy 11:14 That I will give <05414> (8804) *you* the rain <04306> of your land <0776> in his due season <06256>, the first rain <03138> and the latter rain <04456>, that thou mayest gather <0622> (8804) in thy corn <01715>, and thy wine <08492>, and thine oil <03323>.

Nehemiah 5:11 Restore <07725> (8685), I pray you, to them, even this day <03117>, their lands <07704>, their vineyards <03754>, their oliveyards <02132>, and their houses <01004>, also the hundredth <03967> part of the money <03701>, and of the corn <01715>, the wine <08492>, and the oil <03323>, that ye exact <05383> (8802) of them.

Psalms 4:7 Thou hast put <05414> (8804) gladness <08057> in my heart <03820>, more than in the time <06256> that their corn <01715> and their wine <08492> increased <07231> (8804).

Joel 1:10 The field <07704> is wasted <07703> (8795), the land <0127> mourneth <056> (8804); for the corn <01715> is wasted <07703> (8795): the new wine <08492> is dried up <03001> (8689), the oil <03323> languisheth <0535> (8797).

Zechariah 9:17 For how great is his goodness <02898>, and how great is his beauty <03308>! corn <01715> shall make the young men <0970> cheerful <05107> (8766), and new wine <08492> the maids <01330>.

As can be seen in the examples above *tiyros*h and corn are closely linked in the majority of verses in which *tiyros*h is used. There is a similar association between *yarin* and bread, as we shall see when we examine that word. These associations are important. *Tiyros*h like corn is not normally a finished product, complete in it's self. As corn must be taken and processed so *tiyros*h must be pressed out and allowed to maturing into *yarin* over time. Both the corn and the *tiyros*h are natural products that man manufactures into something else. That is not to say that it was not often consumed long before it matured, but that its primary purpose was to become mature wine. This can be seen in Genesis 27: 25 & 28. In verse 25 Isaac drinks *yarin* but in verse 28 he prays for *tiyros*h from which the wine he drinks comes. If it was intended to remain forever unfermented grape juice this association would fail and along with it the association between *yarin* and bread.

Of the remaining six places this word is used, three are similar to those above except that wheat is used in place of corn, but the meaning is much the same. These are Numbers 18:12, Jeremiah 31:12 and Joel 2:24

***Tiyros*h as wine or new wine**

Two of the remaining three speak of the first fruits of a bountiful harvest:

Nehemiah 10:37 And that we should bring <0935> (8686) the first fruits <07225> of our dough <06182>, and our offerings <08641>, and the fruit <06529> of all manner of trees <06086>, of wine <08492> and of oil <03323>, unto the priests <03548>, to the chambers <03957> of the house <01004> of our God <0430>; and the tithes <04643> of our ground <0127> unto the Levites <03881>, that the same Levites <03881> might have the tithes <06237> (8764) in all the cities <05892> of our tillage <05656>.

Proverbs 3:10 So shall thy barns <0618> be filled <04390> (8735) with plenty <07647>, and thy presses <03342> shall burst out <06555> (8799) with new wine <08492>.

As was discussed in section A. above fermentation started within a day or two of pressing here as in the other verses above *tiyros*h means the current year's vintage of fermented wine.

This leaves us with one more use of this most interesting word. In one way we could say that the best has been saved for last.

Isaiah 65:8 ¶ Thus saith <0559> (8804) the LORD <03068>, As the new wine <08492> is found <04672> (8735) in the cluster <0811>, and one saith <0559> (8804), Destroy <07843> (8686) it not; for a blessing <01293> is in it: so will I do <06213> (8799) for my servants <05650>' sakes, that I may not destroy <07843> (8687) them all.

Here *tiyros*h speaks of the juice within the cluster of grapes, carefully distinguishing it from the grape cluster it's self. Here as else where the "blessing" in it is what is produced from it; wine, not grape juice.

06071 `aciyc, (aw-sees')

Used five times in the A.V., twice as new wine, twice as sweet wine and once as juice. Properly this word means pressed out juice or literally "that which is trodden". Much of what was said above applies to aciyc as well. The fact that it was considered alcoholic is evident from the following verses.

Isaiah 49:26 And I will feed <0398> (8689) them that oppress <03238> (8688) thee with their own flesh <01320>; and they shall be drunken <07937> (8799) with their own blood <01818>, as with sweet wine <06071>: and all flesh <01320> shall know <03045> (8804) that I the LORD <03068> am thy Savior <03467> (8688) and thy Redeemer <01350> (8802), the mighty One <046> of Jacob <03290>.

It is hard to imagine a more graphic description of the fate of God's enemy's. This is obviously not to be taken in a purely literal sense. The idea is that they shall kill and destroy themselves and that a great deal of blood will be shed. It is equally obvious that the wine (aciyc) is intoxicating. If this were not the case the symbolism would be completely lost.

Joel 1:5 Awake <06974> (8685), ye drunkards <07910>, and weep <01058> (8798); and howl <03213> (8685), all ye drinkers <08354> (8802) of wine <03196>, because of the new wine <06071>; for it is cut off <03772> (8738) from your mouth <06310>.

Joel 1:5 is very similar to Micah 6:15 which was referred to above under the word Tiyrosh. It is here referred to, as the source of alcoholic wine and in the context of this verse is intoxicating.

Song of Solomon 8:2 I would lead <05090> (8799) thee, and bring <0935> (8686) thee into my mother's <0517> house <01004>, who would instruct <03925> (8762) me: I would cause thee to drink <08248> (8686) of spiced <07544> wine <03196> of the juice <06071> of my pomegranate <07416>

It is very interesting to note what the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia – 10 Volumes (electronic version) says with reference to this word in this passage. Under the definition of wine, point 7. (Which is the word shekhar number 07941 below), the authors refer to the pomegranate "juice" as being a type of strong drink or shekhar. As can be see in the Scripture reference above it is indeed translated as "juice" in the A.V.

The fact that spiced wine is mentioned in the immediate context would also indicate that the reference here is to an alcoholic drink.

The following are the other two verses where this word appears. There is no reason to assume a different meaning here.

Joel 3:18 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day <03117>, that the mountains <02022> shall drop down <05197> (8799) new wine <06071>, and the hills <01389> shall flow <03212> (8799) with milk <02461>, and all the rivers <0650> of Judah <03063> shall flow <03212> (8799) with waters <04325>, and a fountain <04599> shall come forth <03318> (8799) of the house <01004> of the LORD <03068>, and shall water <08248> (8689) the valley <05158> of Shittim <07851>.

Amos 9:13 Behold, the days <03117> come <0935> (8802), saith <05002> (8803) the LORD <03068>, that the plowman <02790> (8802) shall overtake <05066> (8738) the reaper <07114> (8802), and the treader <01869> (8802) of grapes <06025> him that soweth <04900> (8802) seed <02233>; and the mountains <02022> shall drop <05197> (8689) sweet wine <06071>, and all the hills <01389> shall melt <04127> (8709).

3196 yayin (yah' -yin)

This is by far the most common word for wine in the Old Testament. In the King James Authorized Version it is translated as wine 137 times. It is used a total on 140 times. In one case (Prov.23: 20) it is used in the word winebibbers. In the two other cases it is vine and as banqueting.

Yayin as alcoholic wine

Direct Proof

Fifty-nine, of the one hundred and thirty times this word is used in the A.V., it incontrovertibly refers to fermented or alcoholic wine.

A. Verses, which show that the drinking of wine produced either, out-right drunkenness or some lesser condition of intoxication that would not be produced by drinking non-fermented grape juice.

Genesis 9:21, Genesis 9:24 Genesis 19:32, Genesis 19:33, Genesis 19:34, Genesis 19:35, 1 Samuel 1:14 (also verse 15, see point C. Below), 1 Samuel 25:37, Esther 1:7, Esther 1:10, Esther 5:6, Esther 7:2, Esther 7:7, Esther 7:8

The first time we find the word yarin is in Genesis chapter 9. Here it is found twice, emphasizing the fact that the drunkenness was as a direct result of drinking the wine (yarin). This is no coincidence or accident. As has been stated before the Holy Spirit "breathed forth" both the Old and New Testament. When we ignore or twist the obvious intent of what He wanted to impart to us, we will invariably go astray. In Genesis 9:20, 21 we read:

And Noah <05146> began <02490> (8686) to be a husbandman <0376> <0127>, and he planted <05193> (8799) a vineyard <03754>: And he drank <08354> (8799) of the wine <03196>, and was drunken <07937> (8799); and he was uncovered <01540> (8691) within <08432> his tent <0168>.

What could possible be more graphic and concise? Noah started farming to provide for himself and his family. The first thing that we read of is that he planted grapes, made wine and got drunk. The overwhelming evidence of scripture, which will be examined below, shows that the primary purpose for growing grapes never changed throughout Biblical times. Grapes were grown to make wine. Do to man's sinful nature man often misused this gift of God just as money, sex and political power is so often misused. The fact that the wine was misused is not the fault of the wine or of God, but of man himself.

We must remember that there is a wealth of different words that the Holy Spirit could have chosen for the word wine. It is an indisputable fact that yarin is the primary word used. In every single case when yarin is used in a passage which adds some context to its meaning the meaning is clearly alcoholic wine. In not one single instance can non-alcoholic grape juice be implied. This is not a matter of theology or interpretation, but of plain fact. What evidence is there to the contrary? Even if, which is not the case, plain grape juice was intended in several verses the evidence would still be indisputable.

With regard to the verses from Esther, Esther 1:10 is the most important. Here we read that "the heart of the king was merry with wine" The same word for wine is used through out these verses and the context clearly shows that the wine was intoxicating. The references from Genesis and 1 Samuel are too striking to need additional comment.

B. Verses, which show that wine, as used in that verse, has the capacity to produce intoxication.

2 Samuel 13:28, Psalms 78:65, Psalms 104:15, Proverbs 23:30, (and below as well #4469) Proverbs 23:31, Ecclesiastes 2:3, Ecclesiastes 10:19, Song of Solomon 1:2, Song of Solomon 1:4, Song of Solomon 4:10, Song of Solomon 7:9, Isaiah 5:12, Isaiah 24:11, Isaiah 28:1, Isaiah 51:21, Jeremiah 13:12, (X 2) (see context of verse 13 for proof) Jeremiah 23:9, Jeremiah 51:7, Hosea 4:11, Joel 1:5, Joel 3:3, Habakkuk 2:5,, Zechariah 9:15, Zechariah 10:7

We will examine one verse out of this selection, Ecclesiastes 2:3

Ecclesiastes 2:3 I sought <08446> (8804) in mine heart <03820> to give <04900> (8800) myself <01320> unto wine <03196>, yet acquainting <05090> (8802) mine heart <03820> with wisdom <02451>; and to lay hold <0270> (8800) on folly <05531>, till I might see <07200> (8799) what was that good <02896> for the sons <01121> of men <0120>, which they should do <06213> (8799) under the heaven <08064> all <04557> the days <03117> of their life <02416>.

King Solomon, in this and the verses that make up the context, is seeking wisdom. In 2:1 he looked for it by seeking pleasure in various forms. In verse two he admits this was a fruitless quest. In verse three he advocates a different approach. He is going to "give myself unto wine" but with some self-control and moderation. He first tried unchecked gratification, as that was a failure he tries a mixture of gratification and restraint at the same time. What is interesting in regard to our present study is his use of wine to symbolize this pursuit of happiness. False interpretation of Scripture leads to absurd results. If yarin means non-alcoholic grape juice we would have to say that Solomon was seeking earthly gratification in grape juice! I have not yet encountered anyone advocating this openly. Obviously Solomon's whole point is that wine has the ability to produce effects far different than grape juice. He would not have chosen wine as a figure of speech if he felt that there was any chance of its being misunderstood.

C. Verses in which wine and other alcoholic beverages are directly linked together.

Leviticus 10:9, Numbers 6:3, Deuteronomy 14:26, Deuteronomy 29:6, Judges 13:4, Judges 13:7, Judges 13:14, 1 Samuel 1:15, (Also 1 Samuel 1:14, see above point A as well), Proverbs 20:1, Proverbs 31:4, Proverbs 31:6, Isaiah 29:9, Isaiah 56:12, Micah 2:11

It will be worth while, at this point, to examine the meaning of "strong drink" as used in the Old Testament.

The word is Shekar, (Strong's Number 07941). In the A.V. it is translated 21 times as strong drink, once as strong wine, and once as drunkard. It means, "intoxicating drink" of any sort and in Nu 28:7 this intoxicating drink is "wine". It is a generic term applied to all types of fermented liquor. Some times this is wine, sometimes, as in the verses listed above it is a drink other than wine.

The passage from Numbers 28:7 reads as follows:

And the drink offering <05262> thereof shall be the fourth <07243> part of a hin <01969> for the one <0259> lamb <03532>: in the holy <06944> place shalt thou cause the strong wine <07941> to be poured <05258> (8685) unto the LORD <03068> for a drink offering <05262>.

Isaiah 5:11 is an example of wine in parallel with strong drink,

Isaiah 5:11 Woe <01945> unto them that rise up early <07925> (8688) in the morning <01242>, that they may follow <07291> (8799) strong drink <07941>; that continue <0309> (8764) until night <05399>, till wine <03196> inflame <01814> (8686) them!

1 Samuel 1:14, 15 is an example from the list above where strong drink is something different than wine.

And Eli <05941> said <0559> (8799) unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken <07937> (8691)? put away <05493> (8685) thy wine <03196> from thee. And Hannah <02584> answered <06030> (8799) and said <0559> (8799), No, my lord <0113>, I *am* a woman <0802> of a sorrowful <07186> spirit <07307>: I have drunk <08354> (8804) neither wine <03196> nor strong drink <07941>, but have poured out <08210> (8799) my soul <05315> before <06440> the LORD <03068>.

Wine in each of these instances is alcoholic. The context in each case makes this quite clear. It should be noted however that the "strong drink" was not whisky, distilled brandy or any of the other liquors so commonly called by that term today. Another term we use today is "hard liquor". We use terms like this to distinguish between different types of alcoholic beverages. This is not the intended meaning here. When the "strong drink" was not grape wine it was most likely similar to the pomegranate wine referred to in Song of Solomon 8:2. It was probably made from fermenting different types of fruit and as such was not that different from grape wine. It was not "strong" in the sense of having a higher alcoholic content than wine. This is shown by the fact that the shekar sometimes is yarin.

D. Verses that refer to wine in the drink offering to the Lord.

Exodus 29:40, Leviticus 23:13, Numbers 15:5, Numbers 15:7, Numbers 15:10, Numbers 28:14, Deuteronomy 32:38, 1 Samuel 1:24, Hosea 9:4,

We examined Numbers 28:7 in section C. above. This verse give us some very interesting insight into the "drink offering" The Hebrew word here is necek (Strong's number 5262). It is used in six of the verses listed above.

In Numbers 28:7 the "wine" was by definition capable of producing intoxication. This is as we saw the meaning of the word shekar. Unless there is some compelling reason to believe other wise "yarin" in the verses above must also be alcoholic. Compare Numbers 28:7 with Exodus 29:40 - 42 and Leviticus 23:13, the similarity is striking. All we are doing is applying the most basic rules for Bible interpretation. Scripture must be allowed to interpret scripture. Is there a verse anywhere in the Bible that describes a drink offering made with grape juice?

Exodus 29:40 is given below as an example of the others. Clearly the drink offering was not grape juice.

Exodus 29:40 And with the one <0259> lamb <03532> a tenth <06241> deal of flour <05560> mingled <01101> (8803) with the fourth part <07253> of an hin <01969> of beaten <03795> oil <08081>; and the fourth part <07243> of an hin <01969> of wine <03196> *for* a drink offering <05262>.

E. Verses that show the physical properties of wine as opposed to grape juice. Job 32:19, Psalms 75:8, Micah 6:15,

Job 32:19 Behold, my belly <0990> is as wine <03196> which hath no vent <06605> (8735); it is ready to burst <01234> (8735) like new <02319> bottles <0178>.

Psalms 75:8 For in the hand <03027> of the LORD <03068> there is a cup <03563>, and the wine <03196> is red <02560> (8804); it is full <04392> of mixture <04538>; and he poureth out <05064> (8686) of the same <02088>: but the dregs <08105> thereof, all the wicked <07563> of the earth <0776> shall wring them out <04680> (8799), and drink <08354> (8799) them.

Song of Solomon 8:2 I would lead <05090> (8799) thee, and bring <0935> (8686) thee into my mother's <0517> house <01004>, who would instruct <03925> (8762) me: I would cause thee to drink <08248> (8686) of spiced <07544> wine <03196> of the juice <06071> of my pomegranate <07416>

Micah 6:15 Thou shalt sow <02232> (8799), but thou shalt not reap <07114> (8799); thou shalt tread <01869> (8799) the olives <02132>, but thou shalt not anoint <05480> (8799) thee with oil <08081>; and sweet wine <08492>, but shalt not drink <08354> (8799) wine <03196>.

Note on Job 32:19: Here as elsewhere there is a wealth of meaning with regard to our present study. We loose some of the original meaning in our English translations. A verse from Matthew sheds some light on this.

Matthew 9:17 reads as follows: "Neither <3761> do men put <906> (5719) new <3501> wine <3631> into <1519> old <3820> bottles <779>; else <1490> the bottles <779> break <4486> (5743), and <2532> the wine <3631> runneth out <1632> (5743), and <2532> the bottles <779> perish <622> (5698): but <235> they put <906> (5719) new <3501> wine <3631> into <1519> new <2537> bottles <779>, and <2532> both <297> are preserved <4933> (5743)."

We will examine this passage again in the New Testament section but for now it gives us the meaning of what Job was saying. He was ready to break apart with the pressure inside of himself. This pressure was like the pressure of new wine put into a new wineskin, but closed tightly. In this situation the expanding gas from the fermentation process would build up until the bottle burst. Wine bottles were made of animal skins, which was the reason for needing new skins with new wine. If yarin means non-fermented grape juice then Job's illustration is meaningless.

Note on Psalm 75:8: This verse is full of evidence. Proverbs 23:31 warns against looking at the wine when it is red. In other words beware that wine does not lead you into drunkenness and sin when it is most ready to be consumed. Not only is the wine in verse eight red, it is also full of mixture. Wine was often mixed with spices. This was done to render the wine more potent and effective. The dregs are the sediments that form at the bottom of the bottle or container where the wine was stored. The Holy Spirit is using these physical properties to illustrate spiritual truth. Here as in the many other passages we have examined fermented wine must be intended.

Note on Song of Solomon 8:2 Wine in this verse is really "spiced wine" i.e. wine to which spices have been added. As we saw in Psalm 75:8 above this was done to make the wine more intoxicating. See also the notes on #06071 below.

Note on Micah 6:15: This verse was also discussed above under tiyros. It shows the process of fermentation and aging which progresses from new wine to mature wine.

Indirect Proof

There are two other categories or classes of verses, which provide additional, proof that yarin means fermented alcoholic wine. These form a more indirect type of proof. Some of these fall into more than one class. As this strengthens rather than weakens the proof no attempt has been made to document this. There is already over powering evidence in support of yarin meaning alcoholic wine and not a type of grape juice.

A. The problem of storage

As was discussed near the beginning of this article it was not possible for people, during Biblical times, to store or transport plain grape juice. In addition plain fresh grape juice would only have been available for a very short period of time. In the following passages yarin must mean fermented wine for these reasons.

Joshua 9:4, Joshua 9:13, 2 Samuel 16:2, Nehemiah 5:18, Jeremiah 40:10, Jeremiah 40:12, Ezekiel 27:18 Daniel 1:5, Daniel 1:8, Daniel 1:16, 1 Chronicles 27:27,

Nehemiah 5:18 could easily be included in with the more direct evidence presented above. We read of "all sorts of wine" being provided daily. It is hard to conceive of this being "all sorts of grape juice".

Ezekiel 27:18 states that the wine of a specific region was being exported. This is another case were a verse could be moved into the direct proof category.

Daniel 1: 5 The context shows that this provision was daily for three years.

B. The corn and wine parallel.

Mention was made above under the word *tyrosh* of the bread & wine vs. the corn and wine parallels. In the Bible corn and *tyrosh* represent the products of nature while *yarin* and *bead* represent the processed or finished product. If *yarin* meant unfermented grape juice or *tyrosh* that did not mature into *yarin* this comparison would be meaningless. On the other hand when this comparison is allowed to stand it sheds a great deal of light on our understanding of the Bible.

The way we apply rules of interpretation to one passage or group of passages directly effects the way we interpret other passages. We must neither invent relationships that do not exist or deny those that legitimately do exist. This is the root cause of so much of the error that exists today.

The following passages show this relationship:

Genesis 14:18, Judges 19:19, 1 Samuel 10:3, 1 Samuel 16:20, 1 Samuel 25:18, 2 Samuel 16:1, Nehemiah 5:15, Proverbs 4:17, Proverbs 9:2 (in context of 9:5), Proverbs 9:5, Daniel 10:3, Haggai 2:12,

Proverbs 9:2,5 could be applied to the more direct evidence section above. Each verse refers to "mingled wine", wine mixed with spices and drugs to make it more potent and intoxicating.

Lamentations 2:12 this is an exceptional case were corn is linked with *yarin* not *tyrosh*. The most likely reason for this is to compare this passage with others like Genesis 9:20,21. In other words some times the intermediate step is skipped and one is taken immediately from start to finish.

This leaves us with two other groups of verses using this word.

C. In a metamorphic sense

It is used in a metamorphic sense in four passages:

Deuteronomy 32:33, Psalms 60:3, Jeremiah 25:15, Hosea 14:7,

The meaning and import of these verses would not be the same if grape juice were substituted for real wine.

Other passages

Finally there are thirty-four passages, with thirty-five references remaining.

These can be divided into two sections:

Yarin as a type of drink in context with other food.

Genesis 27:25, Genesis 49:12, 1 Chronicles 9:29, 1 Chronicles 12:40, 2 Chronicles 2:10, 2 Chronicles 2:15,

2 Chronicles 11:11, Nehemiah 13:15, Job 1:13, Job 1:18, Song of Solomon 5:1, Isaiah 22:13, Isaiah 55:1, Lamentations 2:12,, Amos 9:14,

As a drink with no mention of bread or other food.

Genesis 49:11, Numbers 6:20, Deuteronomy 28:39, Nehemiah 2:1 (X 2), Isaiah 1:22, Isaiah 16:10, Jeremiah 35:2, Jeremiah 35:5, Jeremiah 35:6, Jeremiah 35:8, Jeremiah 35:14, Jeremiah 48:33, Ezekiel 44:21, Hosea 7:5, Amos 2:8, Amos 2:12, Amos 5:11, Amos 6:6, Zephaniah 1:13,

In regard to some of passages above we would do well to return to Genesis 9:20, 21. Here we found an immediate correlation between planting a vineyard and the production of fermented wine. This is the case with some of the passages above. With regard to the others there is no indication at all that Yarin is to be taken in any sense except as fermented and therefore alcoholic wine.

When Scripture is allowed to interpret Scripture there is simply no evidence of the word yarin being used as non-alcoholic grape juice. To even consider such a usage we would need one or more passages in which there could be no other meaning for this word.

02562 chamar, (kham-ar') &

Used six times in the A.V, as wine.

02561 chemer (kheh' -mer)

This is used two times in the A.V., as pure and as red wine.

Both these words are Aramaic. They share a similar root, hamar, this has the meaning "to boil up" or "to be red" i.e. from boiling or being inflamed. These two words convey the idea of foaming in the process of fermentation i.e. to froth or foam. This fact alone provides sufficient proof that alcoholic wine is intended in the verses where this word is used. Additional proof is given below.

Chamar is found in six verses.

Ezra 6:9 And that which <04101> they have need of <02818> (8750), both young <01123> bullocks <08450>, and rams <01798>, and lambs <0563>, for the burnt offerings <05928> of the God <0426> of heaven <08065>, wheat <02591>, salt <04416>, wine <02562>, and oil <04887>, according to the appointment <03983> of the priests <03549> which are at Jerusalem <03390>, let it be <01934> (8748) given <03052> (8727) them day <03118> by day <03118> without <03809> fail <07960>:

Ezra 7:22 Unto <05705> an hundred <03969> talents <03604> of silver <03702>, and to an hundred <03969> measures <03734> of wheat <02591>, and to an hundred <03969> baths <01325> of wine <02562>, and to an hundred <03969> baths <01325> of oil <04887>, and salt <04416> without <03809> prescribing <03792> how much.

Both the above verses strongly suggest fermented wine. In Ezra 6:9 this was to be a daily ration from the Kings store. Fresh grapes and therefore grape juice would only be available for a short period of time during the course of a given year, certainly not on a daily basis all year long. The same reasoning is true in Ezra 7:22 and again in other passages. How could such a lot of grape juice been kept fresh for any period of time?

Daniel 5:1 ¶ Belshazzar <01113> the king <04430> made <05648> (8754) a great <07229> feast <03900> to a thousand <0506> of his lords <07261>, and drank <08355> (8750) wine <02562> before <06903> the thousand <0506>.

Daniel 5:2 Belshazzar <01113>, while he tasted <02942> the wine <02562>, commanded <0560> (8754) to bring <0858> (8682) the golden <01722> and silver <03702> vessels <03984> which his father <02> Nebuchadnezzar <05020> had taken <05312> (8684) out of <04481> the temple <01965> which was in Jerusalem <03390>; that the king <04430>, and his princes <07261>, his wives <07695>, and his concubines <03904>, might drink <08355> (8748) therein.

Daniel 5:4 they drank <08355> (8754) wine <02562>, and praised <07624> (8745) the gods <0426> of gold <01722>, and of silver <03702>, of brass <05174>, of iron <06523>, of wood <0636>, and of stone <069>.

Daniel 5:23 But hast lifted up <07313> (8712) thyself against <05922> the Lord <04756> of heaven <08065>; and they have brought <0858> (8684) the vessels <03984> of his house <01005> before <06925> thee, and thou <0607>, and thy lords <07261>, thy wives <07695>, and thy concubines <03904>, have drunk <08355> (8750) wine <02562> in them; and thou hast praised <07624> (8745) the gods <0426> of silver <03702>, and gold <01722>, of brass <05174>, iron <06523>, wood <0636>, and stone <069>, which see <02370> (8751) not <03809>, nor <03809> hear <08086> (8750), nor <03809> know <03046> (8751): and the God <0426> in whose hand <03028> thy breath <05396> is, and whose are all <03606> thy ways <0735>, hast thou not <03809> glorified <01922> (8745):

With regard to the four passages from Daniel above and similar passages for other words; how well would plain old grape juice fit into the context. If it were not such a serious matter it would be laughable to suggest that non-alcoholic grape juice could possibly be intended.

Chemer is found in the following two passages.

Once as "blood" of the grape and once as "red wine"

Deuteronomy 32:14 Butter <02529> of kine <01241>, and milk <02461> of sheep <06629>, with fat <02459> of lambs <03733>, and rams <0352> of the breed <01121> of Bashan <01316>, and goats <06260>, with the fat <02459> of kidneys <03629> of wheat <02406>; and thou didst drink <08354> (8799) the pure <02561> blood <01818> of the grape <06025>.

Isaiah 27:2 In that day <03117> sing <06031> (8761) ye unto her, A vineyard <03754> of red wine <02561> (8676) <02531>.

In both these passages the idea is of the foaming, fiery nature of fermenting wine. Again the concept of plain grape juice is completely out of place.

03342 yeqeb yeh' -keb

This is used 16 times in the A.V. mostly as winepresses and once in Deuteronomy 16:13 as wine.

Deuteronomy 16:13 is another example of the wine and corn relationship.

07941 rkv shekar shay-kawr'

For notes on this word see yarin, direct proof, section C above.

5435 cobe', (so' -beh)

Used three times in the A.V., as wine, drink and drunken
 “drink,” Hos 4:18 (margin “carouse”); Nah 1:10).

Isaiah 1:22 Thy silver <03701> is become dross <05509>, thy wine <05435> mixed <04107> (8803) with water <04325>:

Hosea 4:18 Their drink <05435> is sour <05493> (8804): they have committed whoredom <02181> (8689) continually <02181> (8687): her rulers <04043> with shame <07036> do love <0157> (8804), Give <03051> (8798) ye.

Nahum 1:10 For while they be folden together <05440> (8803) as thorns <05518>, and while they are drunken <05433> (8803) as drunkards <05435>, they shall be devoured <0398> (8795) as stubble <07179> fully <04392> dry <03002>.

Note on Isaiah 1:22 and Hosea 4:18 both these verses convey the same idea. "Wine mixed with water" and "Their drink is sour" indicate that it had become undrinkable. The diluting of wine with water was practiced in New Testament times. In the Old Testament, however this was never done willingly.

The context and subject matter of all three verses exclude any idea of grape juice.

04469 mamcak, (mam-sawk')

Used two times in the A.V., as mixed wine and drink offering. This seems to refer to wine mixed with drugs and spices to increase its potency.

Proverbs 23:30 They that tarry long <0309> (8764) at the wine <03196>; they that go <0935> (8802) to seek <02713> (8800) mixed wine <04469>.

Clearly both the yarin and the mamcak are alcoholic in Proverbs 23:30

Isaiah 65:11 ¶ But ye are they that forsake <05800> (8802) the LORD <03068>, that forget <07913> my holy <06944> mountain <02022>, that prepare <06186> (8802) a table <07979> for that troop <01409> (8677) <01408>, and that furnish <04390> (8764) the drink offering <04469> unto that number <04507>. {troop: or, Gad} {number: or, Meni, a pagan god}

Again the concept of grape juice is completely out of place.

08105 shemer, (sheh' -mer)

This is used five times in the A.V., four times as lees and once as dregs. In Isaiah 25:6 it is translated as "wines in the lees" i.e. mature or old wine.

Isaiah 25:6 ¶ And in this mountain <02022> shall the LORD <03068> of hosts <06635> make <06213> (8804) unto all people <05971> a feast <04960> of fat things <08081>, a feast <04960> of wines on the lees <08105>, of fat things <08081> full of marrow <04229> (8794), of wines on the lees <08105> well refined <02212> (8794)

06025 `enab, (ay-nawb')

Used nineteen times in the A.V., once as wine in Hosea 3:1 where the meaning is clearly fermented wine, and eighteen times as grape or grapes.

Then said <0559> (8799) the LORD <03068> unto me, Go <03212> (8798) yet, love <0157> (8798) a woman <0802> beloved <0157> (8803) of her friend <07453>, yet an adulteress <05003> (8764), according to the love <0160> of the LORD <03068> toward the children <01121> of Israel <03478>, who look <06437> (8802) to other <0312> gods <0430>, and love <0157> (8802) flagons <0809> of wine <06025>.

This passage, in harmony with our findings above, shows that wine means fermented and therefore alcoholic wine not grape juice. Any other interpretation leads to ridiculous conclusions. Who would wish to substitute "flagons of grape juice" for "flagons of wine" in the above passage? This passage is interesting for another reason as well. Here is a word that normally means grape or grapes yet in the context of this verse it can only be translated as wine.

Section C. New Testament

3631 oinos, (oy' -nos) &

This is the primary word for wine in the New Testament. It is used as wine thirty-two times in the A.V., sometimes in the metaphoric sense of God's wrath.

3943 paroinos, (par' -oy-nos)

This is used twice in the A.V., both times as 'given to wine'. In both cases, 1 Tim. 3:1 & Titus 1:7 wine clearly means fermented (alcoholic) wine. Paroinos is derived from two other Greek words, para (3844 para) which means 'near, by, or besides and oinos the common New Testament word for wine. It is being included here due to its close association to oinos.

Oinos as alcoholic wine

Direct Proof

As can be easily determined there are far fewer references to wine in the New Testament than in the Old. What is especially interesting is the fact that the evidence for the alcoholic nature of wine is even stronger in the New Testament than in the Old. We will examine this evidence under several headings.

A. Wine bottles

Matthew 9:17 Neither <3761> do men put <906> (5719) new <3501> wine <3631> into <1519> old <3820> bottles <779>; else <1490> the bottles <779> break <4486> (5743), and <2532> the wine <3631> runneth out <1632> (5743), and <2532> the bottles <779> perish <622> (5698): but <235> they put <906> (5719) new <3501> wine <3631> into <1519> new <2537> bottles <779>, and <2532> both <297> are preserved <4933> (5743).

Mark 2:22 And <2532> no man <3762> putteth <906> (5719) new <3501> wine <3631> into <1519> old <3820> bottles <779>; else <1490> the new <3501> wine <3631> doth burst <4486> (5719) the bottles <779>, and <2532> the wine <3631> is spilled <1632> (5743), and <2532> the bottles <779> will be marred <622> (5698): but <235> new <3501> wine <3631> must be put <992> into <1519> new <2537> bottles <779>.

Luke 5:37 And <2532> no man <3762> putteth <906> (5719) new <3501> wine <3631> into <1519> old <3820> bottles <779>; else <1490> the new <3501> wine <3631> will burst <4486> (5692) the bottles <779>, and <2532> <846> be spilled <1632> (5701), and <2532> the bottles <779> shall perish <622> (5698).

Luke 5:38 But <235> new <3501> wine <3631> must be put <992> into <1519> new <2537> bottles <779>; and <2532> both <297> are preserved <4933> (5743).

Luke 5:39 No man <3762> also <2532> having drunk <4095> (5631) old <3820> wine straightway <2112> desireth <2309> (5719) new <3501>: for <1063> he saith <3004> (5719), The old <3820> is <2076> (5748) better <5543>.

These three verses account for ten of the thirty-two times oinos is used. As is quite common in the synoptic Gospels we have three accounts of the same parable. In each instance the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus and asked Him why they and the Pharisees often fasted but His disciples did not fast. Jesus replied with several short illustrations. Needless to say it is the spiritual deeper meaning that is the most important. Jesus is contrasting the old legal system of the Old Testament and those who still followed that path with the Gospel and those who are saved by it. For our purposes the superficial surface meaning needs to be examined.

The bottles here were made from animal skins, most likely goatskins. The skin was tanned and most of the hair removed. It was then turned inside out, with the neck becoming the opening where the wine was poured in and out. The other openings were tied off with cords. Old pre-used skins are brittle and under pressure would crack, spilling the contents and in essence breaking the bottle. The pressure comes from the new, still fermenting wine. Without fermentation there would be no pressure. The fact that there was fermentation shows that the oinos was not grape juice but alcoholic wine.

Luke's account adds an additional verse, which is of particular significance for our purposes. Luke explains why it was so important for the wine to be preserved. In verse thirty-nine Luke states a well-known fact that mature aged wine is preferable to the current year's vintage, which has not had time to mellow. It should be noted that the word oinos does not actually appear in this passage. Modern day commentators have correctly added the word wine as the immediate context makes it completely obvious that this is the intended meaning.

If we substitute grape juice for wine in this or any of the passages that make up the context of this section the passage becomes meaningless. Alcoholic wine and that alone is the clear, unmistakable meaning of the oinos in these passages.

B. The wedding feast

The concept of mature and immature wine is crucial point in these passages as well.

John 2:3 And <2532> when they wanted <5302> (5660) wine <3631>, the mother <3384> of Jesus <2424> saith <3004> (5719) unto <4314> him <846>, They have <2192> (5719) no <3756> wine <3631>.

John 2:9 <1161> When <5613> the ruler of the feast <755> had tasted <1089> (5662) the water <5204> that was made <1096> (5772) wine <3631>, and <2532> knew <1492> (5715) not <3756> whence <4159> it was <2076> (5748): (but <1161> the servants <1249> which <3588> drew <501> (5761) the water <5204> knew <1492> (5715);) the governor of the feast <755> called <5455> (5719) the bridegroom <3566>,

John 2:10 And <2532> saith <3004> (5719) unto him <846>, Every <3956> man <444> at the beginning <4412> doth set forth <5087> (5719) good <2570> wine <3631>; and <2532> when <3752> men have well drunk <3184> (5686), then <5119> that which is worse <1640>: but thou <4771> hast kept <5083> (5758) the good <2570> wine <3631> until <2193> now <737>.

John 4:46 So <3767> Jesus <2424> came <2064> (5627) again <3825> into <1519> Cana <2580> of Galilee <1056>, where <3699> he made <4160> (5656) the water <5204> wine <3631>. And <2532> there was <2258> (5713) a certain <5100> nobleman <937>, whose <3739> son <5207> was sick <770> (5707) at <1722> Capernaum <2584>.

These verses account for another six occurrences of oinos. This is a most interesting and important account. The reference in John 4:46 to this miracle show how significant it is. Even on the surface it is obvious that non-alcoholic grape juice cannot be the principle actor in this dramatic account. This is the first of many public miracles that the Lord Jesus Christ would perform. The significance or purpose of these miracles was to show in a completely unmistakable way that Jesus was God. When we seek to deny the plain obvious meaning of the word wine in these passages we are in essence robbing God of His glory. It would have been a far inferior miracle to change water into grape juice then to change water into mature mellow aged wine. The one requires simply squeezing some fresh grapes, while the other implies that plus a period of more than a year for the grape juice to ferment and age.

John 2:10 provides even more direct proof of this. Here we have a plain statement of fact, which is just as true today as it was then. When people are invited to a party where alcoholic beverages are being served it is the common custom to provide the best of the food and drink while every one is sober. When the party has gone on for some time and many of the guests are in a mellow mood less care can be taken with what is served as no one will particularly notice. The whole point of this passage is that the wine of the miracle was of such a quality that the ruler of the feast was amazed that it was served last when few if any would appreciate its quality.

The King James Version reads "When men have well drunk". The Greek word *methuo* (Strong's number 3184) means, "To drink to intoxication". It is used here in John 2:10 and in some of the other passages we are examining. How could the guests have reached this degree of intoxication on grape juice? Clearly *oinos* in these passages can only be alcoholic wine.

Before we continue one thing must be stated clearly. God is in no way condoning drunkenness in these passages. We will examine this in some detail in the last section. All that is being presented here is what happened in a real life, real time marriage. If Jesus had not turned the water into wine they would have been in the same condition. The purpose of the wine was not to cause drunkenness and disorder but to reveal the power and authority that Christ had within Him. Sin does not reside in inanimate objects like wine or money it resides in the heart of man. It is our use or misuse of God's gifts that determine our fate, not the gift itself.

C. Prohibitions against drinking excess wine

Here is a third group of related passages, which clearly show the alcoholic nature of *oinos*.

Verses where *oinos* is used:

Ephesians 5:18 And <2532> be <3182> <0> not <3361> drunk <3182> (5745) with wine <3631>, wherein <1722> <3739> is <2076> (5748) excess <810>; but <235> be filled <4137> (5744) with <1722> the Spirit <4151>;
 1 Timothy 3:8 ¶ Likewise <5615> must the deacons <1249> be grave <4586>, not <3361> doubletongued <1351>, not <3361> given <4337> (5723) to much <4183> wine <3631>, not <3361> greedy of filthy lucre <146>;
 Titus 2:3 The aged women <4247> likewise <5615>, that they be in <1722> behavior <2688> as becometh holiness <2412>, not <3361> false accusers <1228>, not <3361> given <1402> (5772) to much <4183> wine <3631>, teachers of good things <2567>;

Verses where *paroinos* is used:

1 Timothy 3:3 Not <3361> given to wine <3943>, no <3361> striker <4131>, not <3361> greedy of filthy lucre <146>; but <235> patient <1933>, not a brawler <269>, not covetous <866>;
 Titus 1:7 For <1063> a bishop <1985> must <1163> (5748) be <1511> (5750) blameless <410>, as <5613> the steward <3623> of God <2316>; not <3361> self willed <829>, not <3361> soon angry <3711>, not <3361> given to wine <3943>, no <3361> striker <4131>, not <3361> given to filthy lucre <146>;

Notes on Ephesians 5:18:

While these passages have a similar theme Ephesians 5:18 is different in some respects. Most importantly it is a general command to every Christian, man or woman student or teacher. It is a command without qualification. Do not ever, under any conditions, become drunk. Paul singles out wine, not because it was the only means to induce drunkenness, but because it was, at the time, the most common. This prohibition includes other types of alcoholic beverages and other substances. Anything that so alters the mind that the recipient is no longer able to function in a coherent normal manner. It is the abuse, not the use of wine that is prohibited. We will see this in the next section where 1 Timothy will be examined. For our purpose now, however it is obvious that *oinos* is alcoholic and capable of causing drunkenness if care was not taken.

This passage will be examined in greater detail in the last section.

Notes on the passages from Timothy and Titus:

These verses were written with regard to a specific class or type of Christian, Bishops, Deacons and older women. That such specific instructions were needed is not surprising. Each of these types of people is subject to unique pressures. While all Christians are commanded not to become drunk these in particular must be extra diligent.

The word translated as "given" in Titus 2:3 is of particular interest. It is (1402) douloo doo-lo' -o. This word has the meaning of "to enslave or subject". In other words the older women must not be addicted to wine; they must be its master and not allow it to control them. There is no thought of wine being forbidden, only of its not being abused.

Two different words are used in the other three passages. These have the meaning of "to pay attention to and to be near". Admittedly the connotation here is not as strong as in douloo, but the idea is similar. God and God alone must be our support and comfort. His Spirit should fill and sustain us, not alcoholic beverages. Each of the things that are forbidden in these passages has legitimate uses. Greed, for example is forbidden, but that does not mean that it is wrong to own a house or to acquire some degree of wealth. To accuse someone falsely will disqualify, but that does not mean that we must never accuse. Excess drinking of grape juice may cause some physical discomfort, but it should be apparent that that is not what Paul is talking about.

For our purposes if oinos is grape juice how could any of this make sense? The oinos was not only alcoholic, it was capable of producing drunkenness and specific instructions had to be given about the correct way of using this substance. Notice in each case the prohibition is against over use, but not the use of wine.

D. Wine as medicine.

Luke 10:34 And <2532> went <4334> (5631) to him, and bound up <2611> (5656) his <846> wounds <5134>, pouring in <2022> (5723) oil <1637> and <2532> wine <3631>, and <1161> set <1913> (5660) him <846> on <1909> his own <2398> beast <2934>, and brought <71> (5627) him <846> to <1519> an inn <3829>, and <2532> took care <1959> (5675) of him <846>.

1 Timothy 5:23 Drink <5202> <0> no longer <3371> water <5202> (5720), but <235> use <5530> (5737) a little <3641> wine <3631> for <1223> thy <4675> stomach's sake <4751> and <2532> thine <4675> often <4437> infirmities <769>.

Here we have both the external and internal use of wine as a type of medicine. In each case it is the alcohol that gives the oinos its medicinal properties. The passage from 1 Timothy is interesting because it is in the same book where the misuse of oinos is strictly forbidden. Timothy was one of the leaders or bishops of the church at this time. Paul, in the same letter, using the same exact word, forbids the overuse of wine while advocating its moderate use when needed. What could be clearer? The use of wine is not forbidden only its misuse.

E. Wine used in a metamorphic sense.

These can be divided into two different groups:

Wine as the wrath of God:

Revelation 14:10 The same <846> <2532> shall drink <4095> (5695) of <1537> the wine <3631> of the wrath <2372> of God <2316>, which <3588> is poured out <2767> (5772) without mixture <194> into <1722> the cup <4221> of his <846> indignation <3709>; and <2532> he shall be tormented <928> (5701) with <1722> fire <4442> and <2532> brimstone <2303> in the presence <1799> of the holy <40> angels <32>, and <2532> in the presence <1799> of the Lamb <721>:

Revelation 16:19 And <2532> the great <3173> city <4172> was divided <1096> (5633) into <1519> three <5140> parts <3313>, and <2532> the cities <4172> of the nations <1484> fell <4098> (5627): and <2532> great <3173> Babylon <897> came in remembrance <3415> (5681) before <1799> God <2316>, to give <1325> (5629) unto her <846> the cup <4221> of the wine <3631> of the fierceness <2372> of his <846> wrath <3709>.

Wine as wrath or the wrath of fornication:

Revelation 14:8 And <2532> there followed <190> (5656) another <243> angel <32>, saying <3004> (5723), Babylon <897> is fallen <4098> (5627), is fallen <4098> (5627), that great <3173> city <4172>, because <3754> she made <4222> <0> all <3956> nations <1484> drink <4222> (5758) of <1537> the wine <3631> of the wrath <2372> of her <846> fornication <4202>.

Revelation 17:2 With <3326> whom <3739> the kings <935> of the earth <1093> have committed fornication <4203> (5656), and <2532> the inhabitants <2730> (5723) of the earth <1093> have been made drunk <3184> (5681) with <1537> the wine <3631> of her <846> fornication <4202>.

Revelation 18:3 For <3754> all <3956> nations <1484> have drunk <4095> (5758) of <1537> the wine <3631> of the wrath <2372> of her <846> fornication <4202>, and <2532> the kings <935> of the earth <1093> have committed fornication <4203> (5656) with <3326> her <846>, and <2532> the merchants <1713> of the earth <1093> are waxed rich <4147> (5656) through <1537> the abundance <1411> of her <846> delicacies <4764>.

There is a common Greek word in four of the five passages above. This word is (2372) thumos thoo-mos' . It is translated as "wrath" or "fierceness of his wrath". The "New Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament" (copyright 1979,1881), refers to these four passages. This reference speaks of the "wine of passion" or "inflaming wine" that "either drives the drinker mad or kills him with deadly heat". Grape juice is simply out of the question, it would not only render these passages meaningless, it would also make a mockery of God's just wrath and mankind's sinfulness.

The remaining verse, Revelation 17:2, has a different Greek word it is (3184) methuo meth-oo' -o. Here and in 17:6 it is used in the figurative sense of being intoxicated with blood or the profuse shedding of innocent blood. Is grape juice a suitable figure of this?

F. Wine and strong drink.

Luke 1:15 For <1063> he shall be <2071> (5704) great <3173> in the sight <1799> of the Lord <2962>, and <2532> shall drink <4095> (5632) neither <3364> wine <3631> nor <2532> strong drink <4608>; and <2532> he shall be filled <4130> (5701) with the Holy <40> Ghost <4151>, even <2089> from <1537> his <846> mother's <3384> womb <2836>.

This verse is about John the Baptist. He was unique in many ways. One of which was that from birth he would never drink alcoholic beverages. This brings to mind Ephesians 5:18 which we studied above. As we shall see many things may be lawful in and of themselves. Just because we have full permission to do something it does not automatically follow that we must do that thing. Even though the vast majority of Jews drank wine and other fermented beverages at this time, John was going to be different. In our society today it is normal to marry. No one thinks it odd if a young man or woman wants to marry. For some, however, this is not God's will; He would have that person remain single in order to better serve and worship Himself. This is the same idea here John would find his fulfillment and pleasure in God alone, not in the normal comforts of the world.

The fact that wine is so closely linked to "strong drink" shows that it was alcoholic. The Greek word for strong drink in this verse is sikera. It means an intoxicating beverage that is different from wine. It may have been made from a variety of ingredients such as grain, dates or honey. The point is both the oinos and the sikera were alcoholic.

Indirect Proof

There are two other verses where oinos is used that offer less direct proof.

Mark 15:23 And <2532> they gave <1325> (5707) him <846> to drink <4095> (5629) wine <3631> mingled with myrrh <4669> (5772): but <1161> he received <2983> (5627) it not <3756>.

We examined "mixed wine" above with the word mamcak. It was a common practice to mix fermented wine with various spices and drugs to increase their effect.

Romans 14:21 It is good <2570> neither <3361> to eat <5315> (5629) flesh <2907>, nor <3366> to drink <4095> (5629) wine <3631>, nor <3366> any thing whereby <1722> <3739> thy <4675> brother <80> stumbleth <4350> (5719), or <2228> is offended <4624> (5743), or <2228> is made weak <770> (5719).

This passage will be examined in some detail below. It should be obvious that Paul does not mean grape juice. Both the meat and the wine were used in sacrifices to idols.

Oinos as wine

Luke 7:33 For <1063> John <2491> the Baptist <910> came <2064> (5754) neither <3383> eating <2068> (5723) bread <740> nor <3383> drinking <4095> (5723) wine <3631>; and <2532> ye say <3004> (5719), He hath <2192> (5719) a devil <1140>.

Revelation 6:6 And <2532> I heard <191> (5656) a voice <5456> in <1722> the midst <3319> of the four <5064> beasts <2226> say <3004> (5723), A measure <5518> of wheat <4621> for a penny <1220>, and <2532> three <5140> measures <5518> of barley <2915> for a penny <1220>; and <2532> see thou hurt <91> (5661) not <3361> the oil <1637> and <2532> the wine <3631>.

Revelation 18:13 And <2532> cinnamon <2792>, and <2532> odours <2368>, and <2532> ointments <3464>, and <2532> frankincense <3030>, and <2532> wine <3631>, and <2532> oil <1637>, and <2532> fine flour <4585>, and <2532> wheat <4621>, and <2532> beasts <2934>, and <2532> sheep <4263>, and <2532> horses <2462>, and <2532> chariots <4480>, and <2532> slaves <4983>, and <2532> souls <5590> of men <444>.

We have examined passages in which oinos is used twenty-nine times. In each of these cases the word refers to an alcoholic beverage. There is simply no reason to give this word a different meaning in the three remaining passages above. In fact to do so would be an arbitrary act. If this procedure were put into practice with regard to other words the Bible would quickly be reduced to a meaningless collection of words with no practical, moral or spiritual value.

3632 oinophlugia, (oy-nof-loog-ee' -ah)

This is used once in the A.V.

1 Peter 4:3 For <1063> the time <5550> past <3928> (5756) of our life <979> may suffice <713> us <2254> to have wrought <2716> (5664) the will <2307> of the Gentiles <1484>, when we walked <4198> (5768) in <1722> lasciviousness <766>, lusts <1939>, excess of wine <3632>, revellings <2970>, banquetings <4224>, and <2532> abominable <111> idolatries <1495>:

It is translated as 'excess of wine' i.e. drunkenness. Oinophlugia is taken from a form of the base of another word, 5397 phluaros, (floo' -ar-os). The idea is of an overflow or excess of wine i.e. drunkenness. The close association of oinophlugia to oinos indicates the alcoholic nature of oinos.

1098 gleukos (glyoo' -kos)

This is used once in the A.V. in Acts 2:13 where it is translated 'new wine'.

Acts 2:13 <1161> Others <2087> mocking <5512> (5723) said <3004> (5707), <3754> These men are <1526> (5748) full <3325> (5772) of new wine <1098>.

It's proper meaning is sweet wine, or fresh wine, the sweet juice pressed from the grape. It is similar to the Greek word glukus (1099 glukus, (gloo-koos') which is must. Its use in Acts 2:13 is most interesting. In this verse it clearly refers to alcoholic fermented wine and not to plain grape juice. So we have here a Greek word for 'grape juice' used only once in the New Testament and then for strongly alcoholic wine. There is no hint of non-alcoholic wine or of grape juice in the New Testament.

Wine in the Bible is the same as wine today. It may be vintage or new, red or white, imported or exported, diluted with water or full strength. In every case there is a common property, alcohol.

Section D. The Lord's Supper

As can be seen in verse twenty-nine below the Lord Jesus used a particular phrase that we must now examine. The phrase He used is "fruit of the vine". This passage is also found in the two parallel passages Mark 14:12-17 and Luke 22:7-18. What is the "fruit of the vine"?

Matthew 26:26-29

26 ¶ And <1161> as they <846> were eating <2068> (5723), Jesus <2424> took <2983> (5631) bread <740>, and <2532> blessed <2127> (5660) it, and brake <2806> (5656) it, and <2532> gave <1325> (5707) it to the disciples <3101>, and <2532> said <2036> (5627), Take <2983> (5628), eat <5315> (5628); this <5124> is <2076> (5748) my <3450> body <4983>. {blessed it: many Greek copies have gave thanks} 27 And <2532> he took <2983> (5631) the cup <4221>, and <2532> gave thanks <2168> (5660), and gave <1325> (5656) it to them <846>, saying <3004> (5723), Drink ye <4095> (5628) all <3956> of <1537> it <846>; 28 For <1063> this <5124> is <2076> (5748) my <3450> blood <129> of the new <2537> testament <1242>, which <3588> is shed <1632> (5746) for <4012> many <4183> for <1519> the remission <859> of sins <266>.

29 But <1161> I say <3004> (5719) unto you <5213>, I will <4095> <0> not <3754> <3364> drink <4095> (5632) henceforth <575> <737> of <1537> this <5127> fruit <1081> of the vine <288>, until <2193> that <1565> day <2250> when <3752> I drink <4095> (5725) it <846> new <2537> with <3326> you <5216> in <1722> my <3450> Father's <3962> kingdom <932>.

There are several things to consider here, but before we examine this subject an important truth must be stated. However we answer this question the primary importance of "the cup" is in what it implies. Christ's shed blood and all that it signifies is of primary importance, not what was inside the cup at the Last Supper. It is very easy to worship the gift rather than the giver. However we celebrate the Lord's Supper, with wine or with grape juice, it is the attitude of our heart and mind towards Christ's death and resurrection that is of primary importance. It is always important, however, to be as accurate as possible in our understanding of the Word of God. For this reason we will briefly examine this subject.

Clearly Jesus is not referring to a cluster of grapes, the actual or literal "fruit of the vine". He is drinking liquid from a cup, so we have only two choices fermented wine of some form or grape juice. Up to this point in our study emphasis has been placed on the meaning of the different Hebrew and Greek words that we have been studying. Unfortunately, as any serious Bible student knows, this approach cannot be used in every passage. There are many times when the original meaning of the various words fail to shed further light on the meaning of a particular verse. Even when they do shed much light other factors must be taken into consideration. This can be clearly seen in the previous sections of this study. We must employ all the means available to get as accurate understanding as possible.

One of these tools is to compare the passage under consideration with other parts of the Bible. The following passages are taken from the Old Testament section above. As they show it was a common practice among the Jews to view

fermented wine as the end product, (or figuratively speaking the fruit), of the vine. In the same way when we think of dairy cattle we automatically think of milk as this is the most common end product produced from the cattle.

Judges 9:13 And the vine <01612> said <0559> (8799) unto them, Should I leave <02308> (8804) my wine <08492>, which cheereth <08055> (8764) God <0430> and man <0582>, and go <01980> (8804) to be promoted <05128> (8800) over the trees <06086>?

Isaiah 16:10 And gladness <08057> is taken away <0622> (8738), and joy <01524> out of the plentiful field <03759>; and in the vineyards <03754> there shall be no singing <07442> (8792), neither shall there be shouting <07321> (8783): the treaders <01869> (8802) shall tread out <01869> (8799) no wine <03196> in their presses <03342>; I have made their vintage shouting <01959> to cease <07673> (8689).

Isaiah 24:7 The new wine <08492> mourneth <056> (8804), the vine <01612> languisheth <0535> (8797), all the merryhearted <08056> <03820> do sigh <0584> (8738).

Isaiah 65:8 ¶ Thus saith <0559> (8804) the LORD <03068>, As the new wine <08492> is found <04672> (8735) in the cluster <0811>, and one saith <0559> (8804), Destroy <07843> (8686) it not; for a blessing <01293> is in it: so will I do <06213> (8799) for my servants <05650>' sakes, that I may not destroy <07843> (8687) them all.

Amos 9:13 Behold, the days <03117> come <0935> (8802), saith <05002> (8803) the LORD <03068>, that the plowman <02790> (8802) shall overtake <05066> (8738) the reaper <07114> (8802), and the treader <01869> (8802) of grapes <06025> him that soweth <04900> (8802) seed <02233>; and the mountains <02022> shall drop <05197> (8689) sweet wine <06071>, and all the hills <01389> shall melt <04127> (8709)

There is also a New Testament passage that puts this matter beyond dispute. It is 1 Corinthians 11:18-34. In this section Paul takes up the subject of the Lord's Supper. He first of all takes the Corinthians to task for the way they are observing it. Starting in 23 he lays out in a formal manner how this Blessed Sacrament should be observed. It should be noted that very few churches of any denomination practice this correctly. Verses 21 and 22 are of particular importance to our purposes in this study. They read as follows:

For <1063> in <1722> eating <5315> (5629) every one <1538> taketh before <4301> (5719) other his own <2398> supper <1173>: and <2532> one <3739> <3303> is hungry <3983> (5719), and <1161> another <3739> is drunken <3184> (5719). What <1063>? have ye <2192> (5719) not <3378> houses <3614> to eat <2068> (5721) and <2532> to drink <4095> (5721) in <1519>? or <2228> despise ye <2706> (5719) the church <1577> of God <2316>, and <2532> shame <2617> (5719) them that have <2192> (5723) not <3361>? What <5101> shall I say <2036> (5632) to you <5213>? shall I praise <1867> (5661) you <5209> in <1722> this <5129>? I praise <1867> (5719) you not <3756>. {have not: or, are poor?}

The Greek word used in verse 21 for "drunken" is methuo. We studied this word earlier when we looked at John 2:10. Here it means to be drunk on wine. The Corinthians were gathering together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Some were stuffing themselves with food while others were actually getting drunk! If the wine of the communion meal was not fermented wine how were they getting drunk? Note Paul's answer in verse 22. Does he suggest that they use grape juice instead of wine? We can say categorically that he does not do this. He tells them to do their eating and drinking at home so that when they gather for the common meal they will not need to over eat or over drink.

A third consideration is that the Passover meal took place in April. There would be no fresh grapes available till June at the earliest. This means that if Jesus was drinking grape juice it would have had to be preserved for at least six or seven months. Even fermented wine could only be kept for two or three years at a time. Except for a miracle it would have been all but impossible to keep grape juice fresh for so many months. Matthew, Mark and Luke have left us a detailed account of what actually happened. The disciples prepared a Passover meal in the manner in which all the Jews at the time prepared it. Jesus took the most common elements of the meal the bread and the wine and consecrated them, giving us the sacrament of the Lords Supper.

It was the established custom of the Jews at this time to take fermented wine and dilute it with water and use this mixture for the Passover meal. This wine is called paschal wine and is undoubtedly what constituted the "fruit of the vine" of the Lord's Supper. It is equally certain that red wine was used, as this would be the only fitting symbol for the Lord's shed blood. Unless there are overriding considerations it would be preferable to follow the Lord's example and use red wine and not grape juice for the Lord's Supper. It is interesting to note how inconsistent some fellowships are. They take what amounts to pride in how carefully they follow the practice of the New Testament Church. Yet most of these fellowships believe in total abstinence. It would be unthinkable, so they say to use wine, even diluted wine, in the Communion meal. As was stated at the beginning of this section this is not of primary importance. It is the attitude of our heart that is most important. We must ask, however, if we are willing to err on this subject is it not possible that we err in others as well?

John 4:23 But <235> the hour <5610> cometh <2064> (5736), and <2532> now <3568> is <2076> (5748), when <3753> the true <228> worshippers <4353> shall worship <4352> (5692) the Father <3962> in <1722> spirit <4151> and <2532> in truth <225>: for <2532> <1063> the Father <3962> seeketh <2212> (5719) such <5108> to worship <4352> (5723) him <846>.

Part Two Practical Implications:

The evidence of the Bible is undeniable, wine, in the Bible, is a fermented and therefore an alcoholic beverage. It is identical in its common attributes to the wine of twentieth century. We will now examine the implications of this.

Before we begin it may be worth while to state the obvious: no one has to drink alcoholic beverages if they do not want to. Indeed, in the world as it is today, it would be preferable to keep its use to a minimum. The apostle Paul strongly recommended that Christians remained unmarried do to the times in which he lived. Never the less marriage was not forbidden and in many cases was necessary. I believe the same is true with regard to alcoholic beverages. They have a legitimate purpose, if used correctly. The key is to do whatever leads us away from sinful actions and closer to God. For one person this may be complete abstinence for another it may permit the moderate use of wine or similar beverages. In many countries today it is far safer to drink wine than to drink water, in other cases there may be clear medical benefits. In some cases it may be a simple matter of enjoying the things that God has given us to enjoy. One thing is of fundamental importance; to accurately follow what the Bible teaches. The Bible does not teach total abstinence or anything even approaching that. By all means do not drink wine if you do not want to, but do not use the Bible as your reason.

Section A. Are Christians forbidden to drink wine?

1 Corinthians 6:12 ¶ All things <3956> are lawful <1832> (5748) unto me <3427>, but <235> all things <3956> are <4851> <0> not <3756> expedient <4851> (5719): all things <3956> are lawful <1832> (5748) for me <3427>, but <235> I <1473> will <1850> <0> not <3756> be brought under the power <1850> (5701) of <5259> any <5100>. {Expedient: or, profitable}

1 Corinthians 10:23 ¶ All things <3956> are lawful <1832> (5748) for me <3427>, but <235> all things <3956> are <4851> <0> not <3756> expedient <4851> (5719): all things <3956> are lawful <1832> (5748) for me <3427>, but <235> all things <3956> edify <3618> (5719) not <3756>. {expedient: or, profitable}

1 Timothy 4:3-7 Forbidding <2967> (5723) to marry <1060> (5721), and commanding to abstain from <567> (5733) meats <1033>, which <3739> God <2316> hath created <2936> (5656) to <1519> be received <3336> with <3326> thanksgiving <2169> of them which believe <4103> and <2532> know <1921> (5761) the truth <225>. For <3754> every <3956> creature <2938> of God <2316> is good <2570>, and <2532> nothing <3762> to be refused <579>, if it be received <2983> (5746) with <3326> thanksgiving <2169>:

For <1063> it is sanctified <37> (5743) by <1223> the word <3056> of God <2316> and <2532> prayer <1783>. ¶ If thou put <5294> <0> the brethren <80> in remembrance <5294> (5734) of these things <5023>, thou shalt be <2071> (5704) a good <2570> minister <1249> of Jesus <2424> Christ <5547>, nourished up <1789> (5746) in the words <3056> of faith <4102> and <2532> of good <2570> doctrine <1319>, whereunto <3739> thou hast attained <3877> (5758). But <1161> refuse <3868> (5737) profane <952> and <2532> old wives <1126>' fables <3454>, and <1161> exercise <1128> (5720) thyself <4572> rather unto <4314> godliness <2150>.

1 Timothy 5:23 Drink <5202> <0> no longer <3371> water <5202> (5720), but <235> use <5530> (5737) a little <3641> wine <3631> for <1223> thy <4675> stomach's sake <4751> and <2532> thine <4675> often <4437> infirmities <769>.

There are, as the saying goes, two sides to every coin. While no one is obligated to drink alcoholic beverages are Christians forbidden to do so? Is there any basis for this commonly held belief? The Bible advocates the drinking of wine in moderation (1Timothy 5:23, see above). All that God has provided is good if it is received with thanksgiving (1Timothy 4:3-7, see above). Why then do so many Christians oppose this teaching? I think this is due in part to a fundamental misunderstanding. It is not the physical thing but our misuse of it that causes us to sin. The following words of the Lord Jesus Christ from Mark 7:18- 23 illustrate this.

And <2532> he saith <3004> (5719) unto them <846>, Are <2075> (5748) ye <5210> so <3779> without understanding <801> also <2532>? Do ye <3539> <0> not <3756> perceive <3539> (5719), that <3754> whatsoever thing <3956> from without <1855> entereth <1531> (5740) into <1519> the man <444>, it cannot <3756> <1410> (5736) defile <2840> (5658) him <846>; Because <3754> it entereth <1531> (5736) not <3756> into <1519> his <846> heart <2588>, but <235> into <1519> the belly <2836>, and <2532> goeth out <1607> (5736) into <1519> the draught <856>, purging <2511> (5723) all <3956> meats <1033>?

And <1161> he said <3004> (5707), <3754> That which cometh <1607> (5740) out of <1537> the man <444>, that <1565> defileth <2840> (5719) the man <444>. For <1063> from within <2081>, out of <1537> the heart <2588> of men <444>, proceed <1607> (5736) evil <2556> thoughts <1261>, adulteries <3430>, fornications <4202>, murders <5408>, Thefts <2829>, covetousness <4124>, wickedness <4189>, deceit <1388>, lasciviousness <766>, an evil <4190> eye <3788>, blasphemy <988>, pride <5243>, foolishness <877>: {covetousness...: Gr. covetousnesses, wickednesses} All <3956> these <5023> evil things <4190> come <1607> (5736) from within <2081>, and <2532> defile <2840> (5719) the man <444>.

Obviously this does not give us license to eat or drink anything we like. Some drugs for instance are harmful by their very nature. Any substance that alters our mind and body to the point that we are no longer in control of our faculties is harmful. If one glass of wine affects us to the extent that we are not in control then it is harmful and must be avoided. On the other hand if an individual can have several glasses of wine or some other alcoholic beverage with no appreciable effect it is not harmful in and of its self. However as we shall see we must always consider our weaker brothers and sisters.

It may be helpful to briefly examine what the Scripture says about money. I Timothy 6:10 says:

For <1063> the love of money <5365> is <2076> (5748) the root <4491> of all <3956> evil <2556>: which <3739> while some <5100> coveted after <3713> (5734), they have erred <635> (5681) from <575> the faith <4102>, and <2532> pierced <4044> <0> themselves <1438> through <4044> (5656) with many <4183> sorrows <3601>. {erred: or, been seduced}

This passage is often misquoted as "money is the root of all evil". It is not money in and of its self, but the love of money, or greed, which is the fountain from which all the other evils come from. Those who would prohibit the use of wine would do well to consider the following point. If they were consistent in they're thinking about wine why do they still use money? If wine in and of its self is so evil that it must be avoided at all costs how can we use money? Surely money is at least as evil as wine, yet no one to my knowledge has ever suggested that we go back to the barter system for our daily transactions. I do not even know of anyone who would suggest that it is wrong to have some saving in the bank.

We will examine one other passage on this subject:

Ephesians 5:18 And <2532> be <3182> <0> not <3361> drunk <3182> (5745) with wine <3631>, wherein <1722> <3739> is <2076> (5748) excess <810>; but <235> be filled <4137> (5744) with <1722> the Spirit <4151>;

We, as true believers are forbidden to become drunk. Nothing could be clearer, excess drinking is forbidden. At the same time, however, this passage proves that Christians at that time drank wine and that this was lawful for them. Paul does not say, "Do not drink wine," he specifically says not to become drunk because that is excess. Excess is wrong, but moderation is not. There is simply no universal prohibition against drinking alcoholic beverages in the Bible. It is true that the Nazarite's took a vow, which prohibited them from eating or drinking any product that came from the vine. It is also true the Old Testament priests were not allowed to drink wine when they were on duty before the Lord. These are specific cases that applied to very limited groups of people.

The general rule or guide for the Christian is that unless something is specifically forbidden, (sex out side of marriage, murder, lust, drunkenness etc.) it is lawful. 1 Corinthians 6:12 & 10:23 quoted above shows that just because something is lawful it does not follow that it is profitable or useful. Also there are exceptions to most rules, there are things that have not been forbidden that are never the less unlawful. Wine and other alcoholic beverages are certainly not forbidden and in some cases are positively beneficial. Each person must decide for themselves and the decision its self may change with time and circumstances. The Christian man or women has one other factor to consider, the weaker brother or sister.

Section B. Romans 14:21, Thy Brother

Romans 14:21 It is good <2570> neither <3361> to eat <5315> (5629) flesh <2907>, nor <3366> to drink <4095> (5629) wine <3631>, nor <3366> any thing whereby <1722> <3739> thy <4675> brother <80> stumbleth <4350> (5719), or <2228> is offended <4624> (5743), or <2228> is made weak <770> (5719).

The Christian life is a life of constant balance. We are in this world yet not of this world. We have within us an "old man" and a "new man". We are free in the truest sense of that word, yet under the law of love. Sorting all this out in a practical day by day way is not always easy. On the one hand we may fall into bondage and on the other hand we are prone to over indulgence. This section concerns true believes and true believers alone. Everything Paul teaches on this subject is based upon both parties being saved. We do have a duty to the unsaved, but that will not be covered here.

Matthew Henry, one of the best known Bible Commentators, had this to say when writing about Romans 14:22 "In these indifferent things, thought we must never contradict our persuasion, yet we may sometimes conceal it, when the avowing of it will do more hurt than good." He has, I believe, in these few words summed up the whole duty of the Christian in this complex matter. There are two aspects to this problem. From the point of view of the stronger brother he must never deny or go back on what he knows to be the truth. To do so is to open the door to all kinds of error. Truth cannot be compromised. On the other hand we must exercise caution on how we use the truth we posses. Truth is in a very real sense power and power can either heal or hurt. When dealing with "indifferent things", like drinking wine, it is sometimes necessary to hide or conceal our knowledge from others in order to help them. The weaker brother also has a duty. He must not try and coerce the stronger brother into rejecting what he knows to be true. To do so would cause the stronger brother to sin. He must do what he feels necessary, (to drink no alcohol in this case), or he will be sinning. The weaker brother or sister may not be able to accept that it is lawful for the Christian to drink wine. In this case the stronger person must accept this and exercise caution so that the weaker person is not hurt by what they do. On the other hand the weaker person must not condemn the stronger but must accept that they stand or fall before God. Each has the responsibility to do what they feel in the heart is correct, while at the same time treating others with respect and love.

The problem today is that many Christians are of the weaker type. They are often in the majority or in positions of authority. They base their claim of total abstinence on the Bible falsely representing what it teaches. In essence they

are using every means, true or false to force compliance to their position. There is so much false teaching and confusion on this subject that we must spend some time on this subject.

Paul deals with the subject of meat and drink in three letters. These are Romans chapter fourteen and part of fifteen, 1 Corinthians chapter eight and Colossians 2:16,17. The passages from Romans and Corinthians deal with the weaker brother, while the passages from Colossians give the other side of this teaching.

A. Those that are strong

Colossians 2:8 - 17 reads as follows:

Beware <991> (5720) lest <3361> any man <5100> spoil <2071> (5704) <4812> (5723) you <5209> through <1223> philosophy <5385> and <2532> vain <2756> deceit <539>, after <2596> the tradition <3862> of men <444>, after <2596> the rudiments <4747> of the world <2889>, and <2532> not <3756> after <2596> Christ <5547>. {rudiments: or, elements} {make a prey: or, seduce you, or, lead you astray} For <3754> in <1722> him <846> dwelleth <2730> (5719) all <3956> the fulness <4138> of the Godhead <2320> bodily <4985>.

10 And <2532> ye are <2075> (5748) complete <4137> (5772) in <1722> him <846>, which <3739> is <2076> (5748) the head <2776> of all <3956> principality <746> and <2532> power <1849>: In <1722> whom <3739> also <2532> ye are circumcised <4059> (5681) with the circumcision <4061> made without hands <886>, in <1722> putting off <555> the body <4983> of the sins <266> of the flesh <4561> by <1722> the circumcision <4061> of Christ <5547>: Buried with <4916> (5651) him <846> in <1722> baptism <908>, wherein <1722> <3739> also <2532> ye are risen with <4891> (5681) him through <1223> the faith <4102> of the operation <1753> of God <2316>, who <3588> hath raised <1453> (5660) him <846> from <1537> the dead <3498>. And <2532> you <5209>, being <5607> (5752) dead <3498> in <1722> your sins <3900> and <2532> the uncircumcision <203> of your <5216> flesh <4561>, hath he quickened together <4806> (5656) with <4862> him <846>, having forgiven <5483> (5666) you <5213> all <3956> trespasses <3900>; Blotting out <1813> (5660) the handwriting <5498> of ordinances <1378> that was against <2596> us <2257>, which <3739> was <2258> (5713) contrary <5227> to us <2254>, and <2532> took <142> (5758) it <846> out of <1537> the way <3319>, nailing <4338> (5660) it <846> to his cross <4716>; And having spoiled <554> (5666) principalities <746> and <2532> powers <1849>, he made a shew of them <1165> (5656) openly <1722> <3954>, triumphing over <2358> (5660) them <846> in <1722> it <846>. {in it: or, in himself} Let <2919> <0> no <3361> man <5100> therefore <3767> judge <2919> (5720) you <5209> in <1722> meat <1035>, or <2228> in <1722> drink <4213>, or <2228> in <1722> respect <3313> of an holyday <1859>, or <2228> of the new moon <3561>, or <2228> of the sabbath <4521> days: {in meat...: or, for eating and drinking} {respect: or, part} Which <3739> are <2076> (5748) a shadow <4639> of things to come <3195> (5723); but <1161> the body <4983> is of Christ <5547>.

In verse eight Paul warns us against being misled by the teaching of men, which oppose the teaching of Christ. Verses nine through fifteen portray the blessing and sufficiency that Christ has won for His people. Verse sixteen gives some specific examples of human as opposed to divine doctrine. Paul contrasts and summarizes this in verse seventeen before elaborating on it in the following verses.

The references to circumcision in verse 11 as well as the general context show that Paul is primarily concerned with the ordinances of the Mosaic Law. The emphasis on drink in verse sixteen as well as the general context extends the scope to include all man inspired teaching. Only three of the Mosaic Laws concerned drink. These are Leviticus 10:9 (the ministering of the priests in the temple), Leviticus 11:34,36 (liquids contained in unclean vessels) and Numbers 6:3 (Nazarite vows). It is quite probable that the Jews expanded on these by creating new "laws" forbidding the drinking of wine or other beverages. The exact reason for its inclusion is not all that important. The fact is that men have no right to judge others in the matter of food and drink or in many other areas of our lives. To submit to such human demands is to deny what Christ has purchased with His blood. It is one thing to practice total abstinence in regard to alcoholic beverages it is quite another to impose this belief upon others. Drinking alcoholic beverages is lawful, but no one has to do this if they choose not to. The problem is that many Christians are not content with personal practice; they feel compelled to impose their practice upon others.

It has often been said that if we take the Christ out of Christianity we have nothing of any value left. That is why Paul labors this point so much. As Christians we have been born again, we were dead and have now risen again to newness of life. The importance of what we eat or drink belongs to our old sinful life. Paul shows us the correct way in Colossians 3:2-5.

" Set your affection <5426> (5720) on things above <507>, not <3361> on things on <1909> the earth <1093>. {affection: or, mind} For <1063> ye are dead <599> (5627), and <2532> your <5216> life <2222> is hid <2928> (5769) with <4862> Christ <5547> in <1722> God <2316>. When <3752> Christ <5547>, who is our <2257> life <2222>, shall appear <5319> (5686), then <5119> shall <5319> <0> ye <5210> also <2532> appear <5319> (5701) with <4862> him <846> in <1722> glory <1391>. Mortify <3499> (5657) therefore <3767> your <5216> members <3196> which <3588> are upon <1909> the earth <1093>; fornication <4202>, uncleanness <167>, inordinate affection <3806>, evil <2556> concupiscence <1939>, and <2532> covetousness <4124>, which <3748> is <2076> (5748) idolatry <1495>: "

No true Christian wants to be drunk with wine all the time or at anytime. Their desire is to please Christ and to be with Him. They use the things of this world, but are not enslaved by them. Forbidding the use of wine takes our attention away from Christ and places in on earthly things. Those who seek to impose these restrictions act, as though God were not capable of disciplining His children. If our hearts are right our actions will follow. If our heart is bad no amount of outward morality will save us. In fact outward obedience without inward sanctification is an abomination to God.

We must not go back to these pre-salvation days. We are free to drink wine or not, but we must not deny what we know to be true and submit to the false rule of men by giving in to their demands that have no warrant in Scripture. It should be clearly stated, before we leave this subject that Paul is concerned about "things that are indifferent". Many things are clearly forbidden, murder, rape, unjust anger, false pride, covetousness, slander etc. There is no justification for sinful actions or thoughts. The Christian is to flee from sin in any form. If something that is lawful in its self causes us to sin it is no longer lawful.

B. Those that are weak

Charles Hodge, in his Commentary on I Corinthians summed this matter up while commenting on chapter eight, verse thirteen. He states that the Apostle Paul circumcised Timothy yet refused to circumcise Titus. He then ends his comments with this remark: "Whenever a thing is right or wrong according to circumstances, every man must have the right to judge of those circumstances."

The point here is that there is a wide range of things, including the drinking of alcoholic beverages, that are legitimate in and of themselves, but not in all circumstances. The problem is that not all Christians have the same degree of freedom as others. Many things that we do in private, even taking a shower for instance would not be acceptable in public. Wine, along with many other things is in that category of things that concern our weaker brothers and sisters.

We do have a very clear and very important obligation toward our weaker brethren. We must however have the freedom to determine the bounds of the duty for ourselves. Drinking wine or not is of little or no importance in and of its self. As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 8:8 we are no better off before God if we eat meat or do not eat meat. However, as we saw in the previous section the freedom to do what we know is lawful is important. If we summarily give in on one point why not in many other points? Keeping this in mind we will now examine our duty towards weaker Christians.

Anyone reading the passages from Romans or Corinthians on this subject will be struck by how seriously Paul takes this matter of offending weaker Christians. Look at what he says in 1 Corinthians 8:9-13.

But <1161> take heed <991> (5720) lest <3381> by any means <4458> this <3778> liberty <1849> of yours <5216> become <1096> (5638) a stumblingblock <4348> to them that are weak <770> (5723). {liberty: or, power} For <1063> if <1437> any man <5100> see <1492> (5632) thee <4571> which <3588> hast <2192> (5723) knowledge <1108> sit at meat <2621> (5740) in <1722> the idol's temple <1493>, shall <3618> <0> not <3780> the conscience

<4893> of him <846> which is <5607> (5752) weak <772> be emboldened <3618> (5701) <1519> to eat <2068> (5721) those things which are offered to idols <1494>; {emboldened: Gr. edified} And <2532> through <1909> thy <4674> knowledge <1108> shall <622> <0> the weak <770> (5723) brother <80> perish <622> (5689), for <1223> whom <3739> Christ <5547> died <599> (5627)?

For {1} through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died. {1} Gr in} But <1161> when ye sin <264> (5723) so <3779> against <1519> the brethren <80>, and <2532> wound <5180> (5723) their <846> weak <770> (5723) conscience <4893>, ye sin <264> (5719) against <1519> Christ <5547>. Wherefore <1355>, if <1487> meat <1033> make <4624> <0> my <3450> brother <80> to offend <4624> (5719), I will eat <5315> (5632) no <3364> flesh <2907> while the world standeth <1519> <165>, lest <3363> I make <4624> <0> my <3450> brother <80> to offend <4624> (5661).

Here are strong words indeed! Paul deliberately over emphasizes the consequences of how we act. He states that if it were possible our miss use of freedom could lead to the loss of one for whom Christ died. The astute reader will be asking; where did the words "if it were possible" come from? The subject of Christ's dead and the extent of God's love will be covered in a subsequent paper. For the present take note of the flowing passages: John 10:28 & 29, Phil. 1:6 & 1 John 2:19. There are many other passages including Isaiah 53:11. How could Christ be satisfied if one for whom he died perished? For now the important thing is the importance Paul attached to our use of these things that are indifferent. Paul would rather never eat meat again then to deliberately cause harm to one of God's elect.

The passages from First Corinthians quoted above deal with a very specific problem that was common during New Testament times. The problem facing the early Christians was not "animal rights groups" or vegetarians. It would be foolish to give up eating meat because some people think animals are more important than people or because others prefer not to eat meat for personal reasons. There is nothing wrong with not wanting to eat meat, provided care is taken to get enough protein in other ways. That is, however a purely personal choice. If we had to respond to every possible craze that people take we would be free to do nothing. Many animal rights activists are in clear violation of Biblical truth. To submit to them would be equivalent to openly disobeying Gods will. Paul on the other hand was dealing with a serious matter. Much of the meat that was sold in the open market at that time was used in ritual offering to false gods. It was often impossible to know for sure what the history of any given piece of meat was. Some Christians were very troubled by this. Their desire was to completely serve the one true God. They wanted nothing to do, however remotely, with false religion. Now this is a highly commendable quality. Paul knew full well that an idol is nothing; it is quite simply a block of wood or some other material thing. He was also aware that not everyone had such a full understanding of these things. This was a serious problem that needed immediate attention. Those that are strong must help and care for those who were weak in this matter.

Romans fourteen deals with this subject in a much more general way. We have however the same concern for the weaker member as can be seen in verses fifteen and twenty-three. Two passages are of particular importance to this study. Romans 14:21 was quoted at the begining of this section. Romans 15:1 reads as follows:

We <2249> then <1161> that are strong <1415> ought <3784> (5719) to bear <941> (5721) the infirmities <771> of the weak <102>, and <2532> not <3361> to please <700> (5721) ourselves <1438>.

In the world we live in today it is necessary to exercise caution in everything we do. This is especially true with regard to alcoholic beverages. For some it will be needful to completely give up this practice of the benefit of the weaker brethren. Others may decide as a purely personal choice to practice complete abstinence. In many cases it will be a simple matter of exercising discretion, drinking in moderation when that is practical and abstaining when needful.

There are several important points to be taken from the Romans passage. First of all this subject goes far beyond the drinking of wine. To single out wine as if it were the beginning and end of evil is utter foolishness. **Anything** that causes a weaker brother or sister to sin is unlawful and must be avoided. If we have been blessed with great wealth we must be careful in the use of the blessing. Do we really need a \$50,000 dollar car when members of our fellowship have to walk or take a bus? On the other hand if we are very poor we must guard against covetousness, desiring what others have been given. Do we have perfect children or the ideal wife or husband, what then is our attitude toward those who are less fortunate? Is one day more important than another is? The examples are endless; it is the underlying principle that is important.

Secondly we must not lose sight of the fact that we have a three-fold duty. This is clearly seen in our Lord's words from Mark 12: 29-31:

And <1161> Jesus <2424> answered <611> (5662) him <846>, The <3754> first <4413> of all <3956> the commandments <1785> is, Hear <191> (5720), O Israel <2474>; The Lord <2962> our <2257> God <2316> is <2076> (5748) one <1520> Lord <2962>: And <2532> thou shalt love <25> (5692) the Lord <2962> thy <4675> God <2316> with <1537> all <3650> thy <4675> heart <2588>, and <2532> with <1537> all <3650> thy <4675> soul <5590>, and <2532> with <1537> all <3650> thy <4675> mind <1271>, and <2532> with <1537> all <3650> thy <4675> strength <2479>: this <3778> is the first <4413> commandment <1785>. And <2532> the second <1208> is like <3664>, namely this <3778> (5625) <846>, Thou shalt love <25> (5692) thy <4675> neighbour <4139> as <5613> thyself <4572>. There is <2076> (5748) none <3756> other <243> commandment <1785> greater <3187> than these <5130>.

We have a duty to God, to ourselves and to our neighbor. First and foremost we must obey God, if we feel in our hearts that God does not want us to drink wine or any other particular drink we must obey. We need no other warrant, it is sufficient to do His bidding. We must, however, appreciate the fact that this is a personal matter between us and God and not a command to all. Secondly as we have seen we have a clear and important duty to our neighbor, especially to fellow Christians. Finally we have a duty toward ourselves. The command is to love others as we love ourselves. If we fail to use legitimate means to look after ourselves we do not love, as we should. Is it better to take a pill because we have allowed our blood pressure to increase to a dangerous level, or to have a small glass of wine several times a week? Should we give all our money to the poor, or should we spend what is needful for our family and ourselves first? Each must decide and decisions may have to be changed with the changing times. Some are called to great hardship and some to comparative ease. The point is that we have an obligation to love ourselves in order to love others. There are times when we must put ourselves first, at other times we will need to deny ourselves in order to serve others. This is the way of the cross. We must be careful not to push ourselves beyond the bounds that God sets. I once knew someone who wanted to fast in obedience to God. After many days of not eating our leader had to step in and force this person to eat. He pushed himself to the point of ill health and possible death. Clearly this was not pleasing to God. He lost sight of self-love through false zeal.

It is very important to give wine its proper place in the Bible. I hope I have demonstrated this in the previous pages. There is much that could be said about total abstinence. For some if not many this may be the best way. The point of the paper is not to get as many Christians as possible to drink alcohol. What I have striven to show is that we have the complete freedom to do so as far the Bible is concerned except of course when doing so would hurt others. If you do not want to drink that is wonderful. However be careful of one thing. Do not try to enforce you views upon others by teaching what the Bible does not teach. Be truthful to your self and stand on your personal convictions but at the same time be true to God's word.