

The Gospel of John

The Wedding in Cana - John 2:1-12

**1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;
2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.**

Three days after speaking to Nathanael (1:44-51), Jesus, His mother and disciples attend a wedding in Cana. Jewish weddings often lasted for a week (Jdg. 14:12), and since the wine had already run out, this is most likely not the first day of the wedding. Cana is about ten miles from Nazareth where Jesus was raised. The fact that Jesus, His disciples (then only 5 in number – Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and John the author of the gospel), and mother were all invited may suggest that the wedding was that of a close friend or relative. If so, this could explain why Jesus' mother felt so inclined to help.

**3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine."
4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come."
5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."**

Wine accompanied virtually all celebrations in Jewish culture and was a symbol of joy. Not only would the lack of wine be an embarrassment, it was a major cultural mistake and there is some evidence that the groom could be open to a lawsuit by angered relatives of the bride (Carson, 169; Morris, 179). For a reason unknown to us, Mary feels some sense of obligation to help and tells Jesus of the predicament, relying on His resourcefulness to help.

Mary's comment, "They have no wine" sounds simple enough, but the stern response of Jesus in verse 4 implies that there was more involved in her asking than meets the eye.

First, Jesus addresses her as "woman." This is polite, but not an endearing term one would expect from a son to his much-loved mother (Carson, 170). Jesus uses the same term when He addresses Mary from the cross (19:26) (Carson, 170). By using this expression, it is clear that Mary is no longer in a position to exercise maternal authority over Jesus, and not in a position at all to make suggestions relative to His messianic work (RWP; Bernard I, 75). Physical relationships on earth would not control Him or oblige Him. His mother and his physical family would have no special advantage to guide His ministry. And His mother and physical family would have no special advantage to receive His salvation (Piper, Sermon).

Recall the time that a "woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!' But He said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:27–28). In other words, people thought there would be a special spiritual advantage in being the mother of Jesus, but Jesus cut off that assumption, and focused attention on spiritual relations instead of on physical relations.

Or another time the people called to Him while He was speaking in a house: “Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you.’ And He answered them, ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ And looking about at those who sat around Him, He said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’” (Mark 3:32–34). In other words, followers, not family, have a saving relationship with Jesus. (Piper, Sermon)

Secondly, Jesus asks, “what do I have to do with you?” Literally the phrase means, “What is it to me and to you?” The idiom always distances the speakers. The thrust of it means, “we have absolutely nothing in common in this matter.” For example, the demons used it in their opposition to Jesus in Matthew 8:29: they cried out, saying, “*What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?*” (also Mk. 1:24; 5:7; Lk. 4:34; 8:28). The times in the OT when this expression is used also implies a divergence of opinion (Jdg. 11:12; II Sam. 16:10; 1 Ki. 17:18; II Ki 3:13; II Chr. 35:21). The tone is not rude, but very abrupt. It is a rebuke, a disclaimer of participation on which the request was made (Alford, 705).

Lastly, the reason of Jesus’ refusal to participate in Mary’s request was that His “hour had not yet come.” Jesus’ “hour” appears so often in the Gospel of John (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1), that it becomes a technical term that often marks a crisis (it is especially used of Jesus’ death) but is also a reference to His resurrection and exaltation. John’s gospel sees the predicted end from the very beginning, like a woman in travail (Bernard I, 76). Jesus’ hour is that time when God is fully glorified in Him.

It would be difficult for anyone reading through the gospel for the first time, or anyone in the historical situation to understand Jesus’ “hour” with this depth of meaning. But this is a prolepsis, that is, the use of a word in anticipation of its meaning that will be developed later. At this point of time in Jesus’ ministry, His use of “My hour” forces the reader to ask questions: What hour is He talking about? When does the hour come? Anticipating an answer, he reads more thoughtfully and begins to see the idea unfold.

From these observations it appears that if Mary had been just passing along information, or relying on Jesus’ natural resourcefulness, such a response from Jesus would be unintelligible. It seems more probable that Mary was either expecting a miracle, or a full manifestation of Jesus’ messianic glory. But if Mary was just asking for a miracle, how do we explain that after Jesus rebukes her for making such a proposal He then goes ahead and does it anyway (2:7-9)? It is easier to assume that Mary was thinking that Jesus could somehow use the situation to reveal His messianic glory. At this suggestion Jesus rebukes her, for His glory can only be revealed when His hour comes, as pre-determined by the Father through His death and resurrection.

Jesus’ mother showed the same lack of understanding as John the Baptist and Peter did later on (Matt. 11:1-3; 16:22). Though they were right as to the fact of Jesus’ messiahship, they were wrong as to the time and the manner of His glorious manifestation (Jn. 2:4; Thomas- Gundry, Harmony, 40 n. 3).

Though Mary was rebuked, she perseveres in faith (a pattern that appears elsewhere in John [see Jn. 4:47-50; 11:21-44], Trench, Miracles, 112) and leaves the matter in Jesus' hands, trusting that He would act (Morris, 182; Bruce, 70). Jesus does act by performing the miracle "behind the scenes" so that only the servants who drew the water and the disciples knew the source of the wine (verse 9).

6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.

7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." So they filled them up to the brim.

8 And He said to them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it to him.

9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom,

10 and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

Vessels of stone were less liable to impurity (Plummer, 91, Dods, 704; Carson; Westcott, 83) and were kept handy at a feast for ceremonial cleansing where water was poured over the hands of every guest (II Ki. 3:11; Mk. 7:3). As an eyewitness, John remembers the size, material and number of waterpots.

The total volume of water in the pots was roughly 500-750 liters (i.e. 528-793 quarts or 132-198 gallons). John even adds that they were filled to the brim. Some insist that Jesus did not use all the water, for they see no reason for creating such a huge quantity of wine. This, however, is to miss the point. An abundance of wine is an OT figure for joy in the final days (Amos 9:13-14; Jer. 31:12). In speaking of the blessings of God, the prophet Joel says, "the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil" (Joel 2:24). The sheer quantity of the wine becomes symbolic of the lavish provision of the new age and demonstrates that Christ will abundantly supply the needs of His people (Jn. 1:16).

Normally, wine is the end product of a long series of complex natural processes involving the drawing of water from the soil into the fruit of the grapevine, and the gradual transforming of this water into the juice of the grapes. The ripened grapes must then be picked, the juice squeezed, the sediments allowed to settle down, and fermentation to take place. However, at the wedding the intermediate steps were bypassed and in a single creative act the water became wine.

The possibility of this happening stems from the fact that the power of God which performs this same transformation by natural laws year after year was present in Christ. This doesn't help explain how He did it, but reveals that He is the One who does it.

11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.

12 After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.

John calls this type of a miracle “a sign”. A sign looks at the event as a token, proof, or indicator of something greater. It points beyond itself to a deeper reality that is perceived with the eyes of faith. The purpose of this sign was to manifest Christ's glory (Jn. 2:11) as the Creator of the world (Jn. 1:3,14). Even so, a fuller manifestation of His glory would come when His hour arrived.

The servants saw the sign but not the glory; the disciples perceived Jesus' glory behind the sign and believed.

The first sign is linked with the summary statement of the purpose of the book in Jn. 20:30-31: “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

The Cleansing of the Temple - John 2:13-24

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

14 And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

15 And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables;

16 and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business."

17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME."

Although Jerusalem was south of Capernaum, one is always said to go “up to Jerusalem” no matter where you were in relation to the city. This was probably due to the fact that it was higher in elevation than most places and since the temple was located there, it may also have encouraged this terminology from an ethical and spiritual standpoint (Kent, 49).

The Passover, commemorating Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 12), was celebrated annually in the lunar month of Nissan (Nissan 14 [the March/April full moon]), and was followed by the weeklong festival of unleavened bread (Nissan 15-22).

Animals had to be purchased for sacrifice since many people traveled long distances to the celebration and couldn't bring their own. For the same reason, money changers were also needed to change foreign currency into something more acceptable for the temple tax and for the purchase of sacrifices. In addition, many provisions needed to be made for the feast and it would be better to use the approved

coinage than to have to dispute with the dealers. A convenient place was definitely necessary for these services, but using the temple was a gross violation of its intended purpose.

The court of the gentiles, where business was taking place, stood as a symbol of the nations' free access to prayer (Matt. 21:13). It was a place of worship, a place to enjoy God. The Psalmist said, "A day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" (Psa. 84:10). And again he says, "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple" (Psa. 27:4).

Yet, instead of having an atmosphere that encouraged worship, prayer and seeking after God, Jesus found it cluttered with merchants, tables and stalls. The noise of the animals, the weighing of coins, the disputing and bargaining turned the court into a market place. To Jesus this was an intolerable abuse.

Probably Zechariah 14:16 and the surrounding verses which speak of all the nations going up to Jerusalem to worship God (cf. Isa. 2:2-3; Zech. 8:20-23) give the background for Jesus' violent actions of driving the oxen and their owners out with a whip and overturning the money tables.

His great zeal was reminiscent of Psalm 69:9 where it is written of David, "the zeal for your house has consumed me." In that Psalm David calls out to God because even his brethren were not sympathetic to his profound commitment to the temple. John detects a prophetic parallel in David's greater son, The Messiah. Jesus' burning jealousy for the house of the Lord and for the holiness of the people who served within it forced Him to interfere. His cleansing of the temple testified to His desire for pure worship, though ultimately it was His zeal that led to the cross.

18 The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?"

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

22 So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

Jesus had come to assert the claims of God upon His own nation and His actions presupposed that He had authority as a representative of God. He called the Temple "MY Father's house" which also showed that He claimed a special relationship to God. What Jesus did was more than just an impulsive act of indignation. In Malachi 3:1-3 it is predicted that Messiah "will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. . . "

The authorities' immediate demand for a sign indicates that they had suspicions that they were dealing with a prophet of God, not a madman or a fanatic. But it also reveals that they were more concerned with precedent and authority than with the fact that they were hindering pure worship. Elsewhere Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign" (Matt. 12:38-39). It was evil because they didn't need more signs to prove what was true; they needed hearts that love what they knew was true.

Jesus answered the authorities' demand for a sign with a challenge. "Destroy this temple and within three days I will raise it up."

The construction of the first temple took place under King Solomon. This was later destroyed, though it was repaired under Nehemiah. When Herod the Great became king of Judea, the Temple building "had suffered considerably from natural decay, as well as from the assaults of hostile armies, and Herod, desirous of gaining the favor of the Jews, proposed to rebuild it" (Easton's Bible Dictionary). The construction began in the eighteenth year of Herod the Great (20/19 B.C.). Forty-six years from then brings the date to 27/28 A.D. For all practical purposes, the temple was considered complete, but technically, the entire complex was not finished until 63 A.D. by Herod Agrippa - 7 years before it was destroyed by Rome. After the destruction by Rome, the Temple was never rebuilt. On a literal level, the Jews would not respond to Jesus' challenge, but they were nevertheless at a loss since He was offering them a powerful sign to justify His actions. Anyone who could rebuild the temple in three days after it was completely destroyed must be judged as having sufficient authority to regulate its practices.

Though a reference to the literal temple is demanded by the context, it is also obvious that Jesus had more than the temple in view. John makes it clear that Jesus was primarily referring to the temple of His body and the sign of which He spoke was His resurrection. The point of connection between the temple and the body of Christ is that both were the dwelling places of God – the temple was the symbol of God's presence, Jesus was the actual presence of God among men. In this new "temple" the ultimate sacrifice would take place, and within three days of its destruction it would raise again. It's ironic that the Jews would be the means to bring about the sign that they demanded. The temple that they cherished and the sacrifices that took place there would become obsolete on account of the death of Christ. Jesus Himself would replace the position of the temple in worship.

Remember, the purpose of the Book found in John 20:31 says, " these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." John 2:22 tells us how this story contributes to that end: "So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; *and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.*"

Jesus Knows the Hearts of All Men - Not All Belief Saves - John 2:23-25

23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

24 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

In verse 23 the scene changes to the feast of unleavened bread which lasted for seven days, right after Passover (Lev. 23:5-6). The place was still Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen. The time was the anniversary of the birth of the nation (Passover). The circumstances marked universal joy.

For days people had been observing Jesus' signs (the verb is an imperfect tense indicating a continual past action). Though John doesn't mention what they were, we know that he has already stated that he doesn't intend to give an exhaustive list of what Jesus did (Jn. 20:31; 21:25).

This occasion provided another temptation to Jesus - the temptation to accept outward success at the cost of compromise with falsehood. But Jesus, unlike other religious leaders, could not be dubbed by flattery, enticed by praise or caught off guard by innocence. His knowledge of the human heart is profound (cf. Jer. 17:10; 20:12 for the same knowledge used of God), and this accounts for the diversity of approaches He uses in talking to people. The fact that Jesus refused to entrust Himself to those who "believed" in Him makes it clear that their faith was spurious and didn't extend to the full acceptance of His claims and commands. On the contrary, it was born of wonder and was likely to cease when the wonder ceased (cf. Simon Magnus - Act 8:13). Jesus' ability to know every heart perfectly leads to the unsettling truth that some belief is not the kind of belief that obtains fellowship with Jesus and eternal life. Some belief is not saving belief. Signs were meant to point people to the true Son of God and what he stood for. But many saw the signs and did not see what they stood for.

No person is excluded from Christ's knowledge, and no part of our life is excluded from his knowledge. He knows everybody—and everything about everybody.

Perhaps the glory of his omniscience will come home to us more fully if we draw out a few personal implications. It means that there are no complete secrets in your life. You may have succeeded in hiding something all your life from everyone on this earth, but you have not hidden it from Jesus. The person who matters most, knows most. The person whose judgment about you is all-important knows all. You are totally known. There is not the slightest part of your heart unknown to Jesus, at this hour, and every hour. And this Jesus was still willing to die for you in spite of who you are.