



Social Drinking

These are some things you should know before you start your social drinking.

There are a lot of things being said out there that are emboldening Christian people to defend social drinking. They are making many assumptions from the Bible that does not lead to the dogmatic conclusions that it is perfectly acceptable to be a social drinker.

FIRST

They assume that all wine in the Bible is intoxicating wine. Listen to this jewel of ignorance from a fellow named Peck, *"Two terms for wine are used throughout the Bible. In the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) the Hebrew word is "yayin", while the Christian New Testament, written in Greek, used the word "oinos", from which we get our word "wine". Both mean the same thing, "fermented wine". There is no word for "unfermented wine" in Scripture. Wine is wine. It was always "fermented".*

This man did not give a studied conclusion. His bold assertion is as false as it can be.

- A. "Yayin" is only one of eleven words translated "wine" in the Old Testament.
- B. "Oinos" is only one of three words translated "wine" in the New Testament.
- C. There are words in the Old Testament that usually refer to "unfermented wine" and other words that usually mean "fermented wine".
- D. Sometimes even the word "yayin" refers to the grape juice. **Isaiah 16:10, Jeremiah 40:10,12, Nehemiah 13:15.** These all refer to harvesting grape juice before it is fermented.
- E. The word "oinos" is used to translate both the words that usually mean "fermented" and "unfermented" wine in the Old Testament.

In other words, "oinos" is a generic word and all eleven Hebrew words for "wine" in the Old Testament are translated into Greek by using the word "oinos". Only the context of the use of the word can determine if the word refers to "fermented" or "unfermented" wine. (Oinos being a generic word is like several of our words in English that are generic. When one is offered a toast, some punch, some eggnog, or some cider, he does not know if it is alcoholic or not. One must ask, or else know the person who offers it very well, to determine if he wants to drink it.

So it is an absurd assumption to believe that every time the word "wine" is used, it refers to intoxicating wine.

SECOND

If one is going to okay his drinking because drinking wine is sometimes approved of in the Bible, we need to make sure we're talking of the same drink and not comparing apples with oranges.

It cannot be denied that a Jewish home in Bible times had both unfermented and fermented wine. However, there are several questions we should ask. It's plain ludicrous to affirm that they had to have either one or the other in their home.

1. What about the fermented wine? How was it processed? They usually boiled the wine and most of the liquid evaporated. This left a honey or jelly-like substance. They then would add water to it and it was a common drink in every man's house.
2. What was the amount of pure alcohol in it? It varied. The difference between natural wine and our wine, which adds ethyl alcohol, differs in content anywhere from 15% to 65%.
3. Did they add water to their fermented drinks? Yes, they added three parts water. (Homer says that he found a black wine that needed to be diluted with 20 parts water). If it was three parts diluted with water, it meant that their daily drinking wine would have been up to 2.5% alcoholic. Our beverages today have to be 3.2% to be considered an alcoholic beverage.

4. Was there a wine they were specifically to avoid? Yes, he describes the wine to be avoided. It is described in **Proverbs 23:31**, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright."
5. Did they add additional ingredients that made it a narcotic when added to ethyl alcohol as we do our beverages? No. However, if they diluted natural wine with water, it would make it much less a potent drink.

What would these variables mean? It means that our alcoholic beverages are not the same beverages that they drank. It meant that you would have to drink a lot of wine to get drunk. This is why they were told not to tarry long at the wine, or not to be given too much wine.

To compare one drinking a glass of their weak wine and diluting it even further with one drinking the beverages of today, is comparing a mother lioness with her cub.

However, even the cub can grow up and be a mother lioness just as their weak watered down beverage could eventually get them drunk. One can drink one beer today and get drunk because of the alcohol content.

To not take the above questions into consideration when weighing this subject is not a common sense use of Scripture. Acting like the wine of the Bible and the liquor of today are the same is not worthy of those who want to know and do the mind of God.

THIRD

Fermented wine, being in the homes of the Jews, is no defense for social drinking. Of course, fermented wine was present.

- A. Wine was used for medicine for the stomach and other infirmities.
I Timothy 5:23, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."
- B. Wine was used for cleansing wounds as an antiseptic.
Luke 10:34, "And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."
- C. Wine was used for a painkiller for men ready to perish.
Proverbs 31:6a, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish..." (Like they tried to give Jesus.)

- D. Wine was used for a sedative for those who were bitter spirited or anxious.
Proverbs 31:6, "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, **and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.**"
- E. Wine was used for seasoning in cooking or basting.
- F. Wine was used for the drink offering and poured out on the altar.
Numbers 28:7, "And the drink offering thereof *shall be* the fourth *part* of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy *place* **shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering.**"
- G. Wine was used for festivities and holidays to celebrate. Review the Second point to see it was watered down and not to be taken in much quantity, and certain wines were to be avoided.

Is a "toast" always alcoholic?	No
Is "eggnog" always alcoholic?	No
Is "cider" always alcoholic?	No
Is "punch" always alcoholic?	No

Why do you assume the generic word "wine" in the Bible is always alcoholic?

As I have shown in other writings, they had processes to keep wine from fermenting for years and all Bible wines are not fermented!

FOURTHLY

The **Deuteronomy 14:26** passage, the most difficult passage used by the social drinkers to defend their drinking, does not give the haven of rest they imagine.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27, "22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 23 And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. 24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; *or* if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: 25 Then shalt thou turn *it* into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: 26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or **for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,** 27 And the Levite that *is* within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee."

Question – Would this permission allow them pork?

No, it has to be taken in light of all that God said on that subject. The same is true of wine and strong drink.

Admittedly, all kind of arguments are given to prove that this okays drinking hard liquor and all kinds of objections are given to show those arguments are false. So what is the answer?

The answer is that the word strong drink (*Shekar*) like *yayin* and *oinos* is a generic word. It is a mistranslated word in this text. It should be translated "sweet drink".

In fact, it is where we get our word "sugar". To satisfy your mind on this, read page 232 of "*Wine in the Bible*" by Samuel Bacchiocchi.

He quotes Kittos' **Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature**," Jerome, Young's Concordance, **THE POPULAR AND CRITICAL BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA**. He also points out that all major older English dictionaries derive our English word "sugar" from this Hebrew word in question.

It is hard to believe that one can drink strong in the fear of God, before God's tent of meeting house in Holiness. He had told the priests right after telling them not to come into his tabernacle drunk, to make a distinction between the Holy and the unholy. **Leviticus 10:9**

It is also obvious that since the wine mentioned is the usual word for "unfermented wine" (*Tiyrowsh*, not *yayin*) that the *shekar* would not be fermented or strong drink. How much more sense it makes to translate it "sweet drinks". It was made from fruits, but usually the palm trees.

Would He insist that those who lived nearby bring a tithe of their fields, vineyards, trees, flocks, and herds, and eat their harvest before the Lord's house but those from a distance could sell their tithes and bring the money to buy whatever they wanted to eat and drink, including strong drink that He so often condemns?

Was God really saying, "If you're from around here, eat and drink your new harvest of fresh wine, but if you're from afar off then you can buy some fermented liquor?"

I think that **Isaiah 24:9** will help us see the meaning of *Shekar*.

He is describing judgment upon the land of Israel and He was telling them they would be cursed rather than blessed. He was using contrastive language and saying instead of music with your festivity there would not be a song with your wine and instead of *Shekar* (**sweet drinks**) there would be **bitterness** to those that drink it.

Look of the entire chapter for the contrasts he is making. It is obvious to an unprejudiced mind that *Shekar* has the idea of sweetness rather than strong drink. This text is no harbor for social drinkers.

Since both *yayin* and *oinos* are generic words, as is *shekar*. One cannot be dogmatic that it always refers to

either fermented or unfermented wine. It must be obvious from this study that fermented wine existed for the above reasons in Jewish home. It is true yet today.

The question is not, "Did they have fermented wine as well as unfermented wine", the question is, "What was their ordinarily drinking wine, how was it processed, how was it used and is our wine today the same kind of a product"?

I am not concerned with those who study this issue. I am concerned about those who buffalo people who have not studied the subject into believing that social drinking today is justified by the Bible accounts. To come to that conclusion requires a lack of knowledge of the customs and awareness of all these facts.

FIFTH

Wine is said to gladden the heart of man. **Psalms 104:14-15**. It is claimed that this cannot be said of grape juice.

I think that maybe the reader should read the whole context.

It is a psalm about the majesty and providence of God. It is a psalm of thanksgiving for all God does for man and beast and their well being and happiness. He speaks of angels, springs of water for the beasts, thirst to be quenched, for grass to grow for cattle, and herbs for the service of man.

He continues about food out of the earth and wine that maketh glad the heart of man and oil for his face to shine and bread which strengthens his heart.

He continues that he is thankful for trees, and cedars and high hills, the moon and the sun, and even for a chance for man to work and labor. On and on the Psalmist gives thanks for his provision.

Wine to a Jew was synonymous with drink at festivities, holidays, and God's abundant supply. This psalm is commemorating life, happiness, joy, and the supply and provision of God for his people.

The verse is merely saying man has bread to eat and oil to anoint and wine to drink. Compare **Deuteronomy 7:13, 11:14**

We have already shown their wine was a mixture of wine diluted with water and that one would have to tarry all day to get drunk from it.

This verse proves nothing about justifying a cup of today's wine that is 6% pure alcohol. The burden of proof is on the social drinker to show that his brew had the same content of alcohol as their brew. This we know is not true because it took so much to drink before getting drunk. One beer contains 6% pure alcohol.

You might also remember that alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant, and drinking even one drink can cause

depression and drunkenness in many people. Their diluted wine caused cheerfulness, not depression (unless he drank much of it, and then it brought woe).

Proverbs 23:29-35, "29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? 30 **They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.** 31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. 32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. 33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. 34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. 35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."

A big issue is made because **Psalms 104:14-15** says the word *yayin*, which usually means, "fermented wine". I would remind you that **Judges 9:13** says that wine (*thros*, the word usually meaning, "unfermented wine") is used. That says, "The vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine which cheereth God and man, and go be promoted over the trees?"

So to be technical, according to the Scriptures, both words that usually mean, "fermented" and "unfermented" are said to cheer the heart of man.

Do you want proof that wine in the New Testament is generic?

Jesus said, "No man puts new (*oinos*) in old bottles..." Why? The fresh wine put in the goatskin bottles would expand upon fermentation and burst the skins already expanded by the former wine.

This is proof positive that fresh juice is called "*oinos*".

This article will be added to my booklet, "*Drinking and the Bible*".