

§21: THE MARRIAGE AT CANA

John 2:1–11

The Wine Gives Out at the Wedding

2:1–5

1 And on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;

2 and Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the wedding.

3 And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him: They have no wine.

4 And Jesus said to her: What do I have to do with you, woman? My hour has not yet come.

5 His mother said to the servants: Whatever He says to you, do.

Water to Wine: The First Miracle

2:6–10

6 Now there were six stone water jars standing there according to the purification [custom] of the Jews, containing two or three measures each.

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

8 And he said to them: Draw out now and take to the head-waiter. And they took *it*.

9 Now when the head-waiter tasted the water, having become wine—and he did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew—the head-waiter called the bridegroom,

10 and he said to him: Every man serves the good wine first, and when they have become drunk, the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now.

Reactions to the Miracle

2:11

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

Notes

- Third Day (2:1).** Probably the third day since the calling of Philip and Nathanael in 1:43.
- Wedding.** There are many references in the Bible to weddings or marriage feasts. Recall from the study of “betrothal” earlier that the legal aspects were taken care of then. The wedding or marriage feast involved a cultural celebration at the time when bride and groom began to live together. Note especially the following:

Gen. 29:21ff.; Judg. 14:10ff.; Song of Solomon; Matt. 22:1–14; 25:1–13; Lk. 12:36; 14:8; Rev. 19:7–9. In summary, we find the following things at Israelite weddings:

- a. Meal with wine
- b. Games, riddles
- c. Invited guests in special clothing
- d. Virgins
- e. Friend of the bridegroom
- f. Servants and a head-waiter
- g. Bridal chamber
- h. Exchange of speeches between bride and groom

3. **Wine.** It is true that the wine of Jesus' day was not fortified with added alcohol like some modern day wines. It is possible even today, however, to find wines of relatively low alcoholic content representing natural fermentation only. This is especially true in Europe. The wines of Jesus' day were often diluted with water to further reduce the alcoholic content. But there are also references in ancient literature to drugging wine with various spices and other additives to accentuate the intoxicating nature of wine. When all is said, the potential for wine to be intoxicating, even in Jesus' day, was a well-known and sometimes very disturbing fact. Enjoyed in modest amounts, wine was considered a blessing. When abused, it was considered a curse. Note the following passages:

- a. *A Blessing:* Gen. 14:18; Num. 6:20; Deut. 14:26; Ps. 105:15; Neh. 5:18; Amos 9:13–14. Particularly in the context of a wedding feast note Song of Solomon 1:2,4; 2:4 (banquet hall is lit. "house of wine"); 4:10; 5:1; 7:9; 8:2. In the N.T. see Mt. 9:17 (and parallels: Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:37–39); Lk. 7:33–34; Rom. 14:21; 1 Tim. 5:23.
- b. *A Curse:* Prov. 20:1; 21:17; 23:29–35; 31:4–5; Isa. 28:1–7; Eph. 5:18; and many more.

Some have suggested that the Greek word used in John 2 for wine (the common *oinos*) can be used of unfermented grape juice. Upon close examination, attempted proofs of this assertion are found lacking. *Oinos* can be used with various extended meanings in figurative language, but used by itself in reference to a consumable beverage with no other modifiers (like "new"), it means an alcoholic beverage.

4. **Woman (2:4).** This is not a disrespectful term. Why did He not say "mother"? Perhaps Mt. 12:48 has part of the answer.
5. **Measure (2:6).** Probably around 8 to 9 gallons per measure, so each jar would contain ca. 16 to 27 gallons. The 6 jars together would have somewhere around 100 to 150 gallons.
6. **Become drunk (2:9).** This is the normal meaning of the word, though some have suggested "drunken freely" for this context. One should note that the head-waiter is simply stating what often takes place, not what is necessarily morally right. Some have wondered how Jesus could have participated in a feast in which drunkenness was even a remote possibility. The purpose of the feast was not to get drunk, but to celebrate a marriage, and that was right.

It is also often forgotten that Jesus' mere physical presence at such a feast in no way condones any improper behavior that might take place at the feast. Others wonder how Jesus could have made so much wine and not have been responsible for its abuse. One forgets that Jesus created the universe itself, and the grape vine was one of the things He created. Much more potential wine was created therefore in Gen. 1 than here in John 2.