

## Message #39

## Jeremiah 35:1-19

Biblically speaking, there are some real dangers to drinking too much wine. It can take away one's reasoning ability (Is. 28:7-8; Hos. 4:11; Prov. 31:4-7). Drunkenness and alcoholism is a real threat and a sin and one who gets drunk is not wise (Is. 5:11, 22; Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35). I have personally seen alcohol ruin marriages, lives and testimonies so drinking too much alcohol is a real danger.

However, having said that, there is not one verse in the entire Bible where God says, "I hate wine." There is not one verse in the entire Bible that says, "You should not ever drink wine." There is not one verse in the Bible that says, "Don't ever let any alcoholic drink enter your mouth."

One passage that is often presented as an argument against wine is Proverbs 31:4 which says, "It is not for kings to drink wine or for rulers to desire strong drink." But what is neglected in the verse is Hebrew poetry and the context. If you read **verse 5**, the point is it is not right for leaders to drink so much wine and strong drink that they get drunk to the point that they don't know what they are doing in making judgments. The statement is not a prohibition against drinking any wine; it is a prohibition against being so drunk you pervert justice.

On the other hand, there are many verses in the Bible that say, "You do not ever want to become a legalistic Pharisee." In fact, when Jesus was here on earth He specifically lashed out against Pharisees and said, "you hypocrites...in vain do you worship ME, teaching the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:7-9). There are many verses in the Bible where God says I hate pride and lying.

I am afraid that many people who are believers love their convictions, traditions and denominational rules and catechisms more than Jesus Christ and more than the actual word and truth of God. **As a serious systematic Bible church, what we are after here is God's truth.**

Like it or not, agree with it or not, **Jesus Christ drank real wine. Jesus Christ drank real wine, the kind that if you drink too much can get you drunk. In fact, there were those who called him a drunkard (Luke 7:33-34).**

Let's set the Biblical record straight about wine:

- 1) Wine is considered to be a blessing of God for a wise, obedient life. Prov. 3:9-10; Deut. 7:13; 11:14; 33:28; Is. 28:7-8
- 2) Having no wine to drink is considered to be a curse from God. Deut. 28:39; Hos. 9:2; Joel 1:10; Amos 5:11; Micah 6:15; Is. 16:10; Jer. 48:33
- 3) Wine was a sacred acceptable offering that was to be given to God. Ex. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:5, 7, 10; 18:12; 28:7, 14; Deut. 18:4; I Sam. 1:24; II Chron. 31:5
- 4) Wine was a medicinal drink prescribed by God to settle a stomach. I Tim. 5:23
- 5) Wine was a drink that God provided to gladden a heart. Judges 9:13; Ps. 104:14-15
- 6) Wine, in abundance, which features the best wine, will be a blessing from God in the Future Kingdom. Is. 24:6; Amos 9:14; Jer. 31:12; Joel 2:24-25; Matt. 26:29

- 7) Wine was to be enjoyed when worshipping God in His Sanctuary. Deut. 14:23, 26; Is. 62:9
- 8) Wine was very appropriate at wedding celebrations. Song of Solomon 2:4; John 2:1-11
- 9) Wine was served at many meals with Jesus Christ and He drank it. Luke 5:29, 37-38
- 10) Wine was the drink Jesus chose to represent His blood. Luke 22:17-18, 20; Matt. 26:27-29
- 11) Wine was the drink Jesus sanctioned to be used at church in a communion service.  
I Corinthians 11:20-21, 23-26

Now why am I bringing this up? You did not come here tonight to hear some doctrinal study on the subject of wine. My goal is not to get all of God's people to change their convictions. I bring this up because **right here in this text in Jeremiah, God, Himself, demands that some teetotalers and water drinkers obey Him and drink wine, which they refuse to do.**

**JEREMIAH RECEIVES A DIRECT MESSAGE FROM GOD TO GO TO A SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE TO ILLUSTRATE THEIR FAITHFULNESS TO MAN-MADE RULES VERSUS JUDAH'S UNFAITHFULNESS TO THE WORD OF GOD.**

**Verse 1** says the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah during the days when Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, was king of Judah. The event here occurred a few years before the actual chronology in Jeremiah, but God wanted it used to make a point.

Jehoiakim, whose name was changed to Eliakim, reigned from 609 BC-598 BC. He was an evil corrupt king who ended up being king for 11 years (II Kings 23:34-24:6; II Chron. 36:5-8). He was the son of Josiah, who served for 31 years as king and he was a good king (II Kings 21:26-23:30; II Chron. 33:25-35:27).

Sometime during the reign of Jehoakim, according to **verse 2**, God told Jeremiah to go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them and round them up and bring them to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Rechabites were descendants of Jonadab (II Kings 10:15-23). Jonadab had some strange ideas. The Rechabites were an **odd legalistic religious clan or group of nomads who did not live in houses, did not have farms or vineyards and did not drink wine.** They moved around and stayed in tents. Jonadab had joined Jehu, who was king of Israel, a couple of hundred years before this event to overthrow the house of Ahab (Jer. 35:6-7).

According to the word of God, there was nothing wrong with drinking wine. There was nothing wrong with having a house. There was nothing wrong with owning land. In fact, that was considered to be a blessing.

There was nothing wrong with planting crops. There was nothing wrong with having a vineyard. So this was an odd group of people (they resemble legalistic Baptists).

So what God decided to do was to use this odd group of people with their quirks as an object lesson to make a point that His own people Judah would not obey Him or His word.

What God wanted Jeremiah to do was to invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the Temple (v. 2) and give them some wine to drink.

These side rooms were rooms that were used for various meetings, storage and also they were the living quarters for the priests (Ezekiel 41:6-7). These side chambers that surrounded the Temple were three stories high.

According to **verse 3**, Jeremiah went and got Jaazaniah, who was the leader of the group. He was the son of Jeremiah, not the prophet, but another Jeremiah, who was the son of Habazziniah. Jeremiah invited him and his brothers and all his sons and all the Rechabite people to the Temple.

According to **verse 4**, Jeremiah brought them into Hanan's chamber. Hanan was a man of God who was a priest. His chamber was located above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper.

Now one thing that certainly stands out about this is that there are multiple eyewitnesses to what happens here. So now we get at the crux of all of this.

**PART #1** – Jeremiah commands the Rechabites to drink wine. **35:5**

When Jeremiah got the whole clan into the priest's chambers, he set pitchers of wine and cups before them and told them to "Drink Wine." Jeremiah was presenting to them the word of God and the word of God said "drink some wine."

Jeremiah does not tell them to get drunk. He simply says drink some wine.

**PART #2** – The Rechabites refuse to drink wine. **35:6-11**

According to **verse 6**, about 250 years earlier Jonadab, who was the son of Rechab, told them that they were not to drink wine, they were not to build a house, they were not to sow seed or plant vineyards and they were to live in tents forever (v. 6-7).

They were never ever to build a house, sow seed, plant vineyard or drink wine. They were told they should not ever own anything. He demanded that they always live in tents. They sound like a real fun family and group.

There is no explanation as to why Jonadab put this mandate on the family, but apparently he did. It is speculated that he may have seen the corruption and the immorality in the city and he made some determination that he and his family would not partake of it or be around it so, metaphorically speaking, they headed for the hills.

At the end of **verse 7** he pronounced some kind of a blessing on his family that if they would follow his rules and council, they would live many days wherever they ended up living in their tents.

So now this family is brought to the Temple and given wine and told they are to drink it.

So the children were left with the decision do we honor our father's wishes and mandates or not. God does promise a long life to one who honors their father and mother in both the O.T. and the N.T. (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:2-3).

Generally speaking, God will always bless those who honor their father and mother especially if that father and mother honor God. He will grant them a long and prosperous life.

Now according to **verses 8-10**, they said we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab for the past 250 years.

According to **verse 8** the entire family had obeyed this. All the men and their wives, sons and daughters all followed this odd group of rules.

They had not drunk wine, they had not lived in a house, they had not farmed, they had not planted a vineyard and they had lived in tents (**v. 9**).

They had perfectly obeyed everything Jonadab commanded us to do.

In fact, in **verse 11**, they said the only reason we are here in Jerusalem in a house now is because Nebuchadnezzar came into Israel, we decided to pack up and move south to Jerusalem to get away from him.

He was the only reason they were now even in the city and not out in their tents.

**PART #3** – God communicates a message to His people with this illustration. **35:12-17**

While all this was taking place, God's word came to Jeremiah and said in **verse 12-14** that I want you to go to Judah and tell them that they refuse to listen to My word and yet here is a group of people who obey things that aren't even in My word.

**In other words, the Rechabites obey the words their earthly father invented and you will not listen to My word that your heavenly Father has inspired.**

This family heeds instruction that isn't even Scriptural and you won't obey My word that is inspired by Me.

God says tell them I have sent My prophets and My servants to you to tell you to turn from your evil and amend your ways and not serve other gods and you won't listen to them and you won't listen to Me (v. 15).

Yet here are these relatives of Jonadab and they have been obeying his man-made rules for 250 years (v. 16). God says they obey the words of their father and what he has commanded them, which aren't even Biblical, but you won't obey My words that are Biblical.

So God says what I am going to do is bring on you one disaster after another (v. 17).

**PART #4** – Jeremiah pronounces a blessing on the family of the Rechabites. **35:18-19**

Jeremiah said because you have been faithful to honor your father, God would see to it that their family would not be destroyed. There would always be someone from the family who would be preserved. God does not bless them for not drinking wine; or for not owning a house or not owning and cultivating land nor for always living in tents; **He blesses them for their obedience to their father, something they did that God's own people never did.**

Many years later, when Jerusalem was being rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, we learn from Nehemiah 3:14 that there was an official who was working on the gate whose name was Malchijah, the son of Rechab. God was literally true to His word. Someone from that family stood as a prominent man before God.

Now we cannot leave this text without discussing the drinking of wine. It is clear that God permits His people to drink wine and even commends it. It was here in His Temple. There was a lot of wine in the Temple.

As long as the priests were not on duty, they were permitted to drink wine. Any person who claims that it is wrong to drink wine is adding human law and personal conviction to the inspired word of God.

But also a believer has the freedom not to drink wine if he/she so chooses. If one decided to be a teetotaler, one has the right. God does forbid drunkenness and drunkenness is a sin. Drunkenness leads to immorality, violence and death.

No believer with God's Spirit should ever be drunk (Eph. 5:18).

#### **PARTING APPLICATIONS:**

- 1) Some Christians should never drink wine.
- 2) No Christian is mandated to drink wine.
- 3) Biblically speaking a Christian has freedom to drink wine.
- 4) No Christian has liberty to be drunk with wine.
- 5) Each believer needs to decide for himself.

- 6) One's convictions are not the convictions of everyone on gray areas.
- 7) Christians should be more concerned about what God's word actually says than what someone's convictions are.
- 8) Every believer has a responsibility to obey the word of God on every issue.
- 9) Make sure you never equate your convictions as being the inspired word of God unless they are consistent with the inspired word of God.