

ALCOHOL

What does the New Testament Say? #3

New Testament Facts

The New Testament is more consistently negative in its approach to alcohol.

- 18 neutral references
- 9 negative references
- 3 positive references

*The word “*wine*” appears in other verses not mentioned here (mostly in Revelation), but they were excluded because they did not seem to be about alcohol.

In the New Testament there are several words translated as “wine”:

- **Oinos:**
 - This is a generic word for “wine” that can mean either unfermented grape juice or fermented.
 - In the New Testament, this is the most common word; and it is used both positively and negatively.
 - The context will tell you what the word means.
- **Gleukos** (sometimes spelled glukos):
 - This is sweet, fresh, grape juice turned into fermented wine, referenced only in [Acts 2:13](#).
- **Sikera:**
 - This word is borrowed from the Hebrew word “Shekar”, meaning heavily alcoholic, referenced only in [Luke 1:15](#).
- **Oxos:**
 - A vinegar or sour wine that was cheap and common among Roman soldiers, referenced only in [Mark 15:36](#).

Some Positive References:

[Luke 10:34](#)

*“... and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and **wine** on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.”*

- This is from the parable of the Good Samaritan.
- “Wine” = **oinos**.
 - Alcohol is strongly implied because of the medicinal / disinfectant use.
- This is a positive reference for medicinal purposes... not social or recreational.

[John 2:3-11](#)

*“When the **wine** ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no **wine**.” ⁴ And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.”*

Jesus’ response to His mother is a bit hard for us to understand because the idiom He uses does not translate well into English.

- First of all, calling His mother, “*woman*”, is not a sign of disrespect, though it is a distancing of the relationship.
 - Jesus would call Mary, “*woman*,” again in a very tender manner when He is on the cross and entrusts her care to John.
- **Mary needed to recognize Jesus, not so much as the son she had raised, but as the promised Messiah she needed to submit to.**

The phrase, “*what does that have to do with us*” (Literally: “*What to me and you,*”) is a Hebrew idiom, which distances the relationship of the two parties by asking what there is in common between the two.

- **Jesus is saying He has entered into the purpose of His mission on Earth, and all His activities would now be subject to the fulfillment of that mission.**
- At the same time, Jesus' reply must have indicated to Mary that He would take care of the problem, because she tells the servants to do what He said.

*⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." ⁶ Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him. ⁹ When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become **wine**, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, ¹⁰ and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have **drunk freely**, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."*

"Wine" = **Oinos**.

- Q: Why would John use a word that could mean either fermented or not? Perhaps because this story is not about alcohol?
- It's hard to know if this wine was fermented or not, however [vs. 10](#) makes it seem that people could get drunk on it.
 - The word translated as "drunk freely" is the Greek word *methyskō*, which means to intoxicate, or be **drunk**.

*¹¹ This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and **manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.**"*

This is a positive reference because of why He made the water into wine.

- [Vs. 11](#) says it was how He **manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.**"
- **It was most likely symbolic of Jesus being the vine ([John 15:1-8](#)).**
 - **Vines turn water into wine all the time.**

For those who lean toward social drinking, here are some good questions to ask yourself:

- "Why am I drinking?"
- "Am I revealing God's glory?"
- "Is this helping people put their faith in Jesus?"

Q: Did Jesus drink wine?

- We are not told specifically that Jesus drank wine, but Jesus made a statement that could be taken that way in [Luke 7:33-34](#).
 - *"For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and **drinking no wine**, and you say, 'He has a demon!' ³⁴ **"The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'**"*

[1Tim. 5:23](#)

*"No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little **wine** for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments."*

- "Wine" = **Oinos**
 - This was medical advice. Not recreational or social.
 - Wine was often mixed with water to keep it drinkable.
 - The alcohol killed bacteria.
- **A good question: "Why did Paul have to tell Timothy to drink this?"**
 - It would have been considered a normal practice to drink wine.
 - **Why was Timothy staying away from wine?**

Some Negative References:

Rom. 14:21

*"It is good not to eat meat or to **drink wine**, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles."*

- "Wine" = **Oinos**
 - The context must mean alcoholic wine, since it is difficult to imagine grape juice offending anyone.
- Paul is arguing that we should not do anything that might hinder another believer, including drinking wine.
 - **Apparently, drinking wine can hinder some believers.**

1Cor. 5:11

*"But actually, I wrote to you **not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler** — not even to eat with such a one."*

- We are not to associate with anyone who calls (him or herself) a Christian, and yet participates in certain things.
 - People who have a habit of getting drunk are specifically mentioned.

1Cor. 6:9-11

*"Or do you not know that the unrighteous **will not inherit the kingdom of God**? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, **nor drunkards**, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ **Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."*

- The word "sanctified" is the Greek word **hagiazō**; which means *to make holy, consecrate, set apart for special use*.
- There are some lifestyles that cannot be a part of the Kingdom of God.
 - Matt. 6:10 *"...**your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**"*
 - Jesus said the Kingdom of God is where God's will is done.
 - Living in His Kingdom is living by the same rules we will live by when we are in heaven.
 - The lifestyle in Heaven is focused on pleasing our King—not ourselves.
- A lifestyle that has drinking and getting drunk as a prominent feature, is not compatible with the Kingdom lifestyle.
 - Many of the Corinthians came from that lifestyle, but gave it up to live the Kingdom life.

Gal. 5:19-21

*"Now **the deeds of the flesh are evident**, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, **drunkenness**, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**"*

- Drunkenness is an act of the sinful nature.
 - The pull for alcohol does not come from a desire to please God, but rather a desire to please ourselves.
- **Struggling is not the same as living that way.**
 - This verse is very similar to 1Cor. 6:10

Eph. 5:15-18

*“Therefore be careful how you walk, **not as unwise men but as wise**, ¹⁶ **making the most of your time**, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So then do not be foolish, but **understand what the will of the Lord is**. ¹⁸ And **do not get drunk with wine**, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,”*

- Wine = Oinos – context is alcoholic
- The appeal is to live wisely, and to make the most of opportunities to do wise things.
 - ‘Because the days are evil’, suggests that living wisely is against the flow of daily life.
- Again, the appeal is to find out what God wants... and do it.
- Paul contrasts the influence of alcohol to the influence of the Spirit.
 - Alcohol leads to a loss of self-control.
 - One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control ([Gal. 5:23](#)).
 - **How wise is it to drink something that leads us away from where the Spirit of God leads?**

1Th. 5:4-8

*“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; ⁵ for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; ⁶ so then let us not sleep as others do, but **let us be alert and sober**. ⁷ For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and **those who get drunk get drunk at night**. ⁸ But since we are of the day, **let us be sober**, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation.”*

- The Greek word translated as “sober”, is *neēphoœ*; which means to abstain from wine.
 - It is also rendered “Watchful” in [2Tim. 4:5](#); [1Pet. 4:7](#)

1 Tim 3:2-3

*“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ **not addicted to wine** or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money.”*

- Overseers are to be above reproach.
 - The qualities that follow the command, are given to establish what being above reproach would look like.
- Elders are not ordered to abstain completely, but they are not to be drunk or even have alcohol as a predominant influence in their lives.
 - Very similar to [Titus 1:7](#).

1Tim. 3:8

*“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or **addicted to much wine** or fond of sordid gain,”*

- “Wine” = **Oinos**
- Again, deacons are not required to abstain completely, but they are not to be drunk or even have alcohol as a predominant influence in their lives.

Titus 2:3

*“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor **enslaved to much wine**, teaching what is good,”*

- “Wine” = **Oinos**
- Very similar to the command for elders and deacons.
 - **Apparently drinking much wine is incompatible with leadership at any level.**

THE NEW TESTAMENT PICTURE:

The New Testament presents an overall message that alcohol is not:

- Wise
- Beneficial (except for some medical purposes)
- Complimentary to a godly life.

It must be remembered that this is presented against the backdrop of an area where alcohol was as much a part of the culture as eating.

- Leaders in the Church are specifically warned to not have a close connection with alcohol.

References to alcohol in The New Testament

Positive	Negative	Neutral
1. Luke 10:34	1. Luke 1:15	1. Matt 9:17
2. John 2:9	2. John 2:10	2. Matt 21:33
3. 1Tim 5:23	3. Acts 2:13	3. Matt 27:34
	4. Romans 14:21	4. Matt 27:48
	5. Eph 5:18	5. Mark 2:22
	6. 1Tim 3:3	6. Mark 12:1
	7. 1Tim 3:8	7. Mark 15:23
	8. Titus 1:7	8. Mark 15:36
	9. Titus 2:3	9. Luke 5:37
		10. Luke 7:33
		11. Luke 23:36
		12. John 2:3
		13. John 2:9
		14. John 4:46
		15. John 19:29
		16. John 19:30
		17. Rev 6:6
		18. Rev 18:13

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