

Wine in Scripture

By Charles Dailey 2014

Wine in Scripture was not always like wine at Safeway. The Biblical Hebrew and Greek words ranged in meaning from grape juice to a 14% alcohol content beverage.

Grape juice cases:

"Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field;
In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting,
No treader treads out wine in the presses,
For I have made the shouting to cease." (Isaiah 16:10 NASB)

The beverage was called wine when it was squeezed.

"In that day, 'A vineyard of wine, sing of it!'" (Isaiah 27:2 NASB)

The beverage was called wine while still in the vineyard.

"Thus says the LORD, 'As the new wine is found in the cluster,'
And one says, 'Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,'
So I will act on behalf of My servants In order not to destroy all of them." (Isaiah 65:8 NASB)

The beverage was found in the cluster on the grapevine.

"Then all the Jews returned from all the places to which they had been driven away and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered in wine and summer fruit in great abundance." (Jeremiah 40:12 NASB)

Wine was gathered like fruit, not poured from a container.

"And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined." (Luke 5:37 NASB)

The beverage was called new wine before it expanded from fermentation.

The winepress also serves as evidence that the word wine included grape juice. From an olive press comes olive oil and from a winepress comes grape juice. It took some special conditions and the passage of time for grape juice to ferment into an alcoholic beverage.

The immediate product of a wine press was not fermented.

So the word wine had a range of meaning, unlike our use of the word to mean only an alcohol-bearing beverage.