

# **Bible Study May 10, 2023**

## **JOHN 2 (ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)**

### **The Wedding at Cana**

***<sup>1</sup> On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. <sup>2</sup> Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.***

Jesus was on a mission to save the world, the greatest mission in the history of humankind. Yet he took time to attend a wedding and take part in its festivities. We may feel a certain duty or obligation not to take time out from our “important” work for social occasions. But maybe these social occasions are part of our mission. Jesus valued these wedding festivities because they involved people, and Jesus came to be with people. Our mission can often be accomplished in joyous times of celebration with others. Bring balance to your life by bringing Jesus into times of celebration with others as well as times of work.

***<sup>3</sup> When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”***

Weddings in Jesus’ day were weeklong festivals. Banquets would be prepared for many guests, and a week would be spent celebrating the new life of the married couple. Often the whole town would be invited, and everybody would come—it was considered an insult to refuse an invitation to a wedding. To accommodate many people, careful planning was needed. To run out of wine was more than embarrassing; it broke the strong, unwritten laws of hospitality. Jesus was about to respond to a heartfelt need.

***<sup>4</sup> And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.”***

Mary was probably not asking Jesus to do a miracle; she was simply hoping that her son would help solve this major problem and find some wine. Tradition says that Joseph, Mary’s husband, was dead, so she probably was used to asking for her son’s help in certain situations. Jesus’ answer to Mary is difficult to understand, but maybe that is the point. It showed her that he had his own priorities and was focused on God’s timetable. Although Mary did not understand what Jesus was going to do, she trusted him to do what was right. Those who believe in Jesus but run into situations they cannot understand must continue to trust that he will work in the best way.

***<sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”***

Mary submitted to Jesus’ way of doing things. She recognized that Jesus was more than her human son—he was the Son of God. When we bring our problems to Jesus, we may think we know how he should take care of them. But he may have a completely different plan from ours. Like Mary, we should submit and allow him to deal with the problem as he sees best.

***<sup>6</sup> Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.***

The six stone water jars would normally be used for ceremonial washing. When full, the pots would hold 20 to 30 gallons. According to the Jews' ceremonial law, people became symbolically unclean by touching certain everyday objects. Before eating, the Jews would pour water over their hands to cleanse themselves of any bad influences associated with what they had touched. Jesus used ordinary elements to do something extraordinary, and he still does this today.

***<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. <sup>8</sup> And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. <sup>9</sup> When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom <sup>10</sup> and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."***

People look everywhere but to God for excitement and meaning. For some reason, they expect God to be dull and lifeless. Just as the wine Jesus made was the best, so life in him is better than life on our own. Why wait until everything else runs out before trying God? Why save the best until last?

***<sup>11</sup> This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.***

When the disciples saw Jesus' miracle, they believed in him. The miracle showed his power over nature and revealed the way he would go about his ministry—helping others, speaking with authority, and being in personal touch with people.

Miracles are not merely superhuman events but events that demonstrate God's power. Almost every miracle Jesus did was a renewal of fallen creation—restoring sight, making people who were lame walk, even restoring life to the dead. Believe in Jesus not because he is a superhero but because he is the God who continues his creation, even in those of us who are poor, weak, crippled, orphaned, blind, deaf, or struggling with some other desperate need.

***<sup>12</sup> After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.***

Capernaum became Jesus' home base during his ministry in Galilee. Located on a major trade route, it was an important city in the region, with a Roman garrison and a customs station. At Capernaum, Matthew was called to be a disciple (Matthew 9:9). This city was also the home of several other disciples (Matthew 4:13-19) and a high-ranking government official (John 4:46). It had at least one major synagogue. Although Jesus made this city his base of operations in Galilee, he condemned it for the people's unbelief (Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15).

## Jesus Cleanses the Temple

***13 The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.***

The Passover celebration took place yearly at the Temple in Jerusalem. Every Jewish male was expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem during this time (Deuteronomy 16:16). This was a weeklong festival—the Passover was one day, and the Festival of Unleavened Bread lasted the rest of the week. The entire week commemorated the freeing of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-13).

Jerusalem was both the religious and the political seat of Palestine, and it was the place where the Messiah was expected to arrive. The Temple was located there, and many Jewish families from all over the world would travel to Jerusalem during the key festivals. The Temple was on an imposing site, a hill overlooking the city. Solomon had built the first Temple on this same site almost 1,000 years earlier (959 BC), but his Temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25). The Temple was rebuilt in 515 BC, and Herod the Great had enlarged and remodeled it.

***14 In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there.***

The Temple area was always crowded during Passover with thousands of out-of-town visitors. The religious leaders crowded it even further by allowing money changers and merchants to set up booths in the Court of the Gentiles. They rationalized this practice as a convenience for the worshipers and as a way to make money for Temple upkeep. But the religious leaders did not seem to care that the Court of the Gentiles was so full of merchants that foreigners found it difficult to worship. Worship was the main purpose for visiting the Temple. No wonder Jesus was angry!

The Temple tax had to be paid in local currency, so foreigners had to have their money changed. But the money changers often charged exorbitant exchange rates. The people were also required to make sacrifices for sins. Because of the long journey, many could not bring their own animals. Some who brought animals had them rejected for imperfections. So animal merchants conducted a flourishing business in the Temple courtyard. The price of sacrificial animals was much higher in the Temple area than elsewhere. Jesus was angry at the dishonest, greedy practices of the money changers and merchants, and he particularly disliked their presence on the Temple grounds. They were making a mockery of God's house of worship. Our attitude toward the church is wrong if we see it as a place for personal contacts or business advantage. Make sure you attend church to worship God and enjoy spiritual fellowship with others.

***15 And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.***

***16 And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade."***

Jesus was obviously angry at the merchants who were exploiting those who had come to God's house to worship. There is a difference between uncontrolled rage and righteous indignation—

yet both are called anger. We must be very careful how we use the powerful emotion of anger. It is right to be angry about injustice and sin; it is wrong to be angry over trivial personal offenses.

Jesus made a whip and chased out the money changers. Does his example permit us to use violence against wrongdoers? Certain authority is granted to some, but not to all. For example, the authority to use weapons and restrain people is granted to police officers, but not to the general public. The authority to imprison people is granted to judges, but not to individual citizens. Jesus had God's authority, something we cannot have. While we want to live like Jesus, we should never try to claim his authority where it has not been given to us.

***17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."***

Jesus took the evil acts in the Temple as an insult against God, and thus, he did not deal with them halfheartedly. He was consumed with righteous anger against such flagrant disrespect for God.

***18 So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us 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 has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"***

The Jews understood Jesus to mean the Temple out of which he had just driven the merchants and money changers. This was the Temple Zerubbabel had built over 500 years earlier, but Herod the Great had begun remodeling it, making it much larger and far more beautiful. It had been 46 years since this remodeling had started (20 BC), and it still wasn't completely finished. They understood Jesus' words to mean that this imposing building could be torn down and rebuilt in three days, and they were astonished.

***21 But he was speaking about the temple of his body. 22 When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.***

Jesus was not talking about the Temple made of stones but about his body. His listeners didn't realize it, but Jesus was greater than the Temple (Matthew 12:6). His words would take on meaning for his disciples after his resurrection. That Jesus so perfectly fulfilled this prediction became strong proof for his claim to be God.

### **Jesus Knows What Is in Man**

***23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. 24 But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.***

John records this first clearing, or cleansing, of the Temple. A second clearing occurred at the end of Jesus' ministry, about three years later, and that event is recorded in Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; and Luke 19:45-48.

The Son of God knows all about human nature. Jesus was well aware of the truth of Jeremiah 17:9, which states, “The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?” Jesus was discerning, and he knew that the faith of some followers was superficial. Some of the same people claiming to believe in him at this time would later yell, “Crucify him!” Believing comes easily when it is exciting and everyone else agrees with you. But keep your faith firm even when following Jesus isn’t popular.