

GOSPEL OF JOHN 2

Jesus' First Miracle

Isn't it funny how some things never change? For example: weddings. All throughout history weddings have been ceremonies of great celebration, fun, exhilaration, and bliss. Weddings have brought communities together, families together, friends together, and, occasionally, moments of intense stress! It is no surprise, then, that weddings during Jesus' time also held a great deal of fun, excitement, and nervous tension.

At the beginning of John chapter two, we have what appears to be a simple story of Jesus attending a wedding and helping his mother by turning some water into wine. At first glance, this seems to be a miracle of little significance and life-altering application. However, this creative miracle, or "sign" as the author calls it, reveals a side of Jesus, and through Him, a side of the Father, that is fascinating. "We must always remember that beneath John's simple stories there is a deeper meaning which is open only to those who have eyes to see. In all of his gospel, John never wrote an unnecessary or an insignificant detail. Everything means something, and everything points beyond."¹

A typical Palestinian wedding of Jesus' time would last all week and often the entire town would be invited. The bridegroom and his family were responsible for planning and paying. The new couple would be treated like a king and queen by everyone, paraded around the city, and blessed with tons of gifts and service. It was totally normal for most attendees to take the week off from work, relax, and celebrate the union. Hospitality was of the utmost importance. If there wasn't enough food, beverages, or kindness offered, it was considered the ultimate disgrace.

In John chapter two, Mary, Jesus' mother, had some role in the wedding (most likely related to the bridegroom), and realizing that there was no more wine left, knew the bridegroom's family name and honor would be brought down in a matter of minutes if something was not done. Mary turned to Jesus, who was attending with his first five disciples, and said, "They have no more wine." Jesus replied, "Woman, why do you involve me? My hour has not yet come."² Unshaken by his response, Mary told the servants to do whatever Jesus said.

The word woman (gunai) is misleading. He used this same address to Mary as he left her to the care of John while on the cross. We have no English word to compare it to but the closest would be Lady. In actuality, it was a respectful title, akin to one used to address a queen. After this intro, he says, "Why do you involve me" (ti emoi kai soi) literally, "what to me and to you." Although this sounds harsh and abrupt, D.A Carson, a renowned theologian states, "Jesus is not rebuking his mother, however courteously, declares, at the beginning of his ministry, his utter freedom from any kind of human advice, agenda, or manipulation."³ He did not turn her request down. It was a common conversational phrase and when said sharply did indicate complete disagreement, but when spoken gently, as Jesus spoke, indicated not so much disagreement but

Pre-Article Questions:

1. Describe what the wedding culture is like where you are from? Describe a time when you, or a friend, were at a wedding and something went wrong? What happened?!

1. Barclay, William, The New Daily Study Bible Volume One: The Gospel of John

2. Gospel According to John 2:4

3. Carson, D.A.

He would help but in his own way. For a Jewish feast, wine was essential. Wine was associated with feasting and joy. Jesus could have refused to help, but instead he provided an abundance of choice wine and consequently saved the family from great humiliation that day.

Another ambiguous yet important phrase spoken by Jesus in this exchange with Mary was when he stated his hour was yet to come. This is a direct reference to his "hour" or main purpose for being sent to earth, the hour of crucifixion and his death, stating it was not yet at hand. In this Gospel of John we will see Jesus use the word, "hour" over and over again in reference to the passion (7:6,8, 12:23, and 17:1). "All through his life, Jesus knew that he had come into the world for a definite purpose and a definite task. He saw his life not in terms of his wishes, but in terms of God's purpose for himself. He saw his life not against the shifting background of time, but against the steady background of eternity. All through his life, he went steadily towards that hour for which he knew he had come into the world."⁴

John 2:1-11, NIV

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, 2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." 4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. 8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, 9 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 10 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." 11 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.

Study Questions:

1. In what ways has reading this article helped you to understand the importance of this miracle?
2. How does the miracle of turning the water into wine reflect on the character and heart of Jesus? How does it impact you knowing that Jesus cared enough to save a family from humiliation by performing this miracle?
3. Jesus attended a wedding. Jesus is not a killjoy. What has been your personal experience with Christianity thus far, would you associate it with boredom? Why or why not?
4. In what ways can we be a Christian and still have fun without compromising our actions or thoughts?
5. We all want to make a difference in the world and have purpose. Christ was focused on his purpose from the beginning of his ministry, what scriptures from this passage display that? Any other additional scriptures come to mind when Jesus said something revealing his focus and purpose on earth?
6. In what ways has God begun to reveal more of His purposes in your life and future? How has that helped you on a day to day basis stay focused and keep perspective?
7. In what ways is this miracle a metaphor of the gospel?
8. How has the gospel changed your life? How can you relate to this metaphor and picture of the gospel?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Meeting with a brother or sister from your small group over a meal to get to know one another more and answer a few questions:

- Read John Chapter 2:1-11 again
- What does this chapter teach us about Jesus? What does this chapter teach us about Jesus' Kingdom?
- What specifically about Jesus' actions challenges you and why?
- What questions or comments do you have for Life Group next week about this chapter? (Make note of them to ask at the beginning of next week's study)

End your time in prayer for one another if possible and set up another time to meet again outside of small group.