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Dear Friend:

Does "wine" in the Bible mean "grape juice"? What is the answer to this perplexing question? Does it really mean fermented wine?

Prohibitionists object saying, "But how do you know that the original Hebrew and Greek words mean fermented wine? Certain historians say the wine used was nothing more than molasses -- that this grape drink was nonintoxicating and the ordinary drink of people in Christ's time."

Here is the truth about this false idea!

There are thirteen original Hebrew and Greek words for "wine" in our English Bible. How can we know which one means fermented wine? To find the answer, do not go to Aristotle or Pliny, but go to the Bible itself. By comparing its usage, the scriptural meaning of wine can be defined.

One of the original Hebrew words for wine is yayin. This word is first used in Genesis 9:21 where Noah "drank of the wine and was drunken." This wine caused drunkenness! Was it just grape juice or was it molasses?

In Genesis 14:18 we read of Melchizedek -- Jesus Christ -- who "brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." God Himself here gave wine to Abraham. And again, the original Hebrew word was yayin which always means fermented wine. This same Hebrew word is used in Amos 9:14 speaking of the coming Millennium when the people will "plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof." They will drink the same kind of wine that Noah, by overindulgence, became drunk on.

In the New Testament, one original Greek word for wine is oinos. Proof that it is alcoholic is given in the story of the good Samaritan. The Samaritan poured oil and wine on the man's wounds (Luke 10:34), showing that the wine had enough alcoholic content to be used as an antiseptic. Would you pour grape juice or molasses on a wound?

The Greek word oinos is also used in John 2 where Jesus turned water into wine by a divine miracle. It is used in I Timothy 5:23, the command of Paul, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." This Greek word is also used in Ephesians 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess."

In ancient times it was impossible to preserve grape juice. Except for a short season the "fruit of the vine" was either made into a thick molasses or into wine. Check Hastings Bible Dictionary for the full proof.

"Taken intelligently and with discretion, alcohol (in wine and other drinks) can prolong life expectancy . . . However, even temporary excess or prolonged overdrinking can lead to disaster" (Pasadena Medical Society). It is for our welfare and happiness that God has commanded us not to use alcoholic beverages IN EXCESS and for a wrong purpose. Most people don't know where to draw the line between temperance and excess. Such people better abstain totally until they know they can "be temperate in all things."

LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT