

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXIV

September 28, 2014

No. 39

Give Wine To...

(Jerry Fite)

Wine in the Bible can be the unfermented juice in the grape (*Isaiah 65:8*), or an intoxicating drink (*Proverbs 20:1*). When the proposed drink is alcoholic in content, how should the godly regard it?

King Lemuel's mother reveals God's wisdom to her son: *“Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul; let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more”* (*Proverbs 31:6-7*).

Wine here is connected with strong drink, thus emphasizing the mind altering affects of an intoxicating beverage. Let the one about to die drink strong drink, for it will deaden the pains as one experiences pangs of death. Let the one embittered by poverty drink the intoxicating wine, for it will dull his memory, and momentarily alleviate his misery. Lemuel's mother is focusing tightly upon the immediate effects of intoxicating drink in momentary circumstances. Remember no more your misery? Wait till the wine wears off. Your poverty will still be there, making you bitter and miserable again.

There is another person being considered in the context of this passage: King Lemuel. Strong drink and intoxicating wine are not for kings. *“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes to say, ‘Where is strong drink?’ Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the justice due to any that is afflicted”* (*Proverbs 31:4-5*).

The mind altering affects of intoxicating drink is the reason why King Lemuel should abstain from such drink. The inebriated mind is not a sound mind, forgetting the law and consequently perverting justice. Therefore, Lemuel should not drink wine and strong drink.

How should we view *Proverbs 31:4-7*? To drink intoxicating strong drink and fermented wine, or not, is the question. These passages say yes, and no. If you are ruling as king, then No, you should not drink. If you are about to die, or in dire straits wanting to be put out of your immediate misery, then yes, such drink exists for you. The mind-dulling affects of alcoholic drink is what is common on both sides of the issue.

The *Proverbs* give us wisdom regarding intoxicating wine and strong drink. Knowing its affects on our thinking and consequent actions, we should make sure we do not err and fall under its harmful and sinful influence. *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise”* (*Proverbs 20:1*). God's wisdom dictates that we avoid the foolish and sinful consequences of intoxicating drink by not being captivated by its initial appearance. *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it sparkleth in the cup, when it goeth down smoothly; at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder* (*Proverbs 23:31-32*).

Living the life of a Christian, one must control the character of one's thoughts, words, and actions (*Matthew 5:27-28; 12:36-37; 2 Corinthians 5: 9-10*). Drinking alcoholic wine and strong drink, which alter inhibitions are therefore not for the Christian who is striving to *“be... holy in all manner of living”* (*1 Peter 1:15*). Christians are determined to think wholesome thoughts, speak edifying words, and live wisely before others. Strong drink and wine is therefore not for them to drink!