



"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." Matthew 28:20

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Did JESUS Turn *Water into Wine*?

Chuck Northrop

The obvious answer to the question, "Did Jesus turn water into wine?" is yes. At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee recorded in John 2:1-11, Jesus turned water into wine. However, this question does not usually ask what is meant by it. What is usually meant is "Did Jesus make intoxicating wine?" And the answer is no. Let me explain.

The word translated wine in English (οἶνος in Koiné Greek) can refer to either alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine. At present, the term wine is almost used exclusively of alcoholic wine, but let us never be guilty of interpretation based solely upon modern-day definitions. Consider the following examples of the word wine used in Scripture with reference to unfermented grape juice.

Joel 1:10 says "The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: *the new wine is dried up*, the oil languisheth." (This refers to grapes dried up in the fields which could not be intoxicating.)

Isaiah 65:8 says "Thus saith the LORD, As *the new wine is found in the cluster*, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." (Alcoholic wine in the cluster? No, the juice of the grape while in the cluster could not be intoxicating.)

Jeremiah 48:33 says "And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused *wine to fail from the winepresses*: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting." (The wine of fresh squeezed grapes coming out of the winepress is grape juice and could not be fermented.)

Certainly, other passages could be considered, but these are sufficient to illustrate the word wine can refer to alcoholic wine or simply grape juice.

So, how do we know when it refers to grape juice or intoxicating wine? The context in which the word is found will determine whether it refers to alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine. So, consider the context of John 2.

The immediate context of John 2:1-11 is quite clear. The guests at the marriage feast of Cana were able to discern between the quality of the drink the Lord made and what had already been served. If intoxicating wine had been served, and people "well drunk" or "drunk freely" (*American Standard Version*, 1901) of it (verse 10), then they would **not** have had such keen discernment. Though the amount is not specified as to what they had previously drunk, if they consumed the six waterpots Jesus had the servants fill with water and which contained "two or three firkins apiece" (verse 6), then they would have consumed somewhere between 106 to 162 gallons of booze! This is far more than enough to make the most casual drinker drunk. Those who twist this account to condone social drinking say the term "well drunk" refers to the idea the crowd was so drunk that they could not distinguish. However, the point of "the governor of the feast" to the bridegroom was the guest were able to discern between the "worse" and the "good wine." If it is the case these wedding guests were drunk to the point they could not distinguish, then the Lord made the six pots of alcoholic beverage for those who were already strongly under the influence and caused them to be even more drunk! Thus, the "good wine" of the wedding feast of Canaan must have been the fresh juice of the grape.

Also, consider the logical consequence of those who want to use this passage to justify the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Their argument goes something like this: "Since Jesus produced alcoholic wine, then it is morally right for a person to drink it." However, notice their logic takes them further than most of them want to go. Since Jesus produced alcoholic wine (as they claim), then not only would it be morally right to drink it, it would be morally right to produce it, sell it, distribute it, and make a living from it. Since such actions would most certainly cause someone to stumble, then it must be morally right to cause someone to stumble. However, the logical consequence of their argument would oppose the Lord's teaching (Luke 17:1-2). No, the reasoning is a foolish argument which has no foundation in scripture.

Further, consider the general context of the Bible. Habakkuk wrote, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (2:15). The sin Habakkuk rebuked is the sin of contributing to drunkenness. If Jesus supplied intoxicating wine to the wedding guests at Cana, then He contributed to their intoxication. Not only did Jesus contribute to it, He condoned and encouraged people to get completely soused! Since intoxication is sinful, then Jesus sinned, and the "woe" of Habakkuk would be upon Him. If this be the case, then it would be better for Jesus "that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea" (Luke 17:2). As a perfect Man, Jesus could not have turned water into alcoholic wine and offer such to others.

Another passage to consider in this context is Proverbs 23:31-32 which says, “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.” If Jesus turned water into intoxicating wine, then He would have caused others to look upon the wine when it is red opposing the wisdom of Solomon. Since Jesus is “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42), He would know the wisdom of sobriety and would not tempt others with an intoxicating beverage. Again, Solomon wrote, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

“*What then was the miracle of the wedding feast in Cana?*” The miracle of Cana was Jesus surpassed or transcended the normal amount of time and the natural process it takes to produce and harvest grape juice. What normally takes months, Jesus did in a moment. Augustine wrote, “For He on that marriage-day made wine in the six jars which he ordered to be filled with water — He who now makes it every year in the vines; for, as what the servants had poured into the water-jars was turned into wine by the power of the Lord, so, also, that which the clouds pour fourth is turned into wine by the power of the self-same Lord.” (As quoted in “*Bible Wines*” by William Patton, page 91.)

A person might ask: “*How could this be? Did they have any methods of preservation of grape juice in the first century?*” Yes. In fact, they had several methods. In the book “*Bible Wines*,” the author, William Patton, discusses four methods the ancients used for the preservation of grape juice. One such method is to keep air completely excluded — a method often used today. R. C. Foster in his book, “*Studies in the Life of Christ*,” said, “A Greek wine ship of the second century B.C. found by divers off the southern coast of France several years ago contained a great number of wine flasks that had been sealed so tight that after more than 2,000 years the sea water had not seeped into them.”

With close examination, we must conclude the Lord did not make intoxicating wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. Did Jesus turn water into wine? Yes. Did Jesus turn water into intoxicating wine? Absolutely Not!

Alcohol has caused and/or contributed to broken homes, every kind of accident imaginable, diseases both physical and mental, poverty, and crimes of every kind. Since its effect is such, it is beyond my own imagination why anyone would ever want to justify its use — let alone mar the Lord’s perfect example with its production and distribution. Its use is not social in any way but is in every way antisocial. Its defense by sweet-talking, soft-pedaling, so-called preachers is religiously hypocritical, morally irresponsible, and socially despicable. It has victimized the unborn, children, teenagers, the middle aged, and the old. It has victimized business people and laborers, country folks and city folks, the rich and the poor. There is probably not one person who has not felt its evil bite and its viperous sting! It is beyond my reasoning power to understand how people who claim to be spiritually minded and morally upright will rationalize its use. Blood has filled our streets because of this vile beverage. Graves have filled our hills and vales because of this evil drink. Reproach has filled our nation because of this wicked intoxicant. Corruption has filled our society because of this corrupted liquor. Shame and disgrace have filled our homes because of this malicious booze. Rather than justifying its use, let us stand diametrically opposed to it for “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” ☠ (IBS tract, 1998)

Observations and Concerns

July 5, 2023

Welcome Visitors! We are so glad you chose to be with us.

Praise in Psalm: “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD” (Ps. 4:5).

Declaration of Appreciation: Let us remember to give thanks for the national freedoms Christians possess “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:2).

Summer Series — The speaker this evening is Ron Hass who many of us have been acquainted with for several years. His topic is “Blessed Is the Man to Whom the Lord Will Not Impute Sin” (Romans 4:8).

Russ Earl responded to the invitation last Sunday morning requesting prayers.

Our Monthly Potluck Luncheon is scheduled for this coming Lord’s Day. All are invited to stay.

We have several of our number going to Bible Camp this week. Please keep them in your prayers.

There will be no Sonshiners this coming Sunday evening.

We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of Gary McNatt who recently passed away. He and his wife, Margie, are friends of the Carmonas.

Remember in Prayer:

- Lynn Dilks was scheduled to have cataract surgery on her left eye today.
- Sherry Carmona is recovering from knee surgery. It was good to see her this past Lord’s Day.

Extended Prayer List: Jim Allison – health concerns; Ed Carmona – health issues; Joyce Cash – health difficulties; Dan & Marcella Dennis – health issues; Bill Dilks – cancer; Sammy Gray – health concerns; Nelda Hudson heart struggles; Chuck Northrop – blood disorder; Vance & Darla Smith – declining health; Pat Taylor – health issues; Ed Dindy – cancer; Amanda Georgakus – cancer; Betty Jackson – health issues; Bobbye Mooney – cancer; Sam Orr – health concerns; LeAnna Shafer – chemotherapy; Jacob Webster – dog attack.

Schedule of Services	Assignments			
		Wednesday, July 5	Sunday, July 9 AM	Sunday, July 9 PM
	Announcements	Chris Nelson	Chuck Northrop	Paul Praschnik
	Song Leader	Doyle Jackson	Bill Dilks	Doyle Jackson
	Prayer	Chuck Northrop	Doyle Jackson	Bill Dilks
	Lord's Supper (speaker)		Paul Praschnik	Paul Praschnik
	Lord's Supper		Doyle Jackson	
	Lesson	Ron Hass	Chuck Northrop	Chuck Northrop
Bible Classes. . . 9:30 AM Worship 10:30 AM Worship 5:00 PM Wednesdays Bible Classes. . . 7:00 PM Website: oologahcofc.org	Prayer / Door Attendant	Ross Swearingen	Paul Praschnik	Paul Praschnik