

## Alcoholic Beverages in Christianity

Proverbs 31:4 – 7 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine nor for princes to drink intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert justice of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker; strong drink is a brawler; and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

- The “fruit of the vine” (Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18) in the Lord’s Supper contained alcohol because those who drank too much became drunk (1 Corinthians 11:21).
- Jesus turned water into wine of high quality (John 2:9 – 10). He did not make grape juice.
- Sometimes, wine was diluted with water, but not for disinfection. Dilution was practiced to conserve a meager resource or by the poor. No one wanted to do it. The taste was poor. Ancient peoples drank local water, and knew to use only that which was flowing, not stagnant. They developed immunities to local bacteria and parasites. Paul advised Timothy to keep using wine because he traveled a lot and did not have immunities to each water supply (1 Timothy 5:23).
- Grape juice (unfermented) was given to children and women of child-bearing age. Apparently, they had made the connection between alcohol and fetal development. However, unfermented grape juice began to develop an appreciable alcohol content in a few weeks, so unfermented grape juice was only available in season. Wine has an alcohol content of 8 – 14% depending on the type of grapes (or other sugar-containing fruit or grain) and the fermentation temperature. This technology has not changed.
- “Strong drink” was distilled spirits.
- “New wine” was not unfermented, since the hecklers of the apostles suggested that they were drunk. (Acts 2:13)
- Even in the first century some Christians objected to drinking wine (Romans 14:21), perhaps because of the Nazirite vow in the Law of Moses (Numbers 6:3 – 4) or to mimic John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) or the Rechabites (Jeremiah 35) or just asceticism.
- Drunkenness among Christians was not uncommon and was advised against (Ephesians 5:18, 1 Timothy 3:3 & 3:8, Titus 1:6, Titus 2:4)