

# Did Jesus change water into booze?

## 1. John 2:1-11:

*“On the third day a **wedding** took place at **Cana** in Galilee. **Jesus’ mother** was there, and Jesus and His **disciples** had also been invited to the wedding. When the **wine** was gone, Jesus’ mother said to Him, ‘They have no more wine.’*

*‘Why do you involve Me?’ Jesus replied, ‘**My time is not yet come.**’*

*His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever He tells you.’*

*Nearby stood **six stone water jars**, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*

*Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water;’ so they filled them to the brim.*

*Then He told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’*

*They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water **that had been turned into wine**. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have **had too much to drink**; but you have saved the best till now.’*

*This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. **He thus revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him.**”*

**A. First, we need a little background to understand this story.** Jesus had just turned 30 years old, which was the age a man could become a Rabbi. He had just been baptized (**Luke 3:21-23**), and He just returned from spending 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, and being tempted by the Devil (**Luke 4:1-14**). He has now returned to Galilee in the full power of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 4:14**), with His first five (soon to be) Apostles. It is here in Cana, at this wedding, that Jesus performs His first miracle and demonstrates His power to prove He is indeed the Son of God!

**B. “Wedding” (verse 1):** According to Jewish law, the wedding of a virgin was to take place on a Wednesday. The actual ceremony would take place in the evening after a feast. After the ceremony, the couple would be escorted to their new home by the wedding party with lighted torches and a canopy over their heads. Then the newly-weds had open-house for one week (**In this story, they must have been close to the end of this week, and run out of wine**). During this time the bride and groom wore crowns, wedding robes, and were treated as a king and queen by the wedding party.

**C. “Cana” (verse 1):** A small village quite near Nazareth, where Jesus probably spent at least 18 years of his life.

**D. “Jesus’ mother was there” (verse 1):** One of the Coptic gospels (never accepted as inspired by the Holy Spirit) tells us Mary was a sister of the bridegroom’s mother. The Monarchian Prefaces to the New Testament also tell us the bridegroom was John himself (**author of this Book, and the one telling this story**). It also tells us that John’s mother was Salome (**Mary’s sister**). This would make the Apostle John and Jesus cousins; and

may account for the fact that at Jesus' crucifixion, He told this same Apostle John that His mother (**Mary**) was now John's mother (**John 19:25-27**). There is no mention of Jesus' earthy father, Joseph, probably because he died at an early age. This could be why Jesus spent 18 years in Nazareth. Being the oldest, the responsibility of taking care of the family (**Matthew 13:55-56**) would be on His shoulders.

**E. "Jesus and His disciples had also been invited" (verse 2):** This would have been Peter, Andrew, John, Phillip, and Nathanel (Bartholomew) according to **John 1:35-51**.

**F. "Wine" (verse 3):** The word for wine in this story is not the wine as we know it (purposely aged with certain additives in order to make an alcoholic beverage). This is **oinos wine**, which can be translated either fermented or unfermented (naturally, depending on the degree of exposure to air and heat). They could and did keep grape juice from fermenting into what we and the Greeks called **gleukos wine**, or booze:

(1) "**Oinos**" is the general word for "**wine**" used in the New Testament. **It can be translated either fermented or unfermented**, as contrasted by Jesus in **Matthew 9:17**: "*Neither do men pour new (neous) wine (oinos) into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine (oinos) will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new (neous) wine (oinos) into new (kainos) wineskins, and both are preserved.*"

(a) "**Neos**" is translated: "signifies new in respect of time, that which is recent."

(b) "**Kainos**" is translated: "*denotes new, of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality.*"

(c) The **wine (oinos)** that was put into the wineskins was **recently pressed from the grapes** (as the word **new or neos** denotes) — thus, **unfermented**. In other words, **new (neous) grape juice was first poured into the wineskin**. When this **unfermented** grape juice (**oinos wine**) was carried in the old wineskin (which would no longer stretch), the heat and air caused it to begin to ferment or expand, changing it from **unfermented oinos wine**, into **fermented oinos wine**. This slow fermenting process would eventually expand the old wineskin to its breaking point, and, thereby, burst the old wineskin, allowing the **wine (oinos)** to run out. A **new (kainos)** wineskin would stretch, allowing the **new or neos wine** (unfermented, or recently pressed from the grapes) to ferment naturally, without destroying the wineskin.

(2) As Jesus points out in His story, in **Matthew 9:17**, it was nearly impossible to keep grape juice from fermenting. With this in mind, you could not say that the grape juice in Jesus' day never had any degree of fermentation at all (especially out of grape season). This is why the word "**oinos**" can be translated either

*“fermented,” or “unfermented.”*

(3) However, the Jews and Greeks did know how to keep unfermented or *new (neos) wine (oinos)*, from fermenting! They would **boil the grape juice to a syrup (about 1/3 of the juice they started with), put it in a jar, seal the lid with pitch, and then bury it in earth (ground, or cave) or water to keep it cool.** When they were ready to drink it, they would mix the concentrated juice in water (like we do). Obviously, the more you break open the jar, the greater the degree of fermentation; and the longer you keep the mixed *oinos wine* out (**no refrigerators at this seven day party**), the greater the degree of fermentation, and the closer to vinegar you’re going to get! The *master of the banquet* would certainly be able to tell the difference between **old grape juice** that had been mixed and re-mixed for almost seven days, and the **fresh grape juice** which Jesus created.

(a) **In the National Geographic, March, 1952 edition there is an article about the discovery of the ancient ship called the “Argisy.”** The ship sunk in the first century during Jesus’ day. They found large jars filled with *oinos wine* sealed with pitch (*oinos wine* was one of the Promised Land’s greatest exports). When they cracked open one of the jars, the *oinos wine* inside was still unfermented after almost 2,000 years!

(4) The Greeks and Jews were also very familiar with fermented wine (booze) as we know it today. They called this wine, *“gleukos,”* which translates: *“sweet wine.”*

(a) It was called *“sweet wine,”* because (like wine today), it had to be made with sugar, yeast, and other additives, in a cool and controlled environment. If you just let the grape juice continue to ferment naturally in an uncontrolled environment, without adding sugar, yeast, etc. (as in Jesus’ story in *Matthew 9:17*), you will, eventually, end up with *oinos wine vinegar* — not *gluekos wine*!

(b) *“Gleukos”* is used only once in the New Testament. In *Acts 2:13*, when the Apostles began to speak in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, some of the people there said, *“They have had too much wine (gleukos).”*

**G. “My time is not yet come” (verse 4):** Probably refers to His Messiahship (time to let all people know He is the Son of God, or the Messiah). Up until this time, Jesus had not yet performed any miracles. He, obviously, wasn’t telling Mary that He could not perform this miracle she was asking for, He was just commenting to her that up until this time, He had not performed any miracles. Remember, verse 11 says: *“This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed His glory (that He was indeed the Son of God, the prophesied Messiah)...”*

**H. “Six stone water jars...for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.” (Verse 6):** This means there was a total of 120-180 gallons of water. **The water was used for two purposes:**

(1) It was the custom of every Jew to wash the feet of every guest that entered their home (*John 13, I Timothy 5:10, John 12:1-8, Luke 7:36-50*).

(2) The Jewish Pharisees also adopted the Greek custom of **ceremonially washing their hands before a meal, and between each course**. The hands were first dipped in a bowl of water and held upright to allow the water to run down the wrists; then they were dipped again in the water and held downward to allow the water to run down the finger tips. Then they dipped into the water again to wash each palm of the hand with the corresponding fist. (*Matthew 15:1,2; Luke 11:38, Mark 7:1-9*).

**I. “Water that had been turned into wine” (verse 9)** is the Greek word “*genonao*,” which means “*to beget*.” The word refers to the seed of a man which fertilizes the egg to “*beget*” a child. Jesus fertilized the water to beget the grape juice. The miracle was that He left out the father (grape vine) and the mother (grape).

**J. “After the guests have had too much to drink” (verse 10):** is the Greek word “*methuo*,” which, here in the passive voice, translates: “*have drunk freely,*” or “*have well drunk.*” This word refers only to the people in the hosts illustration. This word is not used to describe the people at this wedding party. The point the host is making is that the *oinos wine* that Jesus made (**which was as fresh as juice squeezed from a grape just picked off the vine**) was much better than any of the *oinos wine* that had been served so far in this seven day party.

(1) **Remember 1.F.(1)&(2):** There would have been a big difference between **concentrated grape juice** mixed with water time and time again, exposed to heat and air, over a period of almost seven days; and **freshly squeezed grape juice** right off the vine!

(2) We know that none of the wine mentioned in this story was *gluekos wine* (purposely fermented wine with sugar, yeast, etc.). The only word for *wine* used here is *oinos* (which can be translated as fermented wine only if it is by a natural process without any additives like sugar and yeast).

(3) If Jesus had indeed made **120-180 gallons of booze** (intoxicating wine) after this party had been **drinking freely (verse 3) for almost seven days**, wouldn't He had been **attributing to possible drunkenness?**

## **2. Before you drink an intoxicating beverage read these Scriptures:**

**A. I Corinthians 5:11:** “...you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a

brother but is...**a drunkard**...with such a man do not even eat.”

**B. I Corinthians 6:9,10:** “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither...**drunkards**...will inherit the Kingdom of God.”

**C. I Peter 4:3-5:** “For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do — living in **debauchery**, lust, **drunkenness**, **orgies**, **carousing**, and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to Him (Jesus) who is ready to judge the living and the dead!”

(1) “**Debauchery**” is the Greek word “**aselgeia**,” which translates: “*excess, licentiousness (disregarding accepted rules and standards; morally unrestrained, esp. in sexual activity), absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness.*”

(2) “**Drunkenness**” is the Greek word “**oinophlugia**,” which translates: “*from oinos, wine, and phluo, to bubble up, overflow; drunkenness, debauchery, is rendered excess of wine.*”

(3) “**Orgies**” is the Greek word “**komos**,” which translates: “*a revel (wild party), carousal, the circumstance and consequence of drunkenness.*”

(4) “**Carousing**” is the Greek word “**potos**,” which translates: “*literally, a drinking, signifies not simply a banquet but a drinking bout, a carousal (a noisy, merry drinking party).*”

**D. Romans 14:21-23:** “It is better not to...**drink wine (oinos)** or to do anything that will cause your brother to fall (**get drunk**). **So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.** Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves (**like drinking fermented wine that could possibly get a person drunk**).”

**E. I Corinthians 8:9-13:** “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom (**drink what you want as long as you don’t get drunk**) does not become a stumbling block to the weak (someone, who because of your example, may drink and get drunk). For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating (**or drinking**) in an idol’s temple (**or a bar, party, etc.**), won’t he be emboldened to eat (**or drink what he sees you eating and drinking**)? So this weak brother (**Christian**), for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers (**fellow Christians**) in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat (**or drink**) causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat (**or drink wine according to his words in Romans 14:21**) again, so that I will not cause him to fall.”

**F. I Corinthians 10:23-33:** “Everything is permissible — but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. Eat (**or drink**

*according to Romans 14) anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience (some meat was offered in sacrifice to other gods), for, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat (or drink) whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, 'This has been offered in sacrifice' (as a test, supposing that a true Christian would not to eat or drink it), then do not eat (or drink) it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience sake — the other man's conscience I mean, not yours. For why should you be judged by another's conscience?...So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God (Christians) — even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved!"*

**G.** The Bible never said people who drink alcoholic beverages (like fermented wine) are going to Hell; and that you should not associate with anyone who drinks them. It said *"drunkards...will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 6:9,10)*. So, if you never drink too much (drunk), and know that you will always be able to control the urge to get drunk (celebrating, depression, etc.); what you do in privacy is between you and God. But, when you do it publicly, approving of it by your actions or words for others who may indeed follow your example and get drunk — **the Lord holds you responsible!**

*(1) Luke 17:1-3: "Jesus said to his disciples: 'Things that cause people to sin are bound to come (like bringing 120-180 gallons of fermented wine to a party when they ran out of booze), but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. So watch yourselves!"*

**H. I Corinthians 6:12-13:** *"Everything is permissible to me — but not everything is beneficial...I will not be mastered by anything. Food for the stomach and the stomach for food — but God will destroy them both."*

(1) Maybe you never get drunk, but does the wine or alcoholic beverage have mastery over you (are you hooked)? Do you **need** it to relax?

**3. After you have read all these Scriptures, how could anyone think Jesus would ignore His own commands and warnings, and change water into fermented wine (or booze) that had the potential of causing someone at this seven day party to get drunk?**

**A. I Corinthians 3:16,17:** *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple!" So, how will the Holy Spirit feel if you make God's temple drunk, or cause by your bad example a young Christian to get his temple drunk?*