

The First Miracle of Jesus at Cana

Was It Meant to Be a Miracle? A Perspective

Reflections The Person and Work of Christ 7 January 2017

John 2:1-11

John 1:29 (quoted)

John 2:4 (quoted)

John 19:26 (quoted)

Matthew 26:29 (quoted)

Luke 14:15 (quoted)

Revelation 21:9-11 (quoted)

Matthew 8:11 (quoted)

Isaiah 25:6 (quoted)

You must have heard this before, but nonetheless: there was a nun in a convent who took to drinking rather too much wine. The Mother Superior counselled her, and eventually she gave it up. Some time later, the Mother Superior caught her drinking wine again, and confronted her. With an expression of surprise, the nun looked at her glass and exclaimed, "Lo, another miracle — I was drinking water, and it turned into wine!" No pun intended; I hold all nuns in high regard.

That brings us to the miracle Jesus performed at Cana, at a wedding feast, turning water into wine — known as the first miracle of Jesus. Have you ever wondered why Jesus chose to perform such a seemingly insignificant miracle to mark the beginning of His ministry on earth? He could have raised someone from the dead, or healed the blind, or performed some other spectacular miracle as His very first sign.

Tradition has it that for a wedding feast to run out of wine was considered a social disgrace to the groom, and the bride's family could even sue him for it. But Jesus was not the head waiter at the feast; He was an invitee, a guest. He had no responsibility for the supply of wine, or for anything else at the feast.

John 2:1-11 gives us a detailed account of what took place. Mary turns to Jesus to tell Him of the shortage of wine. One might wonder why she spoke to Jesus about it, when He had not yet performed a miracle. Here is a probable explanation. Jesus had earlier been baptised by John the Baptist, who had made the pronouncement, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Jesus then went into the wilderness, fasting for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. Now here He was at the wedding, with five disciples. Mary required no further evidence to believe that Jesus was about to begin His ministry as the Messiah, and could do anything. What caught my attention is what He said to Mary: "*Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come*" (John 2:4). As an aside, He was not being impolite to Mary in calling her "woman": recall His words from the cross, "*Woman, behold thy son!*" (John 19:26). To address a woman as "woman" was, in those days, a mark of respect. But what struck me was His statement: "Mine hour is not yet come."

Jesus was clearly referring to a right time that was still to come. When might that time have been? He made another statement at the Last Supper with His disciples: "*But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*" (Matthew 26:29). He was speaking of the time of a grand feast after His second coming, when His kingdom will be established on earth. As a prelude to His parable of the great supper (Luke 14:16), one of those at the table with Him, hearing these things, said to Him: "*Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*" (Luke 14:15). Yes — the unending celebration in the kingdom of God, for the glory of Jesus.

There can be no marriage feast without a bride and guests. From the perspective of the kingdom of Jesus, who is the bride, and who are the invited guests? The general view is that the church is the bride, and the redeemed are the guests. If we accept that view, then during the millennium we have our Lord on the throne, the church as His bride alongside Him, and all the redeemed gathered below, celebrating and worshipping.

However, that is not quite the picture we find when we read Revelation 21:9-11: "*And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*" The bride, here, is the New Jerusalem, comprising the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. One can reasonably argue that the New Jerusalem, the city of God, will contain all who are saved. We are, therefore, looking at the marriage supper of the millennium — which comes after the rapture and the great tribulation — with Christ in His glory, and His bride the New Jerusalem, the saved of every age.

We have another reference to this millennial banquet in Matthew 8:11, where Jesus said: "*And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*" Isaiah, too, prophesied: "*And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined*" (Isaiah 25:6).

I want to suggest that when Jesus told Mary at Cana that His hour was not yet come, and when He told His disciples that He would not drink of the fruit of the vine from then on, and in His parable of the great supper in Luke 14:16, He was pointing us towards the great banquet that is the kingdom of God, to be established at His second coming.

What, then, does the wedding feast at Cana mean for us? The feast ushers in the kingdom of Jesus. The old wine has run out — the law given through Moses is complete — and the new wine, which is good, is the grace and truth of Jesus. From that perspective we can understand why Mary came to Jesus: as I said at the start, she knew that Jesus was about to begin His ministry as the Messiah. The narrative is not, at heart, about a wedding supper at Cana, but about the kingdom of God that Jesus would establish.

Amen.