

Jesus Turns Water into Wine

Introduction:

We will take our study this morning from **Jn. 2:1-11**. We have recorded here the first miracle performed by Jesus during His personal ministry. The occasion was a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. In our study we want to take an exegetical look at the text before us, and then point out a few practical points which we can derive from the passage.

Lesson:

I. Text:

Vers. 1-2

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

Cana was a small village near Nazareth about 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee. The text implies that Mary was either a relative or a close friend to the family of the bridegroom. Jesus being her son also received an invitation, as well as His disciples which is not too surprising since one of those disciples, Nathanael, was from Cana. Now, these kinds of wedding feasts lasted between two and seven days, depending on the resources of the bridegroom. The newly wedded couple were treated like royalty during this time. It was a week of festivity and joy and a supreme occasion on one's life. It was a happy time like this that Jesus and His disciples shared on this occasion. Nevertheless, something went wrong!

Ver. 3

3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."

Anyone who has ever thrown a party or extended hospitality can sympathize with the family of the bridegroom here. What an embarrassing thing it would be to those in charge of the feast. To run out of provisions for an occasion like this would have been an a huge humiliation to the family, as well as a miserable and mortifying experience for the wedded couple. Mary, then, knowing somehow that her son could save the day, revealed the problem to Him. In a moment we will notice the response of Jesus but let me point out something first. *"John refers to Mary as the mother of Jesus. John never mentions Mary by name in his writings. To me that is an important point. If Mary was to be deified or the object of our prayers, then why would John downplay her role? The answer is she is not to be worshiped and she is not divine" (Mattoon's Treasures)*. Roman Catholicism is again seen to be a false religion that is based upon a lie. Now, notice the response of Jesus:

Ver. 4

4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

Now, there's no question but that this is a rebuke by Jesus toward His mother. It is a mild rebuke, but a rebuke nevertheless. This is shown, not by the word "woman" which was a term of courteous respect at that time, but by the statement, "*What have I to do with thee.*" But why would Jesus rebuke His mother on this occasion? The answer is found in the next statement. Jesus said, "*My hour has not yet come.*" Jesus often referred to His death, burial, and resurrection and therefore His glorification, as *His hour*.

John 7:30

30 So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

John 8:20

20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

John 12:23-24

23 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

John 12:27

27 "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.

John 17:1

17 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,

Why does Jesus refer to *His hour* in His response to Mary? He did so because He realized that Mary was interested in more than simply helping her friends on this occasion. She, as we shall see, wanted Jesus to manifest His glory.

Now, we should observe that it was in His *hour* that the true messiahship and sonship of Christ would be manifested in the ultimate way (**Jn. 2:18, 19; 8:28**). Yes, Jesus would give many secondary manifestations of His messiahship (*all of His miracles fall into that category*), but there would be only one supreme manifestation of it—His death, burial, & resurrection. Jesus, knowing the hearts of men, realized that Mary was seeking a supreme manifestation of His Messiahship so that the world could see just how great her Son was, but she was rushing things. Mary was getting into something that was not her business; hence, the words of Jesus, ". . . *what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*" But Jesus did show that He would help with the problem here. Obviously Jesus said something to Mary that is not recorded for us. But notice now what is said.

Vers. 5-6

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." 6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

These water jars were normally used for washing hands before eating which was a tradition started by the elders of Israel (**Matt. 15:1**). This is what is meant by, "*the Jewish rites of purification*." Each water jar held between 20 to 30 gallons each. Altogether, then, these jars of water would hold more than a hundred gallons and maybe closer to two hundred.

Ver. 7

7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim.

Notice that Jesus instructed those standing by to fill the water jars with water and the record says that they "*filled them up to the brim.*" That is an important observation. When Jesus told them to *fill* the water jars that is exactly what He meant. He wanted them filled to the top so that after the miracle is performed, there could be no accusation of collusion. Someone might claim that Jesus conspired with His disciples to trick the people, but with the water jars filled to the brim, they couldn't legitimately make such claim. Now verse eight.

Ver. 8

8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.

Jesus has now performed the miracle. There was no *showing-off* by Jesus. He in no way drew attention to Himself. He didn't have to speak any special words, nor even approach the jars of water. He simply willed it, and it was done. And he commanded the servants to give some of this wine to the master of the feast who was in charge of serving the guest and overseeing the entertainment etc. This was done to substantiate this miracle.

Vers. 9-11

When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

These words coming from the ruler of the feast verify the miracle of Christ on this occasion, and we are told that this marked the beginning of the miracles of Christ, and that it caused His disciples to believe on Him. Here is the primary purpose of the miracles of Christ—to produce faith in Him (**Jn. 20:30-31**).

Now, before we look at some practical points from the text, let's take a few minutes

to discuss the question, “*Did Jesus endorse social drinking here?*” Some claim that Jesus put His stamp of approval on social drinking by turning water into wine. The question is, “Into what kind of wine did Jesus turn the water?” Was it fermented or unfermented? The word *wine* in our text is from the Greek word **OINOS**. Vine says that it is the general word for wine. It can be used in three ways:

- **To denote fermented juice of the grape (Matt. 9:17).**
- **Freshly pressed juice from the grape (Matt. 9:17).**
- **Juice still inside the grape (Rev. 19:15).**

Now, there is no evidence at all to suggest that Jesus made fermented wine on this occasion. Really, if this passage reveals anything, it reveals that the wine here was unfermented. The wine under consideration is described as “*good*” in ver. 10. Now, in this context the adjective *good* refers to the flavor, not the strength of the wine. It should be noted that back then the best wine was that which was harmless and had very little strength. *Good wine* was destitute of spirit, i.e., it was non-intoxicating.

“We should not be deceived by the phrase “good wine.” We often use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength and its power to intoxicate; but no such sense is to be attached to the word here. Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace describe wine as “good,” or mention that as “the best wine,” which was harmless or “innocent.” The most useful wine was that which had little strength...Pliny expressly says that a good wine was one that was destitute of spirit” (Barnes' Notes).

Listen: in light of what the Bible says about intoxicating drink, it is hard for me to believe that Jesus produced such a thing (**Prov. 23:31-35**). I might observe that there are 23 references to strong drink in the Old Testament and 21 of them condemn it. Of the two that don’t condemn strong drink, one is referring to using it in a drink offering (**Num. 28:7**), and the other refers to the purchase of it, not the drinking of it (**Deut. 14:26**). The fact is the Bible condemns the process of getting drunk (**Eph. 5:18**) and the social consumption of alcohol beverages (**1 Pet. 4:3**).

In light of all this, does anyone really believe that Jesus, the most upright and morally pure person who has ever walked on the face of the earth, produced over a hundred gallons of intoxicating drink? I refuse to believe it.

II. Practical Points from the Text:

A. MARRIAGE IS HONORABLE.

Marriage is a wonderful institution created and ordained by God. By accepting the invitation to this marriage feast at Cana, Jesus honored the holy estate of marriage. We need, in this society today in which so many are bad-mouthing and disregarding marriage, to remind ourselves and to teach our young people of the rightness and beauty and appropriateness of marriage. The Hebrews writer declared, “*Marriage is honorable in all ...*”

(*Heb. 13:4*). This is what we need to teach our children. Regardless of what many feminists are shouting on hilltops today, happiness can be found in marriage. As Jesus once said, *"if it were not so, I would have told you."* But instead of telling us that marriage is bad or that marriage is inadvisable, He sanctified it by His presence at a marriage feast. And so holy does Jesus regard marriage, that in His word He has taken it as a type of the union that He has with the church (**Eph. 5:22-32**). Yes there are trials in marriage. There are difficulties associated with all marriages. And there are, of course, marriages that end in complete disaster. But the kind of problems that bring bitterness to marriages, and that make the home a battleground instead of a loving environment, can be mitigated or averted altogether by imitating the folks of Cana and invite Jesus to the marriage (**Rev. 3:20**). Any marriage involving two Christians will be successful (**Jn. 1:12**).

B. WE SHOULD CONDUCT OURSELVES SO THAT JESUS WILL DWELL WITH US .

We are not told a lot about what was going on at this marriage feast at Cana, but we can conclude that it was respectable and that for the most part people were conducting themselves appropriately. How do I know that? Because Jesus was good and holy and there was no evil in Him at all. He never tolerated sinful behavior. Certainly He would not have fellowshipped any sinful activity. I'm not saying that there were not sinners at this wedding feast; in fact everyone there, save Jesus, was a sinner (*Jesus had no problem supping with sinners in an effort to convert them and teach them truth*). But Jesus would never put His stamp of approval upon any function or activity that would put His Father to shame. Now there are two questions which we should ask with this in view. First, *"Do we conduct ourselves in such a way morally as to make Jesus welcome in our lives?"* If we behave ourselves in a dishonorable way, the answer is no (**Rom. 8:5-14; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 1 Jn. 1:7**). Second, *"Do we engage in the kind of social functions in which Jesus would be welcome?"* There is nothing wrong with having a party. That's what was going on at this wedding that Jesus attended. They were eating, drinking, and being merry. They were celebrating life and a new beginning and having a good time, and Jesus was there approving their actions by His presence. Now, what kind of parties do you attend? What kind of social events do you grace with your presence? May I say to you that if they are not situations that our Lord could attend, we ourselves should not be there (*modern day proms, some office parties, unscriptural marriage*). And can I say a word about our modern day weddings? Make sure your wedding glorifies Christ. First, make sure that the bride's maids and the bride herself are dressed appropriately. Sensuality and immodesty may be stylish with the world, but it is not stylish with God. Second, don't dishonor the Lord by serving a bunch of liquor at the reception or engaging in modern day dancing that is sinful in the eyes of our heavenly Father. Have a reception that Jesus could attend.

C. A RULE FOR LIFE -- *“Do whatever He tells you.”*

Better advice has never been given than this! Where do we go to hear the Lord speak? We've said it before and so say we again -- the Word of God. Whatever promises you read in this book, believe them. Whatever instructions of life you read in this book, follow them. Whatever commands you read in this book, do them. You don't have to like it. You do have to understand the rationale behind it. Simply live by this rule -- "Do whatever He tells you!" If He tells you to assemble with the saints, and He has, DO IT! If He tells you put the kingdom of God first, and He has, DO IT! If He tells you to do all things by His authority, and He has, DO IT!

Listen to me: just like Jesus transformed the water into wine in John 2, He has the ability to transform us into the kind of disciples with whom God wants to spend an eternity. Jesus can change wishy-washy disciples into steadfast and reliable disciples. Jesus can change bad husbands into great husbands. Jesus can change worldly-minded sinners into God-fearing Christians. How does He do it? He does it through the power of His Word. Jesus has given us His Word and that Word has the ability to reshape and reform the greatest sinners. The Christians at Corinth were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, drunkards, homosexuals and more, but Jesus changed them by the power of the gospel (1 Corinthians 6:10-11). The Christians at Thessalonica were idolaters, but, by His indestructible and incorruptible truth (1 Pet. 1:22-25), Jesus changed them into servants of the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Paul was a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious (1 Timothy 2:13), but Jesus, again by the power of His Word, changed him into one of the greatest Christians of all time. Jesus may never change water into wine again, but He is still in the changing business. He is in the business of changing lives.

When Jesus makes a change, it is always for the better. The wine that Jesus produced was better than the water that was poured into pots. Will you let Jesus, through the power of the gospel, change your life for the better? If you are not a Christian, will you let Jesus change you into a child of God? If you are a child of God who is uncommitted and apathetic, will you let Jesus transform you into someone who seeks first the kingdom of God? If you are a strong Christian, will you let Jesus continue to change you into an even stronger Christian by the power of that same Word? Jesus wants to help all of us, but we have to do something. Just like the servants at the wedding had to fill the pots with water, Jesus demands that we fill our hearts with His Word and live by it. If we are willing to do that, he will transform our ordinary lives into the abundant life He promises His true disciples (John 10:10).

D. JESUS WON'T DO FOR US WHAT WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES.

Jesus was willing to perform a miracle on this occasion to help this family out. They needed wine and Jesus was willing to provide it, for they couldn't provide for themselves. But what they could do, Jesus commanded them to do: "**fill the water jars with water. . .**" He said to them. This is also true with our salvation. Jesus is willing to save us to the uttermost, but He won't do what we can do for ourselves. He has done His part, dying on Calvary's cross in our stead. Now we must hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized. We must obey the gospel for ourselves. Furthermore, we must work out our own salvation by being faithful unto death **(Phil. 2:12; Rev. 2:10)**.

E. A LESSON ON FAITH.

There are two important points concerning faith that can be derived from this text **(ver. 11)**. First, faith can increase and be strengthened. In regard to the disciples, this was not the beginning of their faith. They had already forsaken all to follow Him. But now their faith was made stronger by this miraculous sign. Our faith can and should increase as well. If we are heading in the right direction, our faith in Jesus and His Word will constantly get stronger, and we will add to our faith other important things that will help sustain us **(2 Pet. 1:5-10)**.

Second, notice here that the disciples believed *in* Jesus. There is a difference between simply believing a person and believing in a person. We might believe someone we don't believe in. To believe one is to accept something he says as truth, but to believe in one is to trust Him completely. These disciples would now demonstrate throughout their life, and most of them in death, that they "believe in him." Do we demonstrate such in our lives? Do we really believe in Jesus as God's Son? Do we trust Him enough to follow Him wherever He goes, and to cast our care upon Him when we are burdened? If not, we certainly must increase our faith.

Conclusion:

Let's try to apply these practical lessons to our lives.