

Beginning of Miracles

- There are three distinct sections in this chapter
- Our plan is to study all three today
- Jesus' power and authority will be the main features of the text
- We find Him first in Cana of Galilee at a wedding
- At one point, His mother recognizes a problem
- And looks to Jesus for a solution

John 2:1-4

1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

- The first word of warning is not to imagine this "wine" as the wine of our day
- There is a lengthy study of words and historical data that helps us to understand the difference between modern wine and this wine
- While that is a worthwhile study, it's not going to be the focus of our time today
- It has to do with the process of making the wine, the mixture (that is, parts wine to water, based on an understanding of the methods of the day), etc.
- If you want to talk about that a little more afterward, I'd be happy to do that, we will likely have some time
- My point here is that we shouldn't just see the word "wine" and assume that it resembles a modern beverage, particularly in its percentage of alcohol content
- That would almost certainly be a very inaccurate assumption, one that could really confuse us in the area of personal application
- Whatever the case, it is clear that Jesus' mother notices the problem
- And she looks to Jesus for help
- His answer seems a strange one to us
- He addresses her as "Woman," but this is obviously not meant as harshly as we see it today
- In a much more tender moment, He refers to her in the same way
- If we step forward a few chapters to John 19 verses 26 and 27, we see Jesus on the cross...

26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

- This was a moment of care and provision, in which the same word is used
- The next phrase can cause similar confusion "what have I to do with thee?"
- Some render the words, "what is it to thee and me?" or what concern is this of ours?
- Should it not be the concern of the master of the feast?
- It seems a logical way to see it
- But if that is what Jesus meant, you wonder why He then takes it upon Himself to provide a solution
- The end of that paragraph doesn't remove the mystery completely, as He says "mine hour is not yet come."
- One commentary tries to help...

"meaning not the hour of his sufferings and death, in which sense he sometimes uses this phrase; as if the hint was, that it was not proper for him to work miracles as yet, lest it should provoke his enemies to seek his life before his time;"

- Another says...

"The meaning of 'My hour' and 'His hour' in this Gospel depends in each case on the context. There cannot here be any reference to His death; rather it means His hour for 'manifesting forth His glory' (John 2:11) as the Messiah by working miracles."

- Again, we may then wonder why He proceeds and completes this miracle
- Here's how it happens...

John 2:5-8

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

6 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

- Whatever He meant by what He said to His mother, she apparently understood that it should be left up to Him
- As she tells the servants simply to follow His instructions
- This is the solution to many of our problems in life too

- Hearing what He says and simply obeying
- These six waterpots of stone would likely have been used for washing
- Washing was an important part of Jewish ritual
- There are some helpful details in Gill's commentary...

"how large the 'metreta', or 'measure' was, which we render a 'firkin', is not certain; it is most likely it answered to the "Hebrew bath", which was a common measure of liquids with the Jews, and held four gallons and a half, or more; ... so that such of these vessels, that held two of these measures, contained nine gallons, and such as held three of them, thirteen gallons and a half;"

- More liberal estimates suggest they could have been twenty or thirty gallons each
- Whatever the case, this would have been a large quantity of wine
- Enough to last a seven day wedding celebration and perhaps beyond
- This would show the liberality of Christ's kindness
- And demonstrate the limitless nature of His power
- These servants did obey Him precisely, bringing some to the governor of the feast
- This feast-master or head waiter would (perhaps) have been painfully aware of the dilemma
- What happened next would have been a shock...

John 2:9-10

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,
10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

- It is not possible for water to become wine
- This would not have been expected
- It is not merely something which we refer to as a miracle (child birth), but is a factually and precisely-defined miracle
- Something only God could do
- Turn one liquid into entirely another, if not by word, simply by thought
- And the quality of the wine, in some way or another, was beyond anything that had previously been offered
- It was not only plentiful, but of the highest quality
- Again, a testament to Jesus power and miraculous attention to detail
- The purpose of this miracle seems to be revealed in the next verse...

John 2:11

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

- Those that followed Him were beginning to see with clarity who He was
- The faith they had already placed in Him, which was significant, was strengthening due to His works
- What they believed about Him was the truth, He was providing experience to go along with it
- This is so often God's way
- When we trust, He sees fit to show us in a greater way His power
- This is section two of the chapter...

John 2:12-15

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

13 And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

14 And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;

- The place where Jesus found this activity would have been the court of the temple, the court of the Gentiles
- There He found...

"...cattle and sheep and doves, the sacrificial animals. It was of course a great convenience to the worshippers to be able to procure on the spot all requisites for sacrifice. Some of them might not know what sacrifice was required for their particular offence, and though the priest at their own home might inform them, still the officiating examiner in the Temple might reject the animal they brought as unfit; and probably would, if it was his interest to have the worshippers buying on the spot."

- As we well know, buying on the spot, in crisis mode, when we fear the consequences of not buying, can be very expensive
- And it was
- This was a tyranny and a monopoly, which was certainly resented by God's people
- It made their experience of worship a hardship, as they were abused by those who would use the law

for gain

- Further insight is provided by one commentator...

"In order to expedite this traffic, there were money-changers at hand, who gave the Jews who came from foreign countries the current money of Judea, in lieu of the money of the countries from whence they came; and for this service they took a premium, which, upon the whole, became very considerable. Thus was the temple profaned by the avarice of the priests, and literally made a den of thieves."

- View Jesus' reaction in light of this understanding
- That in His Father's house, there are those taking advantage of His people for personal, financial gain
- Both in the sale of sacrificial offerings
- And in the unscrupulous rates of exchange
- This must have grieved Him
- And He set out to show them His authority
- For He had authority...

John 2:16-18

16 And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

17 And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

18 Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

- He makes this command with absolute authority
- Such authority that no man dare contradict
- MacLaren's commentary helps us understand...

"How did it come that all these sordid hucksters had not a word to say, and did not lift a finger in opposition, or that the Temple Guard offered no resistance, and did not try to quell the unseemly disturbance, or that the very officials, when they came to reckon with Him, had nothing harsher to say than, 'What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things'? No miracle is needed to explain that singular acquiescence."

- They were staring into the eyes of their Creator
- The One with all authority
- And He meant for what He said to be heard
- There could be no doubt from either party about who was right and who was wrong
- Who had righteousness on His side and who was doing evil
- He would always have the final say, being the One for which every knee would bow and every tongue

would confess

- He makes this clear in the third portion of our text...

John 2:19-21

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

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

21 But he spake of the temple of his body.

- There would be just a momentary victory for those angry enough to kill Him
 - But it would never be a real victory
 - It would only appear to relieve them of His presence
 - And only for three days
 - For His death on our behalf would lead to His ultimate victory over death and hell
 - His followers would see Him risen from the dead
 - And their testimony for Him would continue and continue
 - His name and His works and His power would continue to be seen
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- His disciples didn't understand all of this in the moment...

John 2:22

22 When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

- No doubt there were many of Jesus words that came back to them after He was risen
 - He described to them in so many ways what His future would hold
 - And they often failed to understand
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- We would sometimes struggle ourselves were it not for knowledge of other passages of scripture - looking back on it all
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- Remembering His words, understanding what He did, gave them confidence in the scriptures
 - For His life, His sacrifice, His resurrection was spoken of before-hand
 - And they knew it
-
- Apart from our three sections today, there is this addendum...

John 2:23-25

23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

- I wrote something about these verses recently...

"Many say they believe, even convince themselves they believe, in Jesus. These believed, because they saw His miracles.

It appears they didn't have a sincere or a lasting belief – they certainly didn't have a commitment to Him.

Perhaps they believed for what they could get, imagining they may one day need a miracle themselves. Or just because they were convinced these miracles were real and true.

Did they believe Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior? Did they believe He would be the sacrifice for their sins?

Were they turning from their sin to Him alone? We're not certain, but Jesus was.

The very next verse says that Jesus didn't need anyone to tell Him. He knew what was in man.

He knows our deepest thoughts, our motives, what is in our hearts. There will be no mistake with Him about what we really believe."

- I find this a helpful reminder, particularly in light of the previous words about His disciples
- Their faith was growing, strengthening
- This was not a passing intrigue
- They understood His identity

Christopher Harper, February 2021