

## 15. The Gospel of John—2:1-11

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### *“A Wedding in Cana” Pt.2*

(1/21/18)

Last week in our study of John’s gospel we came to chapter 2—and to a story that has become a little controversial in the minds of some.

It’s the story of a wedding that was held in the town of Cana—a wedding whose guest list included Jesus, His disciples and Jesus’ mother Mary.

Now, as we said last week, there’s nothing controversial about a wedding itself—they happen every week all over the world.

What makes this story somewhat controversial was the interaction between Jesus and His mother, as well as how Jesus seems to be promoting the use of alcohol thru this first miracle of His ministry.

**John 2:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee...**

Cana was a little village located about 8 or 9 miles from Nazareth.

As you know, Jesus grew up in Nazareth—and no doubt most of His family still lived there.

And as we said last week, many believe that this wedding could have been for one of Jesus' relatives, a cousin perhaps, which would explain why Mary was so concerned about the lack of wine and the fact that she seemed to have authority over the servants (v.5)—possibly because she was family.

**John 2:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, **and the mother of Jesus was there.**

I want you to notice that the text says, “**and the mother of Jesus was there**”—not “*Mary’s Son Jesus was there.*”

J. Vernon McGee—

*“It is interesting to notice that Mary is spoken of as **the mother of Jesus**. The Savior was not famous because He was the Son of the Virgin Mary, but she was well-known because she was the mother of our Lord. The Scriptures always give the pre-eminent place to Christ and not to Mary.”*

**John 2:2-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.”

Now as we pointed out last time—weddings in first century Israel were a major social event.

The typical wedding feast would last a week—and during that time those invited pretty much said good-bye to their daily routines.

The caring of their crops, their duties around the house and any other jobs they might have had—and for a week they just celebrated the newlyweds and enjoyed the feast.

Each night was a festival occasion where they would dress the bride and groom in their wedding robes—and with torches in hand, they would parade them thru the town so that everyone could congratulate them.

They were treated like a king and queen during this week.

It was an incredible time for the young couple—seeing as most of them were poor.

They knew that after the wedding feast, as poor people, they would most likely spend the rest of their lives in back breaking labor.

And as such, the wedding feast became a wonderful time of joy and celebration before launching into a life of hardship and drudgery.

Now, what did Jesus do—how did He respond to all of this joy and merrymaking?

Did He condemn them for their partying?

Did He act super-spiritual like the Pharisees and say to them, *“I haven’t got time for such nonsense! I’ve got to go to the temple to pray!”*—no, He joined them in the celebration!

Jesus wasn’t like John the Baptist—He didn’t withdraw from society to go live in the wilderness where people had to seek Him out—no, Jesus sought them out!

He came to the people, to everyday people—not to condemn them, or to isolate Himself from them—but to love them and interact with them

And this is why sinners loved to be around Jesus—sinners didn't like being around the Pharisees back then nor many Christians today.

There was something special about Jesus—something magnetic—something that drew people to Him.

I personally believe it was the love and joy He radiated, coupled with His kind and compassionate heart towards them—which again was why they wanted to be near Him.

Not because He participated in their sin of course—but because He really cared about them and it showed.

So, it shouldn't shock us that He would go to one of the biggest social events of the year—a wedding!

**John 2:3-4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."**

**<sup>4</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."**

Now, we get the impression from the English that Jesus is being harsh or abrupt with His mother by calling her "*woman*".

But actually, that word in the Greek was a polite term (although not an intimate one)—a comparable term in English would be '*ma'am*'.

It is significant that He didn't refer to her as 'mother'—a title He had no doubt called her by ever since He was old enough to talk.

It seems from the gospels that, from the time He began His public ministry to the very last time He addresses her as He hung on the cross (John 19:26)—He only refers to her as ‘*woman*’.

When Jesus began His ministry as Messiah and Savior—from that moment on His relationship with His earthly family changed.

They would have to relate to Him like every other human being—like every other sinner to Savior—and that included Mary.

It’s important we understand that Mary was a very godly young woman when the angel Gabriel appeared to her and told her that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah.

Mary was chosen by God not because she was sinless (as some suppose)—only Jesus was sinless.

Mary herself tells us she was a sinner in her Magnificat in Luke 1 we read—

**Luke 1:46-48 (NKJV)**

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior [*Mary acknowledges she’s a sinner who needed a Savior like every other sinner*]. <sup>48</sup> For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

In fact, that was the very thing Gabriel said to her when he first appeared to her to give her the news that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah—he said, "*Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!*" Luke 1:28 (NKJV)

Notice that the angel Gabriel didn’t say to her, "*Blessed are you above women!*"

The very last time we see Mary in the New Testament is in Acts chapter 1:14—where the disciples are praying *with* Mary and not *to* Mary.

And because Jesus no doubt knew (thru the Holy Spirit) how so many would try to venerate and even worship Mary throughout the centuries—He was careful not to say anything about her or to her that might reinforce that false and heretical view of her.

**Luke 11:27-28 (NKJV)**

<sup>27</sup> And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed *is* the womb that bore You, and *the* breasts which nursed You!"

<sup>28</sup> But He said, "More than that, blessed *are* those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

**Matthew 12:46-50 (NKJV)**

<sup>46</sup> While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. <sup>47</sup> Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." <sup>48</sup> But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" <sup>49</sup> And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! <sup>50</sup> For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

We can see that Jesus was extremely careful never to exalt Mary—or even to refer to her as *mother*.

**John 2:3 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> **And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."**

As I have already said, the typical wedding feast would last a week—during which time the host family was expected to make sure all the guests had plenty of food and drink.

To run out of food and especially wine during this festival week was considered, to say the least, a social disaster because it brought great shame upon the host family.

Since it seems likely that Mary was a relative of this family—we can understand why she was so concerned about it—even to the point of bringing it to Jesus’ attention.

But He seems to rebuff her when He said—

**John 2:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> ..."Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me?..."**

Now, Jesus’ words to Mary seem harsh but in reality these words are difficult to translate into English and therefore our translations are prone to mislead us as to what He is really saying.

Most of the translations, translate Jesus’ words to Mary as, “*What have I to do with you?*” Or, “*What does your concern have to do with Me?*”

But really, that phrase appears several times in the Bible and basically means, “*What do we have in common?*”—and in this context the answer is ‘Nothing!’”

One scholar said with regard to the use of this phrase in Scripture,

*“David uses it twice with respect to his cousins, the sons of Zeruiah. How impossible it was for them to have anything in common with him in the spiritual life!...Three times the demons, by using the same expression, reveal how Satan has nothing in common with Christ, or Christ with Satan. And lastly the Lord used it to the Virgin Mary to show how impassable is the gulf between His sinless Deity and her sinful humanity, and that only One Voice had authority for His ear.”*

And so with that in mind, I believe the Lord is saying to her, “*What do we have in common? I am on a divine mission and only do what pleases My Father—while you live to please others. Woman, this is My concern not yours. As My Father directs Me, that I will do.*”

In other words, “*If I do anything it will be because My Father has told Me to—not because you have.*”

I say this because it sounds as if Mary is twisting Jesus' arm to do something He really doesn't want to do—as if she's the one who's in charge not Him.

This is something that I was taught in Catholic school—that if you really want something from God don't go to Jesus (He's kind of indifferent towards us)—you go straight to His mother.

You see, she has more pull with Him than you, and there's no way He'll refuse a request from her (even if He really doesn't want to do it)—a teaching they get right here from this story.

Now, first of all that is absolutely wrong and unbiblical—Jesus loves us (He died for us!) and wants to meet our needs and help us when we're going thru a difficult time.

And secondly, Jesus knew about this wedding before He made the world, and He knew the Father had ordained for Him to be there and perform this miracle—and Mary had nothing to do with it!

*“Yes, but that seems to contradict with Jesus' full statement on the subject”—*

**John 2:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."**

I don't believe Jesus was saying that His time to perform a miracle had not yet come—if so He wouldn't have disobeyed His Father's will and done one anyway!

No, I believe Mary had waited a long time for Jesus to declare He was the Messiah and glorify Himself—that was her heart, to see Him glorified by establishing His Kingdom upon the earth.

This is something she had been waiting for ever since the angel Gabriel had visited her with the news that, as a virgin, she would give birth to a very special Child—

**Luke 1:32-33 (NKJV)**

<sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. <sup>33</sup> And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Author William MacDonald—

*"Mary had wanted to see Jesus glorified, but He must remind her that the time for this had **not yet come**. Before He would appear to the world as the all-conquering Christ, He must first ascend the altar of sacrifice, and this He did at the cross of Calvary."*

**John 2:5 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> **His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."**

It is important to note that these are the last recorded words of Mary in the New Testament—**"Whatever He says to you, do it."** (Comment)

It's interesting that when she stopped trying to direct Him in what to do and simply left it up to Him, Jesus responded with action—a good lesson to remember with regard to prayer. (Explain)

Just a side note—the word **'servants'** is not the word for *'slaves'* (doulois)—since this was a poor family it's doubtful that they owned slaves.

The actual word in the Greek is 'diakonois' (from which the English word "deacons" comes from—1Tim.3:8, 12).

The word means *'servants'* who were probably friends or family (like Mary) who were helping to serve the guests at the feast.

**John 2:6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.**

Why so much water? Because the Jewish people would use it for the ceremonial cleansing of themselves from defilement.

For example, if a Jew touched a dead body, he was considered unclean until he went through a certain ceremony or ritual of purification.

Or if they came in contact with a Gentile or an unclean animal—he or she would have to wash in a ceremonial way to cleanse themselves from defilement.

This could have been a large family, so consequently they needed a lot of water.

**John 2:7-10 (NKJV)**

**<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim.**

**<sup>8</sup> And He said to them, "Draw *some* out now, and take *it* to the master of the feast [‘head-waiter’]." And they took *it*. <sup>9</sup> When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. <sup>10</sup> And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the *guests* have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"**

As we’ve already said, a wedding feast back then usually went on for a week—and running out of wine was totally unacceptable.

But because most families were poor—they would often start out with the good wine and then, at one point, switch over to a cheaper stuff to save on money.

However, in this story the head-waiter is amazed that this family has saved the best wine for last.

Now from the sheer volume of wine Jesus created out of the water (120 to 180 gallons!)—or that He would even turn water into wine at all—it seems to many that He was condoning and even encouraging drunkenness.

But God condemns drunkenness as a sin—therefore Jesus would never condone or encourage drunkenness.

Furthermore, in Jewish society—drunkenness was looked down upon.

You need to understand that in Israel back then (as well as in many other places)—water was often polluted with micro-organisms that would cause severe stomach issues.

Furthermore, they had no refrigeration back then which meant their choice of beverages to drink was pretty much limited to water and wine.

So, what they would do is add wine to their drinking water—one-part wine to three parts water.

The alcoholic content was just enough to kill the bacteria in the water.

The purpose wasn't to get drunk—although they did have full strength wine if they wanted to get drunk—but as I just said, drunkenness was considered socially disgraceful in Jewish culture.

Today, we have refrigeration and preservatives and plenty of beverage choices to choose from.

On top of it our water is treated and free of micro-organisms that can make us sick—so we don't have to drink wine mixed with water.

And one last thing to consider—the alcohol we have today is much stronger than the home-made wine they had back then.

In fact, wine today as well as all the other alcoholic beverages have been distilled by the liquor industry to be strong enough to give people a quick 'buzz'—because they know that's what keeps people coming back for more.

And when we see all of the lives lost, marriages and families destroyed thru the drink produced by the liquor industry—why would we want to support them by buying their products?

Now listen, the Bible doesn't forbid the use of alcohol entirely, and certainly having a glass of wine or a beer in the privacy of your home I personally don't think is a sin (although I don't drink at all.)

But why give the devil an opportunity to use alcohol to snare you and possibly to destroy your health, your family and your walk with God?

Every alcoholic started down that road with a single drink.

I've got a better option for you—

**Ephesians 5:18 (NLT)**

<sup>18</sup> Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit... (Elaborate)

**John 2:11 (NKJV)**

**<sup>11</sup> This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.**

The fact that John calls this miracle in Cana, “**the beginning of the miracles Jesus did**” puts to rest the unbiblical teaching that Jesus performed miracles as a Child.

In the gnostic writing known as “*The Infancy Gospel of Thomas*” it records numerous miracles that Jesus allegedly did while a Child:

- *Brings a dried fish to life*
- *Fashions birds from clay and then breathes life into them so that they fly away*
- *Heals one of His brothers who was bitten by a snake*
- *Curses a boy who immediately turned into a corpse*

These are all proven to be superstitious fables by the words of Scripture which clearly tells us that the miracle in Cana was “**the beginning of miracles.**”

**John 2:11 (NKJV)**

**<sup>11</sup> This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.**

Some commentators see in the first inferior wine, and then the second superior wine—a reference to the first and second covenants.

The Old Covenant under Moses provided some joy (‘wine’) in that it allowed man to have fellowship with God—even though it was based on law and therefore inferior in that it could only temporarily cover sin but not take it away.

Whereas the New Covenant is superior in that it is based on grace, not man's works, sacrifices, the keeping of feast days—i.e. the keeping of the law.

It is also superior in that it is built on a better Sacrifice—Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Whose blood didn't just cover, but took away the sin of the world.

And therefore, the joy it provides is superior, overflowing, and everlasting!

**John 1:17 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.