

Drink

Revealed Truths

In the Bible, the words translated as "wine" and "strong drink" may refer to fermented or unfermented drink, depending on the context.

God condemns the effects of fermented drink.

Fermented drink decreases moral restraint.

Fermented drink causes violence.

Fermented drink causes disease.

Fermented drink causes addiction.

Fermented drink causes financial ruin.

God calls us to abstain from fermented drink.

The penalty for a priest drinking fermented drink in the temple is death.

The Bible says that we are all priests and our body is God's temple.

Some key verses:

Lev 10:8-10 (compare **1Pe 2:5,9**), **Pr 20:1**, **Pr 23:19-21**, **Pr 23:29-35**, **Isa 5:11,22**, **Lk 12:42-46**,
Ro 13:13,14, **1Co 3:16,17**, **1Co 6:9,10**

Exposed Falsehoods

It is false to think that the "wine" of the Lord's supper was fermented.

It is false to think that Jesus turned water into fermented wine.

It is false to think that the casual/social use of alcohol is approved by God.

We are to be sober.

We are to have the mind of Christ.

Some key verses:

Mt 26:27-29, **1Co 2:16**, **1Th 5:5-8**, **1Pe 5:8**

Evolution of the English Word "Wine"

wine - "Wine, a liquor made of the juice of grapes or other fruits. Liquor or Liqueur, anything that is liquid; Drink, **Juice**, etc. Must, sweet wine, newly pressed from grape." (*Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum*, London, 1708)

wine - "1. the **juice of grapes**. 2. a liquor extracted from other fruits besides the grape. 3. the vapours of wine, as wine disturbs his reason." (*Lingua Britannica Reformata*, 1748)

wine - "[...This oriental word seems to be connected with [glyphs] a fountain, and [glyphs], to thrust, to press, or press out.]

1. The **fermented** juice of grapes; as the wine of the Madeira grape; the wine of Burgandy or Oporto.

2. The juice of certain fruits, prepared with sugar, spirits, &c.; as current wine; gooseberry wine. ..." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

must - "New wine; wine pressed from the grape but **not fermented**." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Modern usage treats the word "wine" as exclusively fermented.

This is contrary to its usage in 1611, at the time of the King James Version (KJV) Bible translation.

Fermentation Defined

Ferment - "That which causes fermentation, as yeast, barm, or fermenting beer."
(Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Barm - "Yeast; the scum rising upon beer, or other malt liquors, when fermenting, and **used as leaven in bread** to make it swell, causing it to be softer, lighter, and more delicate. It may be used in liquors to make them ferment or work." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Leaven - "Any thing which makes a general change in the mass. It generally means something that corrupts or depraves that which it is mixed. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Matt.xvi." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Hebrew [seor (seh-ore'), from shaar (shaw-ar') (to swell up)] - "Barm or yeast-cake (as swelling by **fermentation**):--**leaven**." (Strong's Dictionary)

Any substance capable of producing fermentation.

Hebrew [chametz (kaw-mates')] - "**Ferment**:-- **leaven**, leavened (bread)." (Strong's Dictionary)

Greek [zume (dzoo'-may)] - "**Ferment** (as if boiling up):-- **leaven**." (Strong's Dictionary)

Fermentation formulas:

grape juice = glucose (grape sugar) + albumen (contains ferment micro-organisms, in grape and seed skins)

grape juice + moisture + heat + air + time (for **decay**) = fermented wine

fermented wine = reduced grape sugars + ethyl **alcohol** + carbon dioxide gas (effervescence)

Fermentation as a Symbol of Righteousness

Fermentation as a symbol of righteousness (**Lev 7:11-13, Lev 23:16,17,20, Mt 13:33 and Lk 13:20,21**)

Fermentation as a Symbol of Sin

Fermentation as a symbol of sin (**Ex 12:15, Ex 13:3, Ex 23:18, Hos 7:4,5, Mt 16:6,12, Mk 8:15, Lk 12:1, 1Co 5:6-8,11, Gal 5:7-9, Rev 17:2, Rev 18:3**)

Fermentation was forbidden during the annual Passover festivals. (**Ex 12:19,20, Ex 13:6,7, Lev 23:6**)

Note that the leaven was also to remind of an immediate (rather than slow) exit from slavery (bondage to sin). (**Ex 12:39, Dt 16:3,4**)

Fermentation was **forbidden from being mingled with the blood of the sacrifice**. (**Ex 34:25**)

Note that sacrifices were to be without spot or blemish. (**Ex 12:5,6, Nu 28:3,31**)

Fermentation was **forbidden from offerings made by fire**. (**Lev 2:11, Lev 6:16,17**)

Notes for Lev 2:11:

Made with leaven [chametz], burn no leaven [seor]

Nor any honey [Heb. debash (deb-ash')] - Honey, or other gummy, sticky syrup. (These were also used to produce fermentation). (See references)

Fermentation was **forbidden during the dedication of priests**. (**Ex 29:1-3,23-25**)

In verse 25, note "offering made by fire".

Note that all meat offerings required salt, which is an obvious symbol of preservation from corruption. (**Lev 2:13**)

Salt - "Common salt is the muriate of soda, a substance used for seasoning certain kinds of food, and for the preservation of meat, etc." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Although fermentation is used a few times to represent righteousness, we see that its predominant use in the Bible is as a symbol of sin.

Evil Effects of Alcohol

Health effects

Alcohol destroys the digestive system (liver, stomach, intestines).

Alcohol destroys the circulatory system (heart, blood pressure, veins).

Alcohol destroys the nervous system (brain, coordination, judgment).

Alcohol increases the risk of cancer of the tongue, mouth, throat, and liver.

Other systems (e.g. reproductive) are indirectly affected because of the interdependence among all systems.

Even "light" drinking greatly weakens the immune system.

"The body's ability to fight bacteria and viruses is reduced by 67 percent in light drinkers with only two drinks." (*Proof Positive*, p. 430)

Social effects

Alcohol inflames boisterous assemblies.

Alcohol reduces moral restraint.

Alcohol destroys human potential.

Alcohol physically abuses children and spouses through drunk parents.

Alcohol maims and kills innocent victims through drunk drivers.

Hebrew Words used for Drink in the Bible

[tiyrosch (tee-roshé')] - "Must or fresh grape juice (as just squeezed out) ...:-- (new, sweet) wine." (Strong's Dictionary) (**Nu 18:12,13,27, Dt 14:23, Ne 10:37, Isa 65:8, Joel 1:10**) (**Mic 6:15** - tread sweet wine [tiyrosch], but not drink wine [yayin])

[aciyc (aw-sees')] - Must or fresh grape juice (as just trodden out):-- juice, new (sweet) wine." (Strong's Dictionary) (**Am 9:13**)

[enab (ay-nawb')] - "A grape:-- (ripe) grape, wine." (Strong's Dictionary) (**Hos 3:1** is its only use in the Bible.)

For "flagons of wine" the New International Version (NIV) uses "sacred raisin cakes".

flagons - Translation of the Hebrew word ashiyahah (ash-ee-shaw'), which means

"Something closely pressed together, i.e. a cake of raisins or other comfits:--flagon." (Strong's Dictionary)

Comfit - "Any kind of fruit or root preserved with sugar and dried." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

[yayin (yah'-yin)] - Either fermented or unfermented grape juice, depending on the context.

Note **Nu 6:4**, "vine tree" is the translation of "yayin". Therefore, "yayin" is the name used for the grapevine.

Note Revised Standard Version (RSV): "All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins."

Fermented (**Pr 20:1, Pr 23:30-32, Pr 31:4-6** "wine" crippling the mind), **Hab 2:5**

Unfermented (**Ge 14:18, Ge 49:10-12, Ne 13:15, Ps 104:14,15** compare **Ps 4:7** [tiyrosch], **Isa 16:10, Isa 55:1,2, Jer 40:10-12, Jer 48:33, La 2:11,12**)

"One may press out a cluster of grapes and pronounce the Kiddush over the juice, since the juice of the grape is considered wine [yayin] in connection with the laws of the Nazirite." (*Halakot Gedalot*, earliest Jewish summary of the Talmud)

[shekar (shay-kawr')] - Either a strongly fermented or very sweet, unfermented drink, depending on the context.

Note some roots of the English word "sugar" - Arabic [sukkar], Persian [shakar], Hebrew [shekar]

Fermented (**Pr 20:1, Pr 31:4-6** "strong drink" as pain killer for the dying)

Unfermented (**Nu 28:3-7** "strong wine" compare **Ex 29:38-41** [yayin], **Dt 14:22-26** "strong drink", see Difficult verses section, **Isa 24:9** what should be sweet will be bitter)

[cobe (so'-beh)] (**Isa 1:21,22** is its only use in the Bible.) - Wine. Unfermented in this context.

[chemer (kheh'-mer)] (**Isa 27:1-6** is its only use in the Bible. Compare **Isa 5:1-7**) - "Pure, red wine." (Strong's Dictionary). Unfermented in this context.

[mamcak (mam-sawk')] (**Pr 23:30-32** is its only use in the Bible.) - Mixed wine (mixed with water or spices). Fermented in this context.

Chaldean Words used for Drink in the Bible

[chamar (kham-ar')] - Either fermented or unfermented grape juice, depending on the context.

Fermented (**Da 5:1,2,4,23**)

Unfermented (**Ezr 6:9,10, Ezr 7:21,22**)

Greek Words used for Drink in the Bible

[oinos (oy'-nos)] - Usually fermented, but sometimes unfermented grape juice, depending on the context.

Fermented (**Rev 17:1,2**)

Unfermented (**Lk 7:33-35** see Difficult verses section)

[gleukos (glyoo'-kos)] (**Ac 2:8-15** is its only use in the Bible.) - Sweet, fermented wine.

[oinophlugia (oy-nof-loog-ee'-ah)] (**1Pe 4:3** is its only use in the Bible.) - Excess of wine, drunkenness.

[paroinos (par'-oy-nos)] (**1Ti 3:2,3** and **Tit 1:7** are its only uses in the Bible.) - "Staying near wine, i.e., tipling (a toper):--given to wine." (Strong's Dictionary)

Tipling - "Indulging in the habitual use of strong or spiritous liquors." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Toper - "One who drinks to excess; a drunkard." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

English Words used for Drink in the Bible

The word "wine" [Heb. yayin, tiyrosch, shekar] [Gr. oinos] in the Bible refers to either fermented or unfermented grape juice, depending on the context.

The word "wine" is used to translate most occurrences of drinks derived from grapes.

The word "juice" is used only once in the KJV translation (**SS 8:2**).

The phrase "strong drink" [Heb. shekar] in the Bible refers to either a fermented or an unfermented drink, depending on the context.

Drink offerings were typically a part of offerings made by fire. (**Nu 15:3-10, Ex 29:38-41, Lev 23:18,37, Nu 28:3,4,7,8, Nu 29:6**)

Since fermentation was forbidden from offerngs made by fire, these drink offerings could not have been fermented.

Since these drink offerings are referred to as both "wine" (**Nu 15:10**) and "strong wine" (**Nu 28:7**), **both of these terms can mean unfermented grape juice.**

We see that when the Bible uses the word "wine" or "strong drink", the type of drink (fermented/unfermented) can usually **only be determined from the context.**

Texts that present "wine" or "strong drink" as a blessing are referring to unfermented grape juice.

Texts that condemn "wine" or "strong drink" are referring to a fermented drink.

Fresh Grape Juice is a Blessing From God

Fresh grape juice is a blessing from God. (**Dt 7:13** [tiyrosch], **Dt 11:13,14** [tiyrosch], **Dt 32:13,14** [enab], **Jer 31:12** [tiyrosch], **Hos 2:8,9** [tiyrosch], **Am 9:13,14** [aciyc and yayin], **Zec 9:17** [tiyrosch])

God Condemns the Effects of Fermented Drink

God condemns the effects of fermented drink. (Ro 13:13,14, 1Co 6:9,10)

Fermented drink decreases moral restraint. (Ge 9:20,21, Ge 19:30-32, Pr 23:31,33, La 4:21, Hab 2:15)

Fermented drink causes violence. (Pr 20:1, Lk 12:42-46)

Fermented drink causes disease. (Pr 23:29,31,32,34, Isa 19:14)

Fermented drink causes addiction. (Pr 23:30,31,35, Isa 5:11,22, Isa 56:10-12, Hab 2:5)

Fermented drink causes financial ruin. (Pr 23:19-21)

God Calls Us to Abstain From Fermented Drink

God calls us to abstain from fermented drink. (Pr 23:31)

The **penalty for a priest drinking fermented drink in the temple is death.** (Lev 10:8-10, Eze 44:21,23)

Note that **fermented drink is specifically identified here as unclean.**

As part of the Jewish community, priests were allowed to drink unfermented grape juice before the Lord. (Dt 14:23)

All genuine Christians are priests. (1Pe 2:5,9, Rev 1:5,6, Rev 5:9,10)

Our body is the temple of God. (1Co 3:16,17)

Therefore, **we must not drink any achohol.**

Leaders are not to drink wine because it makes them forget (ignore) the law. (Pr 31:4,5, 1Ti 3:2,3,11)

God does not want us to ignore His law. (Mal 4:4, Ro 7:21-25, Heb 8:10)

We are to be clear-minded and sober. (Isa 28:7,8, Mt 22:36-40, Ro 8:5-8, 1Th 5:5-8, Tit 2:2, 1Pe 1:13, 1Pe 4:7, 1Pe 5:8)

We are to have the mind of Christ. (1Co 2:16)

Therefore, **we must abstain from all mind-altering substances.**

Mind-altering substances include: alcohol, amphetamines (speed), cocaine, glue, hashish, heroin, LSD, marijuana, peyote, etc.

Our "high" is reached in the Spirit of Christ. (Gal 5:22, Eph 5:18)

Biblical Examples of Abstinence

Samson (Jdg 13:3-5,7)

Note: Nazarites made a special vow to abstain from all grapevine products. (Nu 6:1-4,13-15,19,20, Am 2:10-12)

Daniel (Da 1:8)

John the Baptist (Lk 1:13-15)

Peter (Ac 10:14 compare Lev 10:8-10 and 1Pe 2:5,9)

James:

"But Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, gives the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs. He writes as follows: "James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Saviour to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James. He was holy from his mother's womb; and **he drank no wine nor strong drink**, nor did he eat flesh.'" (Church History, Eusebius, book 2, chap. 23, p. 4)

A Popular Deception

Many churches teach that "wine" in the Bible refers only to fermented drink.

Some teach that God encouraged indulgence with alcohol at religious festivals.

Some teach that Jesus' first public miracle was to create more alcoholic drink for already intoxicated wedding guests.

Some teach that Jesus regularly drank alcohol.

Some teach that the blood of Christ was represented at the last supper by an alcoholic drink.

Some teach that God approves of the moderate use of alcoholic drink.

These churches join in an approving toast with the world, rather than standing out as separate.

Difficult

Did God encourage the use of alcohol at religious feasts? (**Dt 14:26**) (No)

We have seen that yayin and shekar can refer to fermented or unfermented drinks, depending on the context.

The context includes the expected behavior of God's holy people. (**Dt 14:2,21**)

The context includes a community festival before the Lord. (**Dt 14:26**)

The priests were warned they would be killed if they indulged in fermented drinks before the Lord (**Lev 10:9,10**)

The tithe is to be from the first fruits of the field and flock. (**Dt 14:22,23**)

The wine [tiyros] of **Dt 14:23** is specifically fresh grape juice.

Those who come far are allowed to sell and then buy "whatsoever thy soul lusteth after" (**Dt 14:26**)

It is absurd to take this phrase literally. The context lists forbidden foods. (**Dt 14:3-21**)

It refers to the healthful blessings of the harvest: corn, grape juice, other sweet unfermented drinks, oil, clean meats, etc.

Those who buy produce with money are certainly expected to drink the same [tiyros, **Dt 14:23**] as those who do not.

Is alcohol recommended? (**Pr 31:6,7**) (No)

The context is the forbidding of all wine from leaders. (**Pr 31:4,5**)

It is to be prescribed only for severe cases involving great misery, such as those "ready to perish".

Did Daniel drink alcohol? (**Da 10:2,3**) (No)

Considering his consistent stand on this (**Da 1:8**), the drink here mentioned must have been unfermented grape juice.

Does "tiyros" ("new wine") refer to fermented wine? (**Hos 4:11**) (No)

The reference here is to offering the wine and new wine to idols. (compare **Hos 2:8,9**)

Is alcohol part of the Lord's Supper? (**Mt 26:27-29, Mk 14:23-25, Lk 22:17,18,20**) (No)

Fermentation was **forbidden from being mingled with the blood of the sacrifice.** (**Ex 34:25**)

It is a symbol of Christ's blood, and He was a "Lamb without blemish and without spot." (**Mt 26:28, 1Pe 1:19**)

Jesus would not violate the Passover festival laws. (**Ex 12:15,19, Mt 5:17**)

Note that Jesus refused an intoxicating drink offered to Him on the cross to numb the pain of crucifixion. (**Mk 15:23**)

Myrrh - "As a medicine, it is a good stomachic, antispasmodic and cordial." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Cordial - "Any medicine which increases strength, raises the spirits, and gives life and cheerfulness to a person when weak and depressed." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Jesus called it the "fruit of the vine", which clearly identifies it as grape juice, rather than an alcoholic beverage.

Was Jesus a drunkard? (**Lk 7:33-35**, see also **Mt 11:18,19**) (No)

Gluttonous - "Given to excessive eating; indulging the appetite for food to excess." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Winebibber - "One who drinks much wine; a great drinker." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

"Eating and drinking" is an expression that denotes socializing. It does not necessarily imply a connection with alcohol.

Jesus socialized, whereas John the Baptist did not.

Did Jesus use alcohol as an analogy for spiritual birth? (**Lk 5:36-39**) (No)

The context is repentance: Turning from the old life of sin unto the new life through Christ. (**Lk 5:32**)

The way of Christ (new) cannot be patched onto the way of the Pharisees (old). It requires a new heart (bottle). (**2Co 5:17**)

If new wine was put in an old bottle (containing ferment residue), fermentation would begin and would soon burst the bottle.

New wine needs to be put in a new (clean bottle) so that both will be preserved (uncorrupted).

Those who drink fermented wine (old) become addicted and do not desire grape juice (new).

The Pharisees were addicted to their ways and did not desire the way of Christ.

Did Jesus turn water into alcohol? (**Jn 2:10,11**) (No)

The created wine is described as good [kalos (kal-os') - beautiful, virtuous], implying fresh grape juice.

The guests being "well drunk" [methuo (meth-oo'-o)] is better translated as having "freely drunk".

It is absurd to think that Christ would create barrels of alcohol to further intoxicate the guests. (**Pr 20:1, Pr 23:31**)

Christ created pure, fresh grape juice--full of life--with no hint of corruption.

Is all food and drink clean? (**Ro 14:2,3,14,17,20-23**) (No)

Paul's statement that there is nothing unclean of itself (**Ro 14:14**) does not mean that there are no unclean things.

In another letter, he states God's clear command to abstain from unclean things. (**2Co 6:17**)

The distinction made in Ro 14:14 centers on the phrase "of itself".

Anything that God separates (sanctifies) as being clean is clean.

Anything that God separates (condemns) as being unclean is unclean.

God specifically separates the clean and unclean foods in the Bible. (**Lev 11:1-47**)

God specifically condemns fermented drink (alcohol) as unclean in the Bible. (**Lev 10:8-10** compare **1Pe 2:5,9** and **1Co 3:16,17**)

God would never recommend a food or drink that is harmful to our health by falsely labeling it as clean.

A strong parallel exists between **Ro 14:1-23**, **1Co 8:1-13**, and **1Co 10:21,27-30**.

They all involve a divisive issue involving food and drink. (**Ro 14:3,13,17**, **1Co 8:1,8**, , **1Co 10:21,27,28**)

The all involve passively influencing others to sin over this issue. (**Ro 14:13,15,20,23**, **1Co 8:7,9-12**, **1Co 10:29,30**)

The 1Co verses clearly indicate the topic to be the controversy over consuming food and drink offered to idols by others. (**1Co 8:1,4,7,10**, **1Co 10:27,28**)

The similarities give reason to believe that the Ro 14 verses refers to the same controversy.

The sinful act is committed by those who offer anything to an idol. (compare **Ex 20:3-5**)

In an over exercise of caution, this sinful practice led some Christians to eat only vegetables, because they even feared the unknown previous use of purchased products.

Because clean food and drink does not switch its cleanliness simply because of its proximity to sinful practices (e.g., idol worship), they were considered to have weak consciences. (**1Co 8:7,10**)

Paul warns Christians not to indulge in what they believe is evil. (**Ro 14:23, 1Co 8:10-12**)
Paul warns against needless judgmental polarizations. (**Ro 14:3,13, 1Co 8:8**) (compare **1Co 1:10** and **2Ti 2:23**)

The final decision is for all to reasonably avoid these controversial foods. (**1Co 8:13, 1Co 10:27,28**) (**Ac 15:29, Rev 2:20**)

Did Paul condone the use of all things, and, thus, also alcohol? (**1Co 6:12, 1Co 10:23**) (No)
Paul's statement that all things are lawful unto him is an expression of speech referring to the power of choice.

Although Paul could choose to do many things, he stresses that some choices are NOT expedient.

Expedient - "Fit or suitable for the purpose; proper under the circumstances. Many things may be lawful which are not *expedient*." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

The context includes a wrong method of handling disputes: going to court before unbelievers rather than before believers, or rather than suffering wrong. (**1Co 6:1-8**)
Although, it is lawful for Christians to challenge each other in court, this is not God's will.

The context includes strong warnings against forbidden practices. (**1Co 6:9,10,15, 1Co 10:21**)

In another letter, he states God's clear command to abstain from unclean things. (**2Co 6:17**)

Was alcohol used in the Lord's supper? (**1Co 11:20,21**) (No)

The context is divisions resulting from heresies. (**1Co 11:17-19**)

The Lord's supper was being misused as an occasion for the wealthy to engage in a carnal feast. (**1Co 11:22,34**)

Turning the sacred remembrance of Christ into a carnal party was denounced as a wicked aberration.

Is moderate drinking of alcohol permitted? (**Eph 5:18**) (No)

Excess - "In morals, any indulgence of appetite, passion or exertion, beyond the rules of God's word, or beyond any rule of propriety." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Excess [Gr. asotia (as-o-tee'-ah)] - "Unsavedness, i.e. (by impl.) profligacy:--excess, riot." (Strong's Dictionary)

Profligacy - "A state of being abandoned in moral principle and in vice." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Note that several translations (NIV, RSV, Darby) use "debauchery" instead of "excess".

Did Paul tell the Colossians they could eat and drink whatever they want? (**Col 2:16**) (No)

Note that the verse does NOT say "what you eat" or "what you drink".

The food and drink refer to the various meal and drink offerings of the ceremonial law. (compare **Lev 23:37**)

Context: "a shadow of the things that were to come" (**Col 2:17**)

Did Paul allow for limited use of alcohol? (**1Ti 3:8**) (No)

Stating that a deacon should not be "given to much wine" does not imply that lesser alcoholic indulgences were condoned.

Give (one use) - "To addict; ... The passive participle is much used in this sense; as, the people are given to luxury and pleasure." (Webster's Dictionary 1828)

Note the statement that the deacon should not be double tongued. This is a reference to hypocrisy.

Saying that alcohol must be abstained from, but then indulging in the same would be hypocrisy.

Did Paul allow for limited use of alcohol? (**1Ti 5:23**) (No)

Apparently, Timothy was using only water and was having frequent digestive problems. Because of its health benefits, Paul is simply advising Timothy to drink fresh grape juice. Note that Christians are not to engage in any semblance of wrong doing. (**1Th 5:22**)

References

Proof Positive: How to Reliably Combat Disease and Achieve Optimal Health through Nutrition and Lifestyle, Niel Nedley, M.D., 1999

Wine in the Bible, Samuele Bacchiocchi, Biblical Perspectives, 1989
