

Exegetical Notes, John 2:1-11 “Water Turned Into Wine”

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John 2:1-11

Verses 1-5

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*“Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”*

⁵*His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”*

- The Mishnah, the rabbinical book of rules, says that weddings should take place on Wednesday, the third day. Thus, the opening words of the chapter are not chronological. They simply indicate that the wedding took place at the usual time of the week.
- We have no records which tell exactly how a Jewish wedding happened in the first century. It seems that the wedding began with a procession from the bride's house to that of the groom. There, the "wedding supper" or the "wedding banquet" was held. The celebration lasted for seven days. (see Judges 14:12). The banquet was exceptionally important. All the rules of good hospitality were expected to be observed. If something went wrong at the wedding banquet it would have been taken as a "bad omen," indicating trouble in the marriage.
- Jesus, his mother, and his disciples had been invited to this wedding banquet.
- A terrible thing happened. At some point in the banquet, all of the wine had been consumed. (The Greek word used here for "wine" is the word which means wine not grape juice. It was a fermented/alcoholic beverage.) That all of the wine was gone before the end of the banquet showed poor planning and would have brought disgrace upon the bridegroom. This was a huge problem; a true lapse is proper hospitality. Mary, Jesus' mother, brought the problem to his attention.
- Jesus had not as yet done any miraculous signs. Why Mary brought the problem to his attention is unclear. However, Jesus' response to her indicates

that she expected him to do something which would positively affect the situation and spare the wedding couple any embarrassment.

- Jesus' response to her -- "woman" -- is not disrespectful. It was the common way that a man would address a woman, even his mother. "My time has not yet come," simply means that it was not yet time for him to offer his life as a sacrifice for humanity.

Verses 6-10

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 aside¹⁰ 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."

- As there were many guests at the banquet, and all of them would want to perform the required ceremonial washing of hands upon arrival at the bridegroom's house, six large jars of water had been set at the entrance of the house for this purpose. These jars would have held between 120 and 180 gallons in total. Jesus ordered the servants at the banquet to fill these jars with water, which they did, filling them to capacity.
- Jesus then had the servants take a drink of the "water" in the jars to the "Master of the Feast." The Master of the Feast may have been the chief servant in the bridegroom's household or the person acting as his "best man." When the Master of the Feast tasted the drink which the servants brought him from the water jars, he discovered it to be wine, in fact better wine than had been previously served.
- The text makes it clear that neither the bridegroom nor the Master of the Feast knew the source of the wine. Only the servants and Mary and Jesus' disciples knew what had happened.

Verse 11

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

- John always refers to Jesus' miracles as "signs." Their purpose is always to reveal his glory in some way to some specific group of persons. In this case, it is to his disciples that Jesus' glory is shown. The hoped for outcome is

always the same, that those who saw the sign of Jesus' glory would believe in him more deeply and/or more completely.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Water Turned Into Wine*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)