

### 13. Women and Wine (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

**Biblical material:** Proverbs 31, Job 29:15, Proverbs 8, 1 Cor. 1:21, Rev. 14:13.

#### Quotes

- Let us have wine and women, mirth and laughter, sermons and soda water the day after. *George Gordon Byron*
- He who loves not wine, women and song remains a fool his whole life long. *Martin Luther*
- Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave. *Martin Luther*
- When the wine is in, the wit is out. *Thomas Becon*
- It does help to actually realize that however stunning the person who is, you know, fluttering eyelashes at you, she doesn't do anything to match up to your wife. *Colin Firth*
- By all means, marry. If you get a good wife, you'll become happy; if you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher. *Socrates*

#### Questions

Why are women and wine on the mind of the writer of Proverbs? Do they need to be linked in this way? What is the verdict? In the words of the world, it's all about "having a good time"—but how is this defined? When we look at the totality of our lives, what do they amount to? How do we make sure that God is the most important focus?

#### Bible summary

Prov. 31:1-19 speaks against the effects of alcohol, warning about the poor decisions that can result. The rest of the chapter extols the blessings of a virtuous woman. It is worth reading it through out loud to get the best impact. The final references (Job 29:15, Proverbs 8, 1 Cor. 1:21, Rev. 14:13) emphasize the importance once again of wisdom and the consequences that naturally follow from living a life that is true and right.

#### Comment

When the words "wine" and "women" are placed together, there is usually some aspect of disapproval. But here in Proverbs they are separated. The destructive effects of alcohol are clearly set out, especially the aspects of poor judgment that result. But the wife of noble character is praised, paying special attention to all her good deeds.

The intoxication caused by alcohol—and other potent drugs—causes huge problems in society. Not just health issues, but poor decisions made under the influence, also violence and drunk-driving. However this just shows the emptiness of this world's philosophies. The result can be a desperate anxiety about life and the future that leads to a constant reaching for the pill capsule or whisky bottle in a desperate search for peace of mind. But such challenges cannot be drowned in a sea of drugs and alcohol, and they return with the head-splitting hangover...

That a virtuous wife is "worth above rubies" is surely positive, especially in the historical context. However this also begs some questions—such as, is the wife only

being valued for her productivity, and is this not rather mercenary? Are we not told to value people for who they are rather than what they can do for us? Or are we trying to take comments from one society and apply them indiscriminately to another society? We see here how the Bible speaks across cultures, but needs to be understood with its immediate cultural context in mind. As we seek to speak with wise words, and as we accept Scripture as providing wise words, we also need to understand that it is the mind that produces the wisdom, and not the following of mottos and formulas... For in thinking about Scripture and its revelation of God, we need to see more than mere words and gain an understanding of the truth about our heavenly Father.

The good news about this woman of noble character is that “Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.” Prov. 31:11, 12 NIV. While all the actions are important, surely the most significant aspect is that “She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.” Prov. 31:26 NIV. It certainly is true that “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.” Prov. 31:30 NIV.

As we close this quarter on Proverbs, let us remember that this is a precious resource of wise words that can be so helpful in our lives. For example, noted surgeon Dr. Ben Carson credits Proverbs as providing his life’s philosophy—a strong endorsement of the power of Scripture to change the direction of our lives.

### **Ellen White Comments**

There are many solemn warnings in the Scriptures against the use of intoxicating liquors. Solomon says, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” “Who hath woe? who hath sorrows? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder...”

Is not this description true to life? Does it not represent to us the experience of the poor, besotted drunkard, who is plunged in degradation and ruin because he has put the bottle to his lips, and who says, “I will seek it yet again”? The curse has come upon such a soul through indulgence in evil, and Satan has control of his being. {RH, May 1, 1894}

The drunkard sells himself for a cup of poison. Satan takes control of his reason, his affections, his conscience. Such a man is destroying the temple of God. {RH, November 6, 1900}

Married life is not all romance; it has its real difficulties and its homely details. The wife must not consider herself a doll, to be tended, but a woman; one to put her shoulder under real, not imaginary, burdens, and live an understanding, thoughtful life, considering that there are other things to be thought of than herself... “A prudent wife is from the Lord.” Prov. 19:14. “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. . . .” “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her,” saying, “Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.” Prov. 31:11, 12, 26-29. He who gains such a wife “findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.” {FLB 256}