

Did Jesus Really Make Wine?

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John 2:9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

John 2:10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

John 2:11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

What is this business of Jesus making a hundred gallons of wine for this wedding feast about? How does Historic Orthodox Christianity regard this matter? In order to answer that meaningfully, I want to discuss with you just a bit of the letter and the spirit of truth. This is also about law and legalism on one side, and grace and truth on the other.

I need to jump into the middle of this somewhere so that it does not become unnecessarily long and tedious. I will do that by starting with an event from the life and ministry of Jesus. It is found in St. Matthew's Gospel 15:1-20. It is about a time when Jesus and His disciples were being criticized by the Pharisees for eating without first washing their hands. Jesus gave the Pharisees a piece of His mind about their hypocritical teachings and actions. Then Jesus, in one of the few times He called the multitudes to Himself (most of the time they sought Him out and pressed in upon Him), gave a most instructive and far reaching explanation of legalism and how it related to

everyday life, particularly in the matter of eat and drink, but with application to other things as well. **“Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.”**

The disciples came and told Him that the Pharisees were offended at Him because of the way He chided their religious traditions. Jesus said, in effect, that these were false and pretentious people who were not genuine. He told the disciples not to worry about whether or not they were offended. He said they are blind leaders of blind followers, indicating that both groups of people were in that state because they wanted to be. If blind people lead, Jesus said, and others who are also blind choose to follow them, they are both going to fall into the ditch. When His disciples pressed Him further about this matter, He was amazed and a bit impatient with their lack of understanding. It apparently seemed to Jesus that His disciples should have picked up on and understood this most basic principle of Godly living. **“Are ye also yet without understanding?”** He asked them. **“Do not ye understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out in the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.”** (Matt 15:16-20)

Evil is in the Heart—Not in the Jug

Any knowledgeable servant of the Lord should understand that you cannot put anything in your mouth that will defile your spirit and your soul. It does not go into your heart, it goes into your digestive system. It can give you a belly ache, but it cannot make a sinner of you.

But the things that come out of the mouth and the heart, well that is a different matter. Those things can defile you.

What Does A Perfect Man Look Like in Living Example?

In His lifetime, Jesus drank wine; He made wine; He ate meat; He ate with unwashed hands; and He walked through the corn fields on the Sabbath

and picked someone else's corn and ate it. He went down into the houses of publicans (the riffraff of His day), and sinners, He sat at their tables and He ate with them. He companied with single women, in their homes, alone; He showed physical affection for, and allowed physical affection to be shown to Him, by a converted prostitute. And for each of these actions and reactions He was condemned by one or more devout leaders of the religious establishment. He was called a gluttonous man and a wine bibber for His eating and drinking habits. Silly and asinine comments have been made by modern day legalists to try to evade these issues. One prominent fundamental religious leader, who has passed on now, but whose teachings are still very much in evidence, was know to say that Jesus did not drink wine, and that you could have drank all of the wine that Jesus made at this wedding feast at Cana and it would not have made you drunk since it did not go through the fermentation process and there was no alcohol in it. But these hapless and mindless observations cannot obscure the obvious. They were not calling Him a winebibber for drinking grape juice and that old ruler of the wedding feast, who commented on the excellent quality of the wine that Jesus made, was not quite so naive as some modern day theologians.

In Psalm 104:15 the Bible says, **“And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.”** St. Paul told Timothy to go ahead and take a little wine for good reasons, and not to be afraid of the legalists. Nowhere in the Bible is wine-drinking forbidden altogether. The commandment prohibits drinking to excess. Do not be drunk. The Bible does not teach prohibition, it teaches temperance. Why is this? We just cited Jesus' explanation. The sin comes out of the heart, not out of the jug. The sin that proceeds out of the heart is excess. There is no defilement, according to Jesus, that comes out of the jug and goes in the mouth. “It does not defile the man,” Jesus said. To believe that there is some evil in the jug — in the fluid, in the inanimate object — is to make the same mistake Eve made, and with the same consequences. The letter kills. If you wish to accuse Jesus of careless, reckless, excessive, indulgent and sinful

behavior, go on and do it. But along with that misguided and wrong-headed thinking will come other acts of Pharisaism.

You who are proud that you have never let anything alcoholic touch your lips, or that you have never been seen in the company of a shady woman, find no sin in relaying your imaginations about someone to someone else as if they were true. This, Jesus said, is murder. You see no harm in feeding your mind on junk that comes out of the television until it distorts your mind, your morals and your habits. These are excesses and adulteries (remember that he who looks upon a woman to lust after her in his heart, the same is an adulterer). You have no principles against giving some poor widow a fraction of what something is worth because her husband has died, she needs the money, and does not know its value. And then you brag to your friends about the bargain you have made as if there was some personal virtue in this opportunistic and fell deed. This is theft. One can only follow the letter or the spirit — he cannot follow both. To focus in upon the letter is to fail to understand what truth is all about. God created the vineyard and gave instructions as to how the fruit of the vine could be used wisely for man's physical and emotional benefit. To take issue with the fact that Jesus made wine at the wedding feast in Cana is to put yourself in the camp of the Pharisees. If you think that drinking wine in moderation is worse than thinking lurid, angry and self-righteous thoughts, giving your wife and children short and uncharitable answers, and acting like a terrorist when you get behind the wheel of an automobile, then the light that is in you is darkness.