

## Turning water into wine... What's that about?

Some Christians believe that to ever drink any alcohol, is a sin. And so they have trouble with passages like this one.

I've heard some folk try to explain that the Greek word used here for "wine" is a non-alcoholic type... You know what: That don't stack-up. The word used here for "wine" is the same word used in Timothy, where it says that Deacons should not be addicted to too much wine.

In ancient times, alcohol, was the preservative. And there is no doubt, unless you were drinking freshly crushed grape juice (that's still dripping off the toes of the slave who crushed it), it would've been alcoholic (that's what made it keep).

Now, when it comes to making wine, most wine drinkers know that some wines are better than others. And it's the same back then. (Some people are better at making wine than others). There was good wine, and there was bad wine. And of course, the better stuff was more expensive...

*In 2018, apparently a bottle of 1945 Domaine de la Romanee-Conti sold for more than \$558 000US.*

*Imagine if any of Jesus' wine survived today, imagine what it would cost...*

Anyway, Jesus turned water into wine (let's not be embarrassed about this). Biblically, it is **not** a sin to drink alcohol. The sin, is to get drunk.

Even so, why did Jesus turn water into wine? If they're already half-sloshed, why did He make more?

BTW, when it comes to the miracles of Jesus, for a **non-Christian**, this is one of His better-known miracles. And probably their most loved *“Cool... Yeah, Jesus turned water into wine. Party...”*

Why did Jesus do it? Well, it looks like it was because His mum asked Him to.

This is how it unfolded:

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. Mary was invited. Jesus and His disciples are invited (we're not sure how many Disciples he has at this stage). And Mary says to Jesus, “They've got no wine” (they'd run out, apparently)... Now, that would've been an embarrassing thing for a host – to run out of refreshments.

And Jesus says: What's that got **to do with me? My hour has not yet come.**”

And believe it or not, I think this is the key, to what this is about. **My hour has not yet come.** 9 times in the Gospel of John, we hear references to Jesus' “hour” or Jesus' “time”. The first 3 indicate that the hour has **not** yet come. And the final 6 indicate that it **has** come.

And one commentary I read said:

*“The hour towards which everything moves, is the hour of Jesus' glorification, which takes place through His death, resurrection, and exaltation.”<sup>i</sup>*

Alright, so the hour for Jesus' death & resurrection hasn't yet come – the hour for His **glorification**, has not yet come. His ministry is barely beginning at this stage. But even now, we catch a glimpse of His “glory”, and we'll see that when we get to V11.

Anyway, Mary takes it for granted, that her eldest Son is going to do what she asked. And Mary gives the only command that she gives anywhere in the Bible. And I reckon it's a command that you and I should take notice of. <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

You can't go wrong, can ya: “*Do whatever Jesus tells you.*”

And if this is the only thing we take home with us today – a new pledge/faithfulness, to “do whatever Jesus tells us”, then I'd say today's been a successful day indeed...

So, let's take those words of Mary to heart: “Do whatever Jesus tells you.”

Righto, so there were 6 stone jars: Receptacles for water for them perform their Jewish religious washings (purification rites).

Their volume: Each jar held about 2 or 3 “measures”. A “measure” was the equivalent of about 35 litres. Alright, so these are **big** jars. 6 jars, and the capacity of each, was 70-105

litres (half a 44 gallon drum). (A total of 420-630 litres).  
That's a lot of wine (min. 560-840 bottles).

Anyway, the stone jars weren't full, so Jesus said "Top them up". They filled them right up to the brim. "Now, draw some out, and take it to the MC". (faith in itself)

And of course, we know the story. The MC didn't know where it came from, but he was impressed. He called the Bridegroom over, and said: "Most people bring the good stuff out first, and once everyone's getting a bit tiddly, then they bring out the cheap stuff, but you've saved the best stuff to the end..."

You know what: Anything Jesus does, He does it good. Why wouldn't He make good wine?

But, before we go any further, I want to touch on something significant – there's something symbolic going on here... The stone jars, were used for religious purification rites. The old religious system had become an outward show of cleanliness. And that's what the water represents.

And Jesus took this outward show of religious purity, and turned it into an abundant blessing.

You see, in the Old Testament, an abundance of wine (and oil or milk), was a sign of an age of fulfilment"...

E.g.

Joel 3:17-18 (ESV)

17 "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God,  
who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain.  
And Jerusalem shall be holy,  
and strangers shall never again pass through it.

18 "And in that day  
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,  
and the hills shall flow with milk,  
and all the streambeds of Judah  
shall flow with water;  
and a fountain shall come forth from the house of  
the LORD  
and water the Valley ....

That's just one example, of the hills dripping with wine.  
There's plenty more...

And so, the symbolism is important. An abundance of wine,  
is a sign, that an age of fulfilment has arrived. The old water  
of an outward **show** of purity has gone. The Kingdom of God  
has come...

Alright, so it's a symbolic thing,,, but what was the spiritual  
outcome, **of** the visual symbol?

V11 says:

11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in  
Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples  
believed in him.

Alright, 2 things happened.

1. Jesus manifested His glory; and
2. His disciples believed in Him.

To manifest, means to let His glory be seen. You see, Jesus is eternally glorious. From His birth onwards, Jesus continued to be glorious, but His glory was kept hidden. But every now and then, the eternal glory of Jesus (that was kept hidden), would be revealed...

So, the hour had not yet come for the **fullness** of glory of Jesus. The **ultimate** glorification of Jesus, was at the cross, where He died for our sins, and it culminates at the empty tomb, where He overcomes death... But in the signs and miracles that Jesus performed, we sometimes catch a glimpse of His glory...

You see, when we pray for a miracle, we are usually craving a miracle for selfish reasons:

- for the healing of a loved one;
- for physical provision;
- for rescue from troubles...
- Name your miracle here...

But the signs and miracles, that Jesus performed, are for a much greater purpose than for self – to reveal His glory...

And this is what we proclaim – “The glory of God”... The greatest blessing, isn’t found in the miracle itself. The greatest blessing, is to be in the presence of the glory of God.

Alright, so:

1. Jesus manifested His glory; and
2. His disciples believed in Him.

There's a change in language as we get to chapter 2...

In chapter 1, the push has been for us to believe about who Jesus is – to believe that He is the Son of God.

And the Disciples followed Him because of what they believed **about** Jesus.

They believed He was:

- the Messiah;
- the Son of God;
- the One who will baptise in the Holy Spirit;
- the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world...

But when they caught a glimpse of His glory, they didn't just believe that He **is** the Son of God – they believed **in** the Son of God.

You see, to be a Disciple of Jesus, there is a crucial shift involved: from “believing about”, to “believing in”. And to “Believe in” Jesus, is an active demonstration of what we call, “faith”.

Let me explain it:

*When Robyn and I were younger, it's never been an easy hobby for us because we've never lived near any hills, never-lone a cliff, but for a while, Robyn and I did a bit of abseiling and rock climbing...*

*It's not a cheap hobby to get into. You've gotta buy stuff that is tested, rated, and you can be confident that it's strong enough to do what it's supposed to do...*

*You've gotta trust the:*

- *rope;*
- *harness;*
- *carabiners;*
- *Figure 8 descender*
- *anchor point (tree; bolt; bollard);*
- *tapes that connect from the anchor points to the carabiners to the rope...*
- *that your 50m rope isn't going to end 10m before the end of the cliff...*

*Now, when you buy each of these items, the testimony is there:*

- *the load rating has been tested;*
- *the number of falls the rope is rated for;*
- *the assurance that these are quality items that will not fail...*

*And I believe that. (That's why I bought them). And I **also** have to believe that the knots I tie, are not going to come undone...*

*And I can stand at the top of the cliff and believe all that...*

*But, to step over the edge of the cliff, and to allow that rope and all of the components, to take the weight of Michael, hanging over a 30 or 40m cliff, that is to believe **in**...*

*I put my whole trust in that rope (and all of its fixings), as I lean back over the edge of the cliff, and begin the descent.*

And that, is why in the Gospel of John, “believing” is always a verb. To believe **in** Jesus, is a very practical doing thing.

The Disciples left everything to follow Jesus. That’s believing in.

You see, believing about Jesus: that never saved anyone. Satan believes:

- that Jesus is the Son of God;
- that Jesus rose from the dead;
- that He is coming again to judge the living and the dead...

The Evil one knows all of that, and he shudders.

Believing in Jesus, means Disciples of Jesus choose the hard road – the dangerous road – the path where we sacrifice a potentially easier life – we sacrifice the cravings of the flesh, for the sake of following Him.

Towards the end of John, is when Jesus will begin to prepare His Disciples for when He’s gone. And He warns them, that

they will be persecuted and ostracised, but He tells them, that their sorrow will turn to joy...

You see, it's about having an eternal perspective. To believe **in** Jesus, is to have the eternal perspective, that stands firm for Jesus, no matter what the cost. Trusting in Him. Trusting that He will provide what we need, and trusting that because He is raised from the dead, we **also** will be raised. It's living, knowing that this life is short, and eternity is forever...

That's what it means, to believe in Jesus.

The Disciples caught a little glimpse of the glory of Jesus (when He turned that water into wine), and that little glimpse of glory, helped them to believe in Him.

We know better. Jesus' time for glory, has come. He is now glorified. He is risen from the dead. And the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, is all we need for us to believe in Him...

Do you believe "about Jesus"? Or Do you believe "**in** Jesus"?

To believe about Jesus, is knowledge (and it's a good start).

To believe in Jesus, is commitment and faith. And you know what Jesus wants.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,

we thank You that Jesus is glorified.

We thank You that He died for our sins,

and yet He lives.

Lord, we believe this.

But Lord, we want to go deeper than knowing.

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in this,

we make a commitment of faith.

Lord, help us

to live for You, every day.

As we trust You in every circumstance of life:

- be with us;
  - comfort us;
  - empower us;
  - keep our faith strong; and
- 
- may You be glorified as we unashamedly believe in You.

in Jesus' Name,

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Kruse, C.G. (2003) *John: an introduction and commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries).