

DID JESUS ENCOURAGE DRINKING? by Carl McMurray

There are certain practices that seem destined never to be conquered. Whether it is because of a continued inflow of converts that need teaching or because of the influences around us that tempt us to compromise. Some things must be revisited from time to time. John 2 is one of those passages and social drinking is one of those subjects.

Whenever the subject of alcohol comes up we are treated to the interpretation that drinking **must** be perfectly acceptable because Jesus turned water into wine after all. This is an interesting concept that some have. This interpretation of events pictures the Savior attending a party where they have already drunk up all the alcohol available. Then this view has Him giving them another 150 gallons of brew to finish off the drunken revelry. Stop and consider for a moment. If 300 people attended this wedding (a large wedding indeed), Jesus made enough for each guest to have a half gallon of fine alcohol to top off what they have already finished off. Is there anyway Jesus was not contributing to the sin of drunkenness here?

I wonder how they arrive at their conclusion...

It is not because they have researched the word for "wine" in the original language and found it to prove this point. If they had, they would already know the Greek word for "wine" is *oinos*, and in the original language it actually can refer to either a fermented beverage or unfermented juice. The "wine" Jesus made could have been non-alcoholic as well as alcoholic based solely upon the Greek term "*oinos*/wine." So this certainly does not prove, or justify, wine drinking today.

It is not because of the context. Although every drop of "wine" has been consumed, please note there is no indication of drunkenness or dishonorable conduct. In fact, they are still able to discern good "wine" from that of poorer quality. Note also, it is Jesus' mother that encourages Him to address this need and provide more to drink. A strange thing for any mother to do, let alone Mary and Jesus, when faced with a crowd who has finished off all the alcohol in sight. No, contextually there is nothing here to lead one to believe this must have been a fermented, alcoholic drink.

It is also not because of the culture Jesus lived in that one must conclude this surely was "strong drink." Three different kinds of "wine" were available to those people of which only one was fermented, i.e., fresh juice, medicinal (mixed with herbs), and mixed wine (boiled juice diluted with water). What logic would make one conclude that Jesus **MUST HAVE** given them more than enough alcohol to leave any size wedding party staggering drunk, when another type was available? Could it be possible that someone is trying to "make" this scriptural account say something it was never intended to say, to justify a desire that deserves no justification.

Lastly, it is not because of biblical wisdom that this conclusion is drawn. Shall we be satisfied with saying that the Son of God simply ignored the Scriptures that say “wine is a mocker” (Proverbs 20:1), “Do not mix with winebibbers” (Proverbs 23:20), and “Do not look (i.e., desire) the wine when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly” (Proverbs 23:31). The King of kings must have missed Proverbs 31:4, where Solomon wrote, “It is not for kings to drink wine,” while He created 150+ gallons of it. I’m supposing that Mary should have drilled young Jesus more in the wisdom literature of God, rather than encouraging him to supply goes with liquor?



If it is not demanded in the language, the context, the culture, or the scripture-led demeanor of our Lord, I am left with only one conclusion. I can arrive at no other understanding than simply to acknowledge that men desire John 2 and this first miracle of Jesus to justify something they have already determined in their own mind to be permissible, if not actually desirable. Objective Bible study does NOT require the conclusion that Jesus created an alcoholic beverage in fantastic proportions to be distributed. In fact, new covenant teaching would absolutely forbid this type of drinking party and subsequent revelry.

There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus created the sweetest and most desirable *oinos*/wine to be tasted by men, out of ordinary well water. That sweet wine was pure unfermented, non-alcoholic juice. To say otherwise indicts the Christ as being ignorant of the Scriptures, or rebellious to God’s admonitions, and an encourager of sinful behavior. Unstudied and carnal people may continue to twist the Scriptures to justify themselves, but let true Bible students reject such foolish explanations.

John 2:11 says that our Lord showed His glory in this miracle. Let’s not be guilty of dimming that glory by trying to justify this common drug problem.