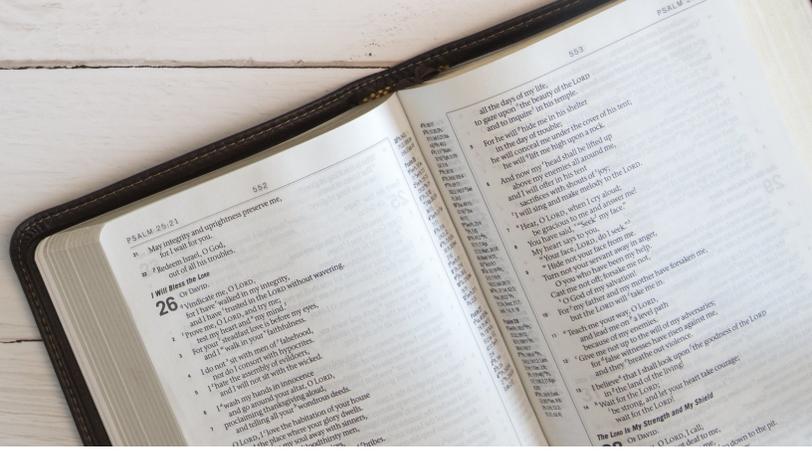


THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 2:1-11: The Wedding in Cana



What is the funniest thing you've witnessed at a wedding?

Into the Word

- Jesus is not known as a miracle-worker, so why does Mary approach him (v. 3)? What do you learn about Jesus and his mother from this story?
- How does this passage affect your belief in the consumption of alcohol?
- What part does the function and size of the jars play in this story? How does the quantity and quality of the wine demonstrate Jesus' glory?

Into the Heart

- Where is the wine level (zest for life) in your life right now? Full? Half full? Empty? What is draining you?
- What area of your life seems like stale water in an old jug?
- How could Jesus bring celebration back into your life?

*What is your greatest takeaway from this passage?
What specific life changes do you need to make?
How will you hold yourself accountable?*

THE WEDDING IN CANA (John 2:1-11)

A SIMPLE "WATER" WEDDING...

This is a simple story with complex nuances. *It's a wedding story. A story between a mom and her messiah son. A story about new wine from stale water.* But there's also deeper meanings too. First of all, this wedding takes place in Cana of Galilee. It was close enough to Nazareth (where Jesus lived) that you can see it. Only John records this amazing story, but it's part of an early WATER theme that bubbles throughout John's gospel. Jesus is, after all, THE LIVING WATER.

A FAMILY AFFAIR...

One of the Coptic gospels tells us that Mary was a sister of the bridegroom's mother. There is an early set of Prefaces to the books of the New Testament called the *Monarchian Prefaces* which tell us that the bridegroom was no other than John himself and that his mother was Salome, the sister of Mary. This would explain the vivid details of this story and why only John tells it. He was the GROOM. It was his wedding. There is no mention of Joseph. He's likely dead by this point in Jesus' life and that was not unusual. The lifespan of a male in the first century was around 40 to 45. Joseph was at least 20 when Jesus was born and Jesus is now 30.

A VILLAGE WEDDING...

The scene is a village wedding feast. In Palestine a wedding was a really notable occasion. It was the Jewish law that the wedding of a virgin should take place on a Wednesday. The wedding festivities lasted far more than one day. The wedding ceremony itself took place late in the evening, after a feast. After the ceremony, the young couple were conducted to their new home. They were taken by as long a route as possible so that as many people as possible would have the opportunity to wish them well. A newly married couple did not go away for their honeymoon; rather they stayed at home; and for a week and kept an open house. They wore crowns and dressed in their bridal robes. They were treated like a king and queen and their word was law. Whatever they wanted, they got.

For a Jewish feast wine was essential. The rabbis said: "*Without wine there is no joy.*" Wine was not an abused drink in their culture. In fact, drunkenness was a great disgrace. Nevertheless it was essential to any celebration. It was actually consumed "watered down" (2 parts wine, 3 parts water). Hospitality was a key feature and a sacred duty. Jesus' mother, being the aunt and sister, would've had that duty. It's why she asks Jesus to deal with the problem of running out of wine. That act would've showed a failure to plan and was considered an act of inhospitality.

Jesus responds to Mary's request with "Woman (Greek: *gunai*), why do you involve me?" Today, we would see this retort as disrespectful, but it was common in their culture to use that term interchangeably for both reproach and misunderstanding. Ironically, the word "woman" is the same word Jesus invokes from the cross to have John care for his mother as his own: (John 19:26-27). Jesus begins his ministry with John and his mom at a wedding and ends it with John and his mom at the cross. They are bookend events. In the first, Mary's sister Salome "gives away" her son John to Jesus. In the second, Jesus "gives away" his mom Mary to John.

Nearby were six large jars for ceremonial washing. Each jar held about 20 gallons. A vase or basin was used to siphon from the jars for purification purposes. Water was required for two purposes at Jewish ceremonies and gatherings: 1) **Cleansing of feet** (which were sandy, dirty and muddy from walking the roads and paths barefoot or with open sandals). And 2) **Hand washing**. Strict Jews washed their hands before the meal and between each course. Jesus told the servants to fill the jars to the brim. Essentially there were no added ingredients.

THE JEWISH VIEW OF THIS STORY

According to the Jews, seven is the perfect Divine number and six is unfinished, imperfect and human. God created in six days (human, earthly, physical) and rested on the seventh (divine, spiritual). These water pots held 20 gallons of water. That was 120 gallons of wine. Even a large wedding party in that day couldn't consume 120 gallons of wine. The point? When Jesus blesses, he blesses "beyond measure."