

The Most Famous Winemaker?

A couple of weeks ago I received a letter from a reader who made the claim that Jesus was “the most famous winemaker in history.” Really? In this article, we will examine this misguided claim.

The respondent had in mind, no doubt, the incident in John 2:1-11 where Jesus turned water into wine. The belief that the wine Christ provided was alcoholic rests on five assumptions. First, it is assumed that the word *oinos* (the Greek word for “wine”) indicates only “fermented-quality grape drink.” Second, it is assumed that since the word *oinos* is used in reference both to the wine which ran out and the wine that Christ made, both wines must have been alcoholic. Third, it is assumed that the Jews did not know how to prevent the fermentation of grape juice; and since the wedding was just before Passover (John 2:13), that is, six months after the grape harvest, the wine had ample time to ferment. Fourth, it is assumed that the description given by the master of the banquet to the wine provided by Christ as “*the good wine*” means a high-quality alcoholic wine. Fifth, it is assumed that the expression “*well drunk*” indicates that the guests were intoxicated because they had been drinking fermented wine. Consequently, the wine Jesus made must also have been fermented.

It was common custom to bring out the freshest wine at the beginning of the feast. As the wine ran low, the older wine was brought out. In John 2:10, the master of the feast made the comment that Jesus had saved the good wine until the end. This “*good wine*” was fresh, unfermented wine. Jesus did not make intoxicating wine!

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