

Why Christians Don't Drink 11-29-20

Can Christians drink? This is an important question that has relevance to our lives today. We live in a society (almost universally in all societies) that glorifies the consumption of alcohol. Why don't Christians drink?

To answer this question, we need to break down our meaning.

WHY = the Scriptural guidance

CHRISTIANS = those who put on Christ and live as Christians

DON'T = Make a choice to abstain (as opposed to the impossibility thereof)

DRINK = non-medicinal alcoholic consumption

To begin, we can find much spoken of in the Old Testament.

Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.

Hosea 4:11 Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart.

Isaiah 28:7 But they also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

Proverbs 23:29-30 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine.

Isaiah 5:11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning, That they may follow intoxicating drink; Who continue until night, till wine inflames them!

It is important that we take note that while the Law of Moses did not forbid consuming alcohol, there were many, many implied prohibitions. Prophets, priests and kings were forbidden to consume alcohol (consider we who are in Christ are prophets, priests and kings with Christ). We see that it was described as foolish, dangerous, and contrary to Godliness. These are not "Old Law" commandments that were part of the Law of Moses; these were statements made to reveal truth.

The Old Testament also describes in detail the effects of alcohol on people. Alcohol is first found in Genesis 9; there we read how drunkenness led to the curse of Canaan. Just a few chapters on and we see drunkenness leading to incest (Genesis 19:32). Nabal's folly (1 Samuel 25:36) and King Elah's murder (1 Kings 16:9) are both tied to alcoholic consumption. Once more, can we see anytime that alcohol was tied to Godliness? To faithfulness? To righteous conduct? The picture painted in the Old Testament is quite grim.

But what does the New Testament say? The law of Christ is far more specific in the condemnation of alcohol. First, we see that drunkenness is utterly condemned (be mindful that "drunk" is an abstract condition, expressed in our legal system as being "t the slightest degree impaired). The New Testament says that drunkenness is a work of darkness (Romans 13:12-14, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). This implies that it is evil from a very Satanic perspective. But what about drinking itself? The New Testament actually speaks to this as well.

Social drinking is a work of darkness per 1 Peter 4:3-4 (Ephesians 5:11-18). Consider the words used here: revelry (which might be defined as the enjoyment of wine); drinking parties: social drinking. Peter goes on to discuss this as dissipation, which can be seen also in Ephesians 5. Drinking dissipates spirituality.

The New Testament still says more. It tells us that drinking and drunkenness is the epitome of worldliness. Consider that the desire for the effect of alcohol (whether it is the “buzz” or relaxation or full drunkenness) is a lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). The desire to drink is also called a lust of the eyes in (Proverbs 23:31). Finally, consider the pride of life and wine in Proverbs 31:5.

But what about those passages that seem to promote wine? Passages such as Jesus turning water to wine in John 2, or Paul telling Timothy to drink a little wine in 1 Timothy 5:23? First, it is a known fact that the word translated as “Wine” in both the Old and New Testament has a variety of meanings. Second, we also know that alcohol had legitimate uses; consider Proverbs 31:6. Today we use medicines like morphine or opiates to accomplish those purposes (could you imagine brethren debating one day recreational drug use?). For someone who truly seeks the law of Christ, they need to ask: is it likely Jesus got people drunk at a party, or that wine here is the term for a far less dangerous drink. Is it likely that Paul wanted Timothy to drink more? Obviously not.

When we put on Christ, we are making a choice to put off fleshly desires. Consider Paul’s words here “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14). Make no provision; can alcohol fit into the life of a Christian with statements like this?

But let us make the case for a moment that Scriptures do not and suggest that perhaps there is some place for casual alcoholic consumption. Let us say that it passes the test of what we can partake of in Christ. It still must pass the test of not causing others to stumble. Jesus declared “Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!” (Matthew 18:7). Can you imagine a substance that by being observed consuming is more likely to cause others to stumble? Even the world gets this, and forbid people to consume alcohol until they are over 21. Even the world understands that alcohol consumption is a tremendous pressure for others. Why don’t we?

Why Christians don’t drink: Because we walk by Faith; because we abstain from fleshly lusts; because we obey the law of Christ; because we desire others to be saved.