Glad Tidings

"And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers…" (Acts 13:32)

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Is Total Abstinence Scriptural?

(Jerry Fite)

God explicitly condemns drunkenness. Christians honoring the New Testament unite in this statement. The Scriptures are clear*: "Let us walk becomingly, as in the day; not in revealing and drunkenness...but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:13-14).* Allowing *"Drunkenness"* to enter our lives, means forfeiting our inheritance in heaven *(Galatians 5:21).* The whole debauched setting, including drunkenness is condemned, step by step. "Lasciviousness, lusts, winebibbings (drunkenness) , revellings, carousings (party - drinking) and abominable idolatries are all imprints in the dissolute "excess of riot" *(I Peter 4:3-4).*

A Christian, from the very beginning of his or her life with Christ, must with meekness receive the saving implanted word *(James 1:21).* Does that not include putting aside our "think so's" and submitting to God's wisdom? Notice Paul did not just command us to lay aside drunkenness, but we are also to make "no provisions to satisfy the lust of the flesh." Taking the first drink of alcohol might be a small step, but it is a definite beginning leading to intoxication. Alcohol, being a depressant, impacts the brain. It decreases inhibition and slows coordination. While we would never desire a DUI, that is your label after you cannot control your care safely or walk a straight line. With sexual desires ever present, the first drink can begin its inhibiting work leading to fornication. If you follow God's command, you will not get drunk. If you follow God's wisdom, you will not make provisions- like taking the first drink - which begins to dull the mind to resist temptation.

God warns us: *"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; and whosoever erreth thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).* God exhorts us with wisdom: *"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).* Statistics show what the adder's sting looks and feels like: damaged property, aggravated and sexual assaults, spousal abuse, child neglect, and homicide.

However, did not Jesus make a lot of wine in a social setting? Yes, Jesus made wine at a marriage feast that He and his disciples attended. He made a large amount of wine, between 120 to 180 gallons, equivalent to over 900 bottles of wine today *(John 2: 7).* But the large amount does not mean Jesus made wine in its intoxicating state.

Wine in the Bible sometimes denotes the abundant juice of the grape while clustered on the vine *(Isaiah 65:8).* The air has not yet entered the protective skin of the grape for fermentation, nor has feet crushed the skin to produce juice to serve. Jesus turned water, purifying water, into wine *(John 2:6)* Our spiritual vine, bypassed the physical vine, and produced the juice of the grape. He made sure the six jars containing water were filled to the brim with water *(John 2:7).* No room for added yeast, and no time for a seven to twenty-one-day-wait for intoxicating wine to appear. It is new wine or the fresh juice of the grape that appears before the wine becomes intoxicating *(cf. Luke 5:37-38).*

As people of "the day," we are to be continually sober and vigilant *(I Thessalonians 5:5-6, I Peter 6:8).* Would Jesus make further provisions for drunkenness among guests who had already depleted the wine supply? By taste, Jesus produced "good wine," not necessarily "intoxicating" wine. To totally abstain from the recreational consumption of alcoholic beverages is certainly wise, and definitely Scriptural!