

June, 2005

Pause Ponder Profit

For You To Muse

by James A. Brown

My name is legion. *"Then He asked him, 'What is your name?' And he answered, saying, 'My name is Legion; for we are many'"* (Mark 5:9). On Jesus' excursion into the territory of the Gadarenes, He encountered a man possessed by an unclean spirit. When Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to leave, and asked his name, the unclean spirit replied, "My name is legion". Since a Roman division or legion consisted of three to six thousand men including cavalry, a very large number is implied. After leaving their victim, the unclean spirits entered a herd of pigs, who thereupon rushed headlong down the cliff into the lake and were drowned. In modern allusion, "Their name is legion" means simply, "They are many".

Olive branch. *"And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth"* (Gen. 8:10-11). In Genesis, the olive leaf is an indication of the extent to which the flood waters had receded, for the olive tree is found only below certain

levels of altitudes. Deut. 28:40 may even suggest that olive trees should be planted around the coasts. Although not fully supported by the text, the receding of the flood waters may have indicated the declining of God's wrath, and the dove with the olive branch a sort of herald of reconciliation between God and man. During the present period of history the dove and olive branch are universal symbols of peace. Even in our modern language the word "dove" can be defined as a "supporter of peace: somebody who supports peaceful measures and resists confrontation or war"; and the words "olive branch" are defined as a conciliatory gesture: a gesture or offer intended to bring about a reconciliation."

Potter's field. There are two accounts of the potter's field. In the book of Acts it is stated that Judas purchased a field with the wages for his betrayal of Jesus. Falling into it, he burst and died, turning it into an "Akel Dama" or "field of blood" (Acts 1:18-19). Matthew records that

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Remember Our Gospel Meeting

Speaker: Jim McDonald

Sunday, July 24th

9:45 A.M. 10:45 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

Mon. — Fri., July 25th — 29th

7:00 P.M.



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Judas, before hanging himself, returned the thirty pieces of silver to the priests who had paid him for betraying Jesus. Since the money, being polluted, could not be put into the Temple treasury, the priest bought with it a potter's field, to be used as a cemetery for foreigners. This came to be known as the "Field of Blood" in allusion to the blood money (Matt. 27:3-10). Today a potter's field is a burial place for the poor or unidentified people.

The voice of the turtle is heard. *"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away"* (KJV) (Song of Solomon 2:11-13). "The voice of the turtle is heard" is a metaphor for the coming of spring. The "turtle" is not the reptile encased in a shell but the turtledove, a bird (NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, NRSV).

Better to marry than to burn. *"I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn"* (KJV), (1 Cor. 7:8-9). "To burn" is translated in the New King James Version as "to burn with passion." This is in harmony with the NIV as well as the RSV and the NRSV which has "to be aflame with passion." It is also in agreement with how the words "to burn" are defined. Strong's defines them as, "to be inflamed with . . . lust." Thayer says, "to be inflamed with sexual desire." So, there is no indication, as some have thought, that it means "to burn in hell as a punishment for fornication."

Inherit the wind. *"He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, And the fool will be servant to the wise of heart"* (NKJV), (Prov. 11:29). To "inherit the wind" is to "inherit only

wind" (NIV, cf. the NAB), that is, absolutely nothing rather than the expected substantial inheritance. The image of wind as nothingness is unmistakable set forth in the book of Ecclesiastes by Solomon. The Preacher pronounces one after another sphere of human activity meaningless, a mere "grasping for the wind" (NKJV) or "chasing after the wind" (NIV) (Eccles. 1:14, 17). The image is used repeatedly as a kind of catch phrase expressing the tedious futility of going after something and finding it to be nothing after all—like trying to capture the wind in one's hands. What does any human being gain, the Preacher asks, "since he toils or labors for the wind" (Eccles. 5:16 NIV, NKJV).

Put a knife to your throat. *"And put a knife to your throat If you are a man given to appetite"* (Prov. 23:2 NKJV). This phrase is an Eastern figure of speech for restraining one's appetite. That is, control your appetite, as if by force and violence or at all cost. But this verse is rendered by some interpreters as, "You have put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite" (cf. YLT). That is, one's appetite may prove to be detrimental to his life. All sensual gratifications, if not controlled, are harmful to the body, as well as the soul, and are the frequent causes of sickness, weakness, and death. It has even been said that the throat has killed more people than the sword.

The bed undefiled. *"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge"* (Heb. 13:4 NKJV). The bed under consideration is the "marriage bed" and more specific the sexual activity of the married couple. Undefiled means, "pure, free from that by which the nature of a thing is deformed and debased, in the context of Heb. 13:4, free from adultery. So the phrase "the bed undefiled" requires the marriage bed—the sexual activity of the married couple to be free from unlawful sexual intercourse. God will judge the fornicators and adulterers.

Is Social Drinking Sinful?

by Clark Dugger

Paul warns that drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:10; cf. Gal. 5:19-21). But what about drinking alcoholic beverages in moderation? Is social drinking sinful? It is becoming more and more common to find Christians that will try to justify such practices. I have spoken to brethren on occasion that claim that while they don't drink alcohol themselves, they do not consider "social drinking" to be sinful as long as you don't get drunk. Sometimes biblical (?) arguments are made to prove their point. Let's briefly consider three of these arguments.

The first argument that is often made concerns Christ's first recorded miracle when He turned the water into wine (John 2:1ff). On this occasion Jesus and His mother had attended a wedding feast in Cana. When the supply of "wine" ran out, Jesus had six 20-30 gallon waterpots filled to the brim. He then miraculously turned the water into "wine." The argument is, of course, that since Jesus provided more "wine" for consumption at this social occasion, the drinking of "wine" socially is authorized.

There are several problems with this argument. Just because the word "wine" is used in the text we should not immediately assume that Jesus had turned the water into some intoxicant. In the Bible the word "wine" (*oinos*) is a generic term that can denote either fermented or unfermented juice; the context being the determining factor. The idea that Jesus Christ would provide 120 to 180 gallons of alcoholic beverage for people to become intoxicated at a social occasion, and then condemn them for doing so, is absurd. What Jesus provided was fresh unfermented juice, not an intoxicating beverage.

The second argument often made is that Paul wrote Timothy, "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). But this passage actually disproves that social drinking is acceptable in God's sight. Notice that Timothy was evidently accustomed to drinking "only water." The mere fact that Paul had to give specific instruction for him to drink the wine clearly shows Timothy's attitude towards drinking any alcohol for any reason.

But more than this, if we assume that the word "wine" (*oinos*) does refer to fermented drink, we must observe the two qualifications placed upon its consumption. The reason for drinking the wine was not as a beverage in some social setting, but obviously for medicinal purposes, that is, "for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities." But even then, notice the amount to be consumed was to be "a little." While this passage does authorize the use of medications that may have some alcoholic content, it in no way authorizes social drinking.

Last of all, it is argued that Paul says the man qualified to be a deacon must be "not given to much wine" (1 Tim. 1:8). According to Thayer the Greek expression means "drunken, or addicted to wine." The argument is that since the deacon is not to be given to *much* wine, a moderate amount of wine consumption is authorized. But stop and think about it for a moment. What if Paul had said that the deacon was not to be addicted to *much* marijuana? Would that statement authorize the smoking of a little pot? Of course not! What if he said the deacon was not to be addicted to *much* cocaine? Would that authorize the moderate use of cocaine? Of course not! Neither does the statement authorize the moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages.

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Time and time again the New Testament emphasizes the necessity of sobriety for the child of God (1 Thess. 5:6, 8; Titus 2:2, 4, 6; 1 Peter 1:13; 5:8; etc.). In spite of this, some insist on trying to justify their desire to drink alcoholic beverages. There is no justification for it. When I was a boy, my grandfather used to say that if it takes five beers to get you drunk and you drink two beers, you're two-fifths drunk. Think about it.

Come Worship With Us



**For bodily exercise profits a little,
but godliness
is profitable for all things,
having promise
of the life that now is
and of that which is to come.
(1 Timothy 4:8)**

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Sunday
Radio 1490 AM . 9:00 A.M.
Bible Study 9:45 A.M.
Worship..... 10:45 A.M.
Worship..... 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study..... 7:00 P.M.

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