

GOSPEL OF JOHN (pt. 2)

The Wedding | Steve Ellis
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The gospel of John, as others have described, is like stepping into an art museum. You can pass by the paintings just noticing them and get an idea of what the artist intends to represent, or you can stand in front of the picture and just get lost as you stare deeply at it. The longer you look, the more detail you begin to see, and you begin to see things you did not notice at first.

This, to me, is the gospel of John. We can give it a quick read and get the idea, or we can look deeply at the signs John is sharing with us. By doing so, we begin to see more. We gain a greater understanding of Jesus and His identity as revealed in John. John invites us to slow down a bit and take a good long look at Jesus.

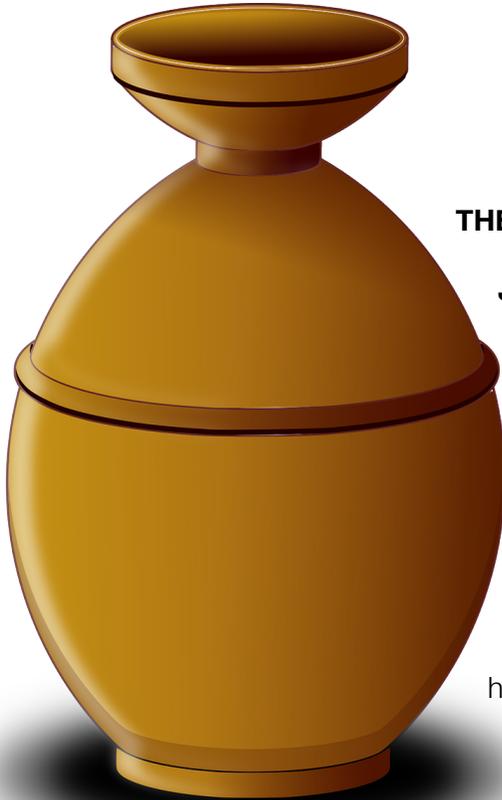


DESIGN

Many people have noticed John's gospel can be divided into several major sections. The first significant section, chapters 1-11, demonstrates Jesus through several miracles (or signs) recorded at significant places. Places such as the wedding at Cana and Jacobs well. Later in this section, John shares signs and teachings of Jesus that take place around several festivals or feasts. This section covers about three years in the life and ministry of Jesus. In the second significant section, chapters 12-20, John slows down and covers the last week of Jesus' ministry leading to His death, resurrection. In the final chapter, Jesus appears to His disciples in Galilee. The first 11 chapters have been outlined as the Book of Signs. The latter half of the gospel as the Book of Glory.

THE WEDDING FEAST

Let's notice the wedding at Cana. Sometimes we come to this sign and get caught up on what type of wine Jesus made or how much alcohol content was actually in the wine Jesus made. When we do so, we are missing the purpose of the sign John is sharing with us. In the sign, there is a problem, a solution, and an outcome. The outcome is the glory of Jesus is revealed, and the disciples believed in Him (ref. Jn. 2:11). So we should see the glory of Jesus in the sign.



THE PROBLEM

JOHN 2:1-3 (NKJV)

“On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.””

They have run out of wine. Today, we may not see the big problem here. However, these types of wedding feasts would be celebratory feasts that would often last up to seven days. Much of the community would have been invited to the banquet. For the host to run out of wine would have been shameful in their culture. Likely there would have been a social stigma attached to the groom that would have made him the talk of the town for years to come.

The "mother of Jesus" recognizes the problem and brings this to Jesus' attention. It's interesting to note, in John's gospel, Mary, Jesus' mother, is never referred to by her name. She appears twice in John's account, here and in (Jn. 19:25) at the foot of the cross. She sees the problem, there is no wine, and she makes Jesus aware of it.

JOHN 2:4 (NKJV)

“Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.””

Reading the word "woman" in the text can seem a bit disrespectful in our culture. However, this was not the case in Jesus' culture. This was a simple, informal address, and we should not read our modern understandings into the text or Jesus' words here.

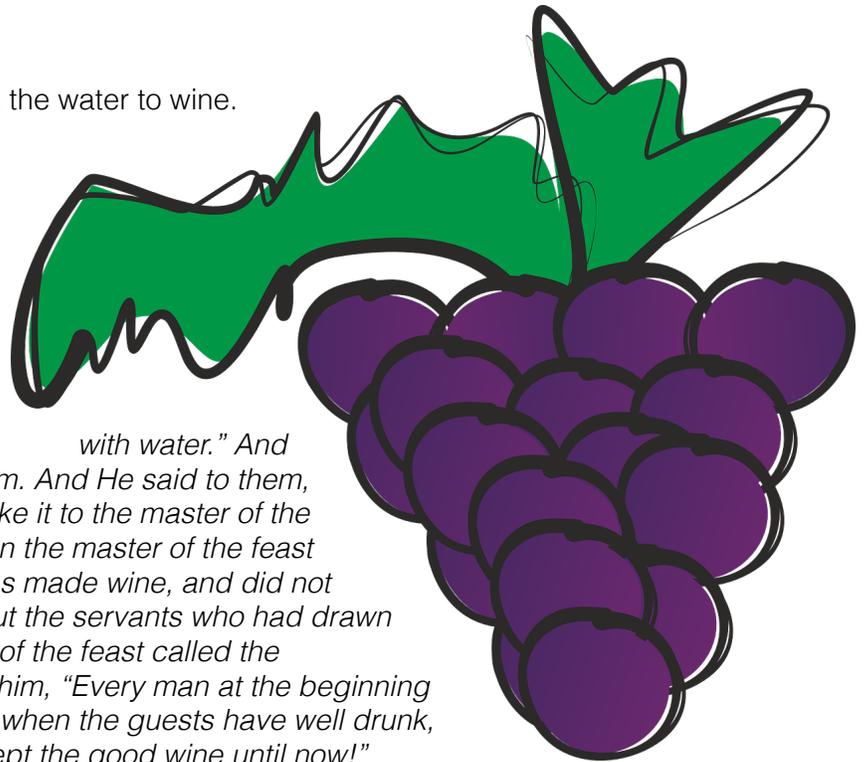
Jesus says His "hour has not yet come." Jesus is speaking of the cross. John is continually pushing us forward in the narrative to the enthronement of King Jesus and His resurrection. Jesus knows changing the water to wine will set in motion a chain of events, actions, and reactions that will push Him closer to the cross.

THE SOLUTION

The solution, Jesus changes the water to wine.

JOHN 2:6-10 (NKJV)

"Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots with water." And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. 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. 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!"



In this portrait of Jesus, the wine takes a prominent place. John slows down and spends some time talking about this and giving us a few details.

First, Jesus would have made between 130-180 gallons of wine. That's a significant amount. This would have been more than enough for the guests at the wedding feast. Jesus creates an abundance and demonstrates generosity. One of the things we notice is that Jesus is concerned about people.

Mixing the wine with the waterpots would have made the waterpots unclean as they were used for purification. Jesus shows a greater concern for the groom and the host of the feast than honoring ritual washings of which the waterpots would have been used. .

THE OUTCOME

Wine is made from grapes. What do we read about grapes in the Scriptures? Turning back to the Old Testament, grapes were often a symbol of abundance and are connected to the land of promise.

Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan. The spies cut down fruit as a way of showing the abundance of the land.

(Numbers 13:23) They "...cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes; they carried it between two of them on a pole. They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs."

This was a sign of the abundance of the land.

In **(Isaiah 25)** we find a poem about New Jerusalem and the Messianic kingdom:



ISAIAH 25: 6-9 (NKJV)

"And in this mountain The Lord of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Here we see a "feast of wines" "well-refined wines" this abundance is connected to the Lord's goodness and his kingdom. He will swallow up death; He will save; we will rejoice in his salvation. God's kingdom is a kingdom of rejoicing, of abundance, and of salvation. Like the wedding feast, the Lord's kingdom is a celebration.

At the wedding in Cana, Jesus makes the best wine. The best has been saved for last. This is an important point as we consider God's kingdom and reflect on this portrait or sign John is providing. We have read the story, and we see what John is doing. He is pushing us forward to the cross and the enthronement of Jesus. In (John 19), the soldiers are mocking Jesus; but we should see something else. As they are mocking him, the servant King is taking his throne.

JOHN 19:1-3 (NKJV)

“So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And they struck Him with their hands.”

Jesus, the suffering servant, is enthroned as a king. A crown of thorns, a purple robe, *the best has been saved for last*. Jesus, the Son of God, has arrived and his kingdom is now.

JOHN 2:11 (NKJV)

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

John records this sign as the beginning of signs, and it manifested Jesus' glory. Glory is one of the repeated words in the gospel of John. It's a theme you can follow. Earlier, John recorded:

JOHN 1:14 (NKJV)

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”



At the wedding feast, Jesus is more concerned with people than ritualistic traditions. Changing the water to wine, Jesus shows compassion and mercy for the groom and host. Jesus and his kingdom is a kingdom of abundance.

Through this sign, the glory of Jesus is revealed, and the disciples believed in Him. This is the outcome of signs John desires for each of us.

John, records for us his purpose for writing this account:

JOHN 20:30-31 (NKJV)

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

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