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# Hebron Herald

Published by the Hebron Lane Church of Christ  
Shepherdsville, KY

Volume 31 Number 7

July 2007

## Alcohol In The Bible

Alcohol is the number one drug in our society. It is the drug of choice for sporting events, holiday parties, weekend “recreation,” family gatherings, mood alteration, stress alleviation, and much more. At one time it was illegal, but not for long. It is a huge profit-making industry; and it corrupts our society like cancer.

The evidence that alcohol is a problem in our society is overwhelming. Following are some facts about alcohol from The Greater Dallas Council On Alcohol & Drug Abuse (<http://www.gdcada.org/statistics/alcohol.htm#stats>).

- More than 100,000 U.S. deaths are caused by excessive alcohol consumption each year. Direct and indirect causes of death include drunk driving, cirrhosis of the liver, falls, cancer, and stroke.<sup>1</sup>
- At least once a year, the guidelines for low risk drinking are exceeded by an estimated 74% of male drinkers and 72% of female drinkers aged 21 and older.<sup>2</sup>
- 65% of youth surveyed said that they got the alcohol they drink from family and friends.<sup>7</sup>
- Nearly 14 million Americans meet diagnostic criteria for alcohol use disorders.<sup>5</sup>
- Youth who drink alcohol are 50 times more likely to use cocaine than those who never drink alcohol.<sup>3</sup>
- Among current adult drinkers, more than half say they have a blood relative who is or was an alcoholic or problem drinker.<sup>1</sup>
- Across people of all ages, males are four times as likely as females to be heavy drinkers.<sup>1</sup>
- More than 18% of Americans experience alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some time in their lives.<sup>6</sup>
- Traffic crashes are the greatest single cause of death for persons aged 6–33.

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- About 45% of these fatalities are in alcohol-related crashes.<sup>4</sup>
- Underage drinking costs the United States more than \$58 billion every year — enough to buy every public school student a state-of-the-art computer.<sup>2</sup>
- Alcohol is the most commonly used drug among young people.<sup>1</sup>
- Problem drinkers average four times as many days in the hospital as nondrinkers — mostly because of drinking-related injuries.<sup>1</sup>
- Alcohol kills 6½ times more youth than all other illicit drugs combined.<sup>2</sup>
- Concerning the past 30 days, 50% of high school seniors report drinking, with 32% report being drunk at least once.<sup>2</sup>

#### Sources

- <sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem, Feb. 2001
- <sup>2</sup> Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- <sup>3</sup> National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
- <sup>4</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
- <sup>5</sup> Alcohol Health & Research World
- <sup>6</sup> National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Analysis
- <sup>7</sup> The Century Council

If you can read the above and deny that alcohol is a scourge on our nation, you are simply willfully ignorant.

Further, the problem of alcohol is not new. The Bible reveals the troubles associated with intoxication from the first book onward. Noah became drunk and his son did something unseemly while he was in that condition (Gen. 9:20-27). God warned Aaron and his sons not to drink intoxicating drink so they could “distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Lev. 10:9-11). Peter tells us that all levels of drunkenness—social drinking, partying, and total addiction—are of the Gentiles, that is, sinful (1 Pet. 4:3, 4).

Still, there are those who will argue that social drinking is fine. Drinking a beer or two is not so bad. Having a glass of wine is perfectly acceptable. They even bring Jesus into the debate and use Him to justify their use of alcohol. Supposedly, Jesus made intoxicating wine for the wedding feast at Cana of Galilee (Jn. 2:1-12). However, if you understand the use of the word “wine” in the Bible and study the account of John 2, there is no way it authorizes social drinking.

Wine is used in two senses in the Bible and we must depend on context to tell us which way it is. Sometimes the word “wine” is used to describe fermented juice. Isaiah pronounces “woe” to men who drink wine and intoxicating drink (stronger alcoholic drinks) in 5:22. He also talks about “new wine...found in the cluster” (Isa. 65:8). The cluster is a grape cluster, where the “wine” is obviously unfermented. Thus, “wine” does not always refer to an alcoholic beverage.

Moreover, the account of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding feast reveals He did not make an intoxicating drink for the people. In John 2:6, we find out that 120-130 gallons of water were turned to “wine.” If there were 240-260 people at the feast, that would be ½ gallon each. Likewise, the Bible tells us these people were already “well drunk” (Jn. 2:10). That means they had already had a lot of liquid to drink. Do you honestly think Jesus made another 120-130 gallons of alcoholic wine for a crowd of people who were already lit up?

The wise man said, “Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). The opposite of wise is fool. Our common description might be “stupid.” Yes, the Bible says you are a stupid fool if you think alcoholic drinks are no big deal.

Those who are Christians cannot forget to defend the truth about alcohol, though it is so widely accepted in our society. Let us not give up on telling others what the Bible says about it, even if no one listens. We will at least defend the integrity of God's Word.

- Steven F. Deaton

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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. Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: “They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?”

- Prov. 23:29-35