

## John 05 - Messiah's First Sign - Wedding at Cana

Dr. Leon L. Sanders

John 2:1-12

### Historical Context

- John's opening hymn dictates the flow of the reflective narrative of his gospel (John 1:1-18)
  - The wedding is probably early in His ministry though not immediately after His baptism
  - He has disciples whom He has not called per John (John 1:35-51)
  - It is His first sign, not necessarily His first miracle

### What is a Sign?

- Sign (σημεῖον) - Authenticating marker that may be visual or auditory and may or may not be miraculous
  - Authenticates the message and its messenger (Signet)
- This event illustrates the flow of His Messiahship and authenticates Him as the true Messiah, slave of God
  - The focus is not the miracle but the entire event which conveys the message of His Messiahship

## Ancient Jewish Wedding Motif A

### Man

- Betrothal - Contract of marriage included the *bride price*
  - Bride accepted the groom by drinking wine cup poured by the groom (G. 24:57-59)

### Christ

- New Covenant - Bride of Christ bought by His blood (Mt 26:28, 1Pe 1:18)
- Last Supper wine denoted acceptance of His salvation (1Co 11:25)

## Ancient Jewish Wedding Motif B

### Man

- Wedding Chamber - Groom would leave to prepare this chamber at his father's house
  - Only his father could signify when wedding chamber was ready

### Christ

- Father's House - Christ left to prepare His *House* of new covenant believers; Church first fruits (Jo 14:1-3; Ac 1:6-11)
  - Only the Father knows when the *House* is ready (Mt 24:36)

## Ancient Jewish Wedding Motif C

### Man

- Comes Unannounced - Once approved the groom would go for his bride
  - A shout or shofar would signal his approach
  - Wife and attendants had to be always ready

### Christ

- Christ's Return - Christ will return unexpectedly for His Bride (Mt 13:32-37)
  - He will descend with a shout like a trumpet and His Bride will meet Him in the air (Rapture) (1Th 4:13-18)

## Ancient Jewish Wedding Motif D

### Man

- Marriage Consummated - Bride and groom enter chamber to consummate marriage
  - Friend of the groom waits for groom to announce the marriage has been consummated; the guests celebrate seven days

### Christ

- Salvation Completed - Believers receive new body and give an account of deeds done in the fleshly body  
1Co 13:50-58, 2Co 5:6-10
  - Angel presents Christ and His Bride (Church *first fruits*) to the world; Christ returns to begin His Millennial Kingdom rule Ro 19:6-10

## Ancient Jewish Wedding Motif E

### Man

- Couple Presented - Bride and groom presented to the guests after seven days
  - They are now one flesh entering into the continued life of the community (Children)

### Christ

- Christ Presents - Christ presents His Bride
  - The New Jerusalem representing all believers are one with Christ spending eternity with Him in His glory  
(Ro 11:31-27; 1s 1:18; Re 21:1-3, 22)

## Ancient Jewish Wedding Motif F

### Man

- Couple Begin New Life - Bride and groom then leave to set up their own home

### Christ

- New Earth - Christ and all who are saved live with Him in the New Earth (New Creation) in His Light forevermore  
(Re 21:1-17)

## Wedding Exemplifies Christ's Plan

- Regardless of one's eschatological context one cannot escape the fact that Christ's overall plan mirrors this ancient Jewish ceremony
- Thus, this is why John places it immediately after the witness of faithful men of Jesus' Messiahship and calls it His first sign - a sign to Israel He is announcing His call her to enter into a new covenant with Him

## Christ Arrives with Disciples

- Christ arrives on the third day of the celebration
  - (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος) No connection with *the next periods* of the preceding chapter
  - Mary already present, possibly with His brothers
  - Celebration ran out of wine
  - Mary suggests Christ remedy the crisis
  - Or, does she suggest really something else

## Well to do Wedding Festival

- Details suggest this was not a wedding of a poor couple
  - Invitation to Jesus and His disciples, number unknown but even if the 12, suggests plenty of food for everyone
  - The six large containers for purification also suggests the inclusion of a large number of people and the means to support that number
  - Running out of wine then signifies poor prior planning and could be remedied by simply purchasing more wine

## What Was Mary Really Asking?

- Hebraic subtleties require us to understand how they discussed issues rather than assume our more direct manner of speech
  - Understanding wedding motif as it relates to Messiah, Mary probably was telling Him to publically reveal Himself as the long awaited Messiah with the creation of new wine; i.e., inaugurate the Kingdom now (J. 5:1-11)

## Mary Did Not Understand Messiah

- Christ did not come to be the Ruling Messiah
  - As discussed previously, He came to purchase Salvation
  - Thus, He came as the unlooked for Suffering Messiah
- Without His blood there was no Ruling Messiah
  - View this as a temptation to bypass the stauros
  - Unwittingly Mary is used by Lucifer to test Christ's resolve to follow His Father's will, or take the easy route

## Thus, Christ Rebukes Her

- Christ rebukes her as Woman, not as His mother
  - In her eagerness she was following the path of Eve to promote fleshly concept of Messiahship - Strength
  - It is in this context that Christ rebukes her
  - She accepts His rebuke, shown by her willingness to allow Him to determine how He will present Himself in this wedding context

## No One Understands (Ro. 3:10-18)

- Christ came to do will of His Heavenly Father (Lk. 2:49-50)
  - No one understood what was required to purchase salvation after 1400 years of sacrificial observances
  - Christ was constantly tested (examined) to determine if He would control or be controlled by the flesh (Co. 4:6-7)
  - This is John's rendition of Christ's temptation, not in the wilderness, but in public at the hands of a mother (Mt. 12:14-19)

## Mary Acquiesced to Messiah

- Mary demonstrated submission to her God by not rejecting Christ's rebuke
  - This signified a change in roles from mother to believer
  - She was as much in need of salvation as everyone else
  - She accepted Him as Messiah but she struggled with her understanding of Messiahship as everyone else (Mt. 3:15-21)
  - Thus, she tells the slaves to obey Christ, not her

## Laying the Foundation

- This lesson has laid the foundation for understanding this significant event in John's Gospel
  - So significant that John called it the *first sign* of Messiah
  - Christ is tempted by none other than His mother
  - When Christ testifies that He has not come to bring peace but division, He speaks from truth and experience (Mt. 12:14-19)



## Hebraic Knowledge Essential

- One cannot properly exegete and interpret this passage unless one gains some knowledge of Hebraic idioms, customs and history
  - Viewing this primarily from a Gentile perspective will miss much of what John is telling us
  - Rather than writing in great detail, John uses Christ's methodology to convey complex issues in simple motifs

## Father Invites to Marriage Feast

- Father invited His people to the marriage feast; however, as a society they refused to come though individuals were indeed saved (Jn 22:17)
- Father then called those who were not originally invited to come to the marriage feast (Jn 22:8-10)
  - Sinners - Those rejected by self-righteous Jews
  - Gentiles - Also rejected by pious Jews

## Marriage Feast Not Open to Anyone

- To enter the marriage feast one must have an invitation
  - Special garments were worn by invited guests
  - Those without garments could not join the feast
- His people are clothed in His righteousness not theirs (Jn 22:11-14; Rv 3:5, 19:6-8, 20:11-15)
  - Those in their own righteousness cannot attend
  - They are judged solely by their deeds - No righteousness