

Gospel of John Study Session 5

In last week's session we completed chapter 1 and saw how the good news about Jesus spread from two disciples who were with John the Baptist to their family and beyond. This was the humble beginnings of Jesus' public ministry. Now this week, we are going to look at the power of Jesus. John (the author) wants to make a strong endorsement of Jesus as who He truly is and it is the first link in a long chain John is using to make the case that Jesus is truly the Messiah but also the Son of God. Let's do a little review from the first session.

[John 20:30-31]

Q: What is John's purpose in writing this book? *(to lead people to believe that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God and have life in His name)*

So everything in this book that the apostle John has written is going to go into making those points. Every story about Jesus and every sign that He performs is told to further John's ends of leading people to Jesus for eternal life. In this session we will witness Jesus' first miraculous sign and see how it links with the prologue and rest of the first chapter.

Q: Do you think that what you truly believe matters in life? I'm not just talking about spiritual matters but any matters that pertain to our lives.

Q: Why do our beliefs matter? *(What you truly believe leads to how you act/behave now and how you plan for things in the future. It lays the grid for how you think and react to the world.)*

The apostle John understands how important it is for every person to come to believe on Jesus. To do this he is going to present evidence that shows that Jesus is uniquely qualified as the Messiah and Savior of mankind.

[II Corinthians 5:17]

All of chapters 2,3, & 4 of John are meant to express this one truth found in the verse we just read. *"the old things passed away, behold new things have come"*. This is going to be an exciting ride as we see how John is going to show us that the old things have passed away with Jesus' arrival and that things are brand, spanking new.

[John 2:1-2]

Q: What does John mean by saying the "third day", the third day since when? *(It has been three days, in their reckoning since Jesus encountered Nathanael.)*

This is important and is often overlooked because our Bibles have split the first and second chapter in a way that separates the meaning of what John is trying to get across here. What we are going to see is that this is the only time in the book of John where he gets this

specific on a frame of time for this length of time. This is running sequence of time since **1:19** and the climax is the miracle in this chapter and they are all linked. So let's go back and explore this timeline John has laid out for us.

Day 1 - **[John 1:19]** - What happened this day? (*The Jews interrogated John the Baptist*)

Day 2 - **[John 1:29]** - What happened this day? (*John the Baptist reveals Jesus as the Lamb of God*)

Day 3 - **[John 1:35]** - What happened this day? (*Jesus brings two disciples to His residence*)

Day 4 - **[John 1:41]** - What happened this day? (*Andrew introduces Peter to Jesus*)

Day 5 - **[John 1:43]** - What happened this day? (*Jesus meets Philip and Nathanael*)

The term the "third day" is a common term but it always counts the day mentioned last. In this case then, it marks the fifth, sixth then seventh day. So since the fifth day is the day Jesus met Nathanael, the third day from that day is the seventh day. (Consider the way the three days Jesus was in the tomb is reckoned. Friday/Saturday/Sunday but only Saturday was a 24 hour period of time. Jesus died late Friday afternoon and rose early Sunday morning before sunrise. So this is just how they computed the interval of days for an event.) This is the day (*A side note to this discussion is that since John went into this sort of detail in the timeline, it is possible that this is an indicator that not only was he an eyewitness to these events but that this makes him the other unnamed disciple who was with Andrew on day 3 (1:35).*)

Q: What else in Scripture took seven days? (*Creation - Genesis 1*)

Q: What has John already said about creation in this gospel? (*That the Word (Jesus) was the agent of creation 1:3*)

The reason John brings this out is because as the world was originally created in seven days, this seven day period of time at the beginning of Jesus' ministry reflects a new creation. John will (in this session and the next few chapters) be expressing the truth that Jesus came to bring newness of life and that everything old passed away in light of Jesus' coming into the world.

Q: What was the event where we find Jesus, His mother and His disciples? (*v.1 - a wedding*)

Q: Where does the wedding take place? (*Cana of Galilee - a city in close proximity to where Jesus had been earlier in the week - very close, just slightly north of Nazareth where Jesus grew up*)

[Genesis 1:26-28]

Q: What is the commandment given by God to mankind in this passage? (*for man to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the world*)

[Genesis 2:22-25]

Marriage was an intrinsic part of the creation account. By Jesus performing His first

miracle at a wedding celebration, He is approving and endorsing marriage. In other words, His appearance does not impede God's desire for men and women to marry and carry out the first commandment given to mankind.

*(Side note: A question that arises many times in witnessing situations concerns why God considers homosexuality a sin. If you do a study of the practice through Scripture, every place it is mentioned, it is listed as a sin. Remember, sin is missing the mark of God's best; it's settling for something less than what God wants us to have (**Romans 3:23**). God has a plan for every person He has ever created and given life to and as we've seen in the passages above, to fulfill the first commandment of being fruitful requires people of opposite sex. Same sex couples cannot fulfill God's commandment here and thus are below His best. But also, as God presented Adam and Eve as the perfect human couple and their marriage as the standard of what He was looking for in human marriage (as it was the first institution given by God to man) homosexuality is a perversion of God's natural order, of how He created man and woman to exist and function in this world. The same charges that can be leveled against the transgender lifestyle, too.)*

There is one more point to be made here. John, the apostle, never refers to Mary by name in his gospel. She is always referred to as "the mother of Jesus". The reason for this is that there are many other women named "Mary" in the gospel already, so he'd had to distinguish her with the phrase "the mother of Jesus" anyway, so he just uses this phrase instead of calling her Mary.

Before we read further in the account, you need to know a little history and background into first century Jewish weddings. A Jewish wedding celebration could easily and customarily did last one full week. The groom was responsible for the cost of this week-long celebration. Remember, he was the one who had to foot the bill for the living costs of everyone invited to the wedding for that week. He had to arrange places for the guests to stay, if they were traveling from a distant area. He had to arrange for every meal for every person - the food and the drink. Since there were no convenience stores or grocery stores in that day and time, all this planning and procuring of food and drink had to be done in advance based upon those who had accepted invitation to come to the wedding. For a wedding celebration to run out of food or drink before the end of the celebration was more than just a major social embarrassment for the groom and his entire family as the guests might not have anything to eat or drink for a few days. It could lead the groom open to a lawsuit by the bride's family as they would be aggrieved by the incident. Remember, ancient Israel was what we'd call a "shame culture". If you or your family did something like this, they would be shamed. This would mean that the family responsible (in this instance the groom's family as they were financially responsible) would bear the shame and stigma culturally for as long as they lived in that area. Who would want to give their daughter to marry into that family in the future? What father of a daughter would want their little girl to marry into such a family of cheap-skates or social morons? Keep this in mind as we read through this event.

[John 2:3-5]

Q: What was the problem at this wedding? (v.3 - *the wine had run out.*)

Notice what didn't happen. The wine was not about to run out or they were not running low on wine and feared it wouldn't last. The wine was all gone. This point is made twice in v.3.

Q: Who let Jesus know about this problem? (v.3 - *His mother*)

Here's another historical note that helps us get a more full picture of the setting. A normal guest would not know if the wine had run out before it became common knowledge to everyone at the wedding celebration. Only a person who was part of the planning and preparations would be in on this fact - someone who might be able to find help to fix the problem. Those putting on the wedding would want to keep this fact quiet as to avoid being shamed. This lets us know that Mary was one of the people who helped plan or throw this wedding in some way. This means that the groom of this wedding was a relative or a close friend of Jesus' family. This isn't Mary walking over to Jesus and sharing the latest gossip with Him but rather it is her telling him of a potentially embarrassing situation and wants Him to do something about it.

This requires us to dig into Jesus' family a little bit at this point. This is all speculation but it's speculation that is born out in Scripture. At this point in time, Mary was in all likelihood a widow. Joseph was probably dead by this point in Jesus' life. Here's what we do know for sure. The last time Joseph is mentioned is in **Luke 2:48** when Jesus is 12 and remains in the Temple talking with the rabbis. Mary admonished Him saying that she and His father had been anxiously looking for Him. We know that Joseph and Mary had many other children, besides Jesus, after Jesus had been born. While Jesus is called the "carpenter's son" (**Matthew 13:55**), Jesus is also called "the carpenter" in **Mark 6:3**. Thus it is believed that Jesus took up the family business before He started His public ministry and was the main breadwinner for the family until He left. So somewhere between Jesus being 12 and 30, Mary was widowed and Jesus ran the carpenter's shop, probably along with his brothers as they grew old enough to help out. This is why this question would be natural then. Mary had learned to rely upon Jesus and His resourcefulness as the oldest son in the family. We'd expect that if Joseph was still alive at this point, Mary would turn to him, her husband, for assistance in this matter instead of her oldest son.

Q: What was Jesus' response to His mother? (v.4)

Q: How does Jesus' response strike you? (*somewhat cold or distant*)

This response is actually a mild rebuke. Notice Jesus does not call Mary, "Mother" but "Woman". While this is a courteous word, similar to "ma'am" when speaking to an unknown woman in the south, it is not an endearing term. It wasn't considered rude or disrespectful but it certainly is not the term a son would use to address a beloved mother. The term implies less attachment than "mother".

[John 19:25-27] - Jesus uses the same term while on the cross as He did in chapter 2 at the wedding.

Q: Why do you think that Jesus used the term "Woman" instead of a more endearing term? (*He*

was stating at the onset of His ministry at He was free from all human advice, human agenda or human manipulation. His only motivation was to accomplish the will of God. He had to teach His mother that even His dear family ties had to be subordinated to His divine mission from His Heavenly Father. Mary could no longer view Jesus as her Son as other mothers had the right to view their sons. Everywhere that Mary shows up in the gospel accounts, Jesus is at pains to establish distance between them. Mary, like all others, must learn to see Jesus as the Messiah. She could not claim or presume that she would have some inside track to God or a righteous standing with Him. She had to come to this conclusion based on faith in Jesus within her own heart. In this sense, Mary may have had the hardest time with Jesus' transition to a public ministry. Think of it, she had birthed Him. She had nursed Him. She had played with Him and helped to educate Him. She had taught Him to walk and talk and protect Him as a child. Then at a time, as a widow, needing her oldest son to care for her, she finds Him needing to distance Himself from her and the family. They would no longer be able to rely upon Him for even the role of financial provider, much less treasured Son who comforted His mother. Jesus was distancing Himself from His earth family and role as earthly provider so that He could fulfill His role as the Son of God and become our heavenly provider. This also shows us that no matter who you are, you are sinner in need of Jesus' help.)

Jesus' response can literally be translated, "*What to me and to you?*" The idiom was common and always was used to denote distance between the two parties. The one speaking the idiom always had a hint of reproach in their tone. It could be said, "*What do you and I have in common in this matter?*" But more accurately into modern English we'd say, "*Why are you involving me in this matter?*"

Q: How does Jesus end His statement to His mother? (*v.4 - My hour has not yet come.*)

Different translations use either the word "time" or "hour" in v.4. Whenever has Jesus utter this word in this phrase, it is always referring to His death on the cross and subsequent exaltation. His hour means His death and resurrection. This phrase actually guides a reader through the book of John. It's first used here in 2:4.

[John 7:26-30] - This is the same phrase used here. His hour, the time of His crucifixion had not yet arrived.

[John 8:20] - Same use in this verse.

[John 12:20-23]

Q: What is different about Jesus' statement in 12:23? (*Jesus said His hour had come. It was His time to face crucifixion and resurrection. His glory would be fully seen.*)

Q: What was Jesus doing when He made this comment? (*He was speaking to a group of Gentiles/Greeks*)

Q: Why is this significant that He's speaking to Gentiles before He makes this statement about

His hour having arrived? *(It showed God's concern for all humanity. Jesus Himself had said He came for Israel but His work would actually bring salvation to all mankind who believed in Him. His hour could not come until it involved the salvation of all people - signified by these Gentiles coming to Him.)*

Now back to the wedding. The question for us to understand this verse is in what way would this response be an appropriate response for Jesus to give to His mother concerning the lack of wine at a wedding they were attending? There are two parts to the answer this question.

1) The use of the word "hour" is a literary device used by John to bring the reader to ask, "*What hour?*" This is called an internal prolepsis. It causes the reader to read the text more carefully to be looking for the answer to the question of what hour Jesus is talking about.

2) However, more than just a literary device, Jesus' response to His mother needed to make sense in some way to her. She was just informing Him of the potentially disastrous lack of wine at the wedding. Think of it. She laid out the need for more wine in very mundane terms. Basically, here's the facts. Mary wants the wedding to end without embarrassment for the family of the groom. Yet, it's not uncommon for Jesus to see past the obvious to a deeper symbolism than the speaker originally envisioned. In this case, in many other places that Jesus mentions weddings, it is referring to the prophecy in the Messianic Age where He will be the groom and the church or citizens of God's kingdom will be the bride. John the Baptist recognized this truth early.

[John 3:27-30]

But one of the main symbols of the Messianic kingdom will be that wine will flow abundantly. There will be no scarcity at all.

[Jeremiah 31:12]

Also, the Messianic wedding metaphor is not only a symbol for abundance but also a symbol of the consummation of the Messianic Age itself. Jesus tells several parables about a king throwing a lavish celebration for his son who is to be married. The theme of these parables is that those expected to attend and who were first invited, won't necessarily be those who will end up in attendance to the wedding. **(Matthew 22:1-14)**

So Jesus, as the Messianic bridegroom, despite this mild rebuke of his mother, will graciously correct the deficiencies of the groom at the wedding He's attending in anticipation of the time when He'll perfectly fulfill the role of Messianic bridegroom at the consummation of His kingdom.

Q: What is Mary's response to Jesus' statement to her? *(v.5 - She tells the servants to do what Jesus tells them to do.)*

This is Mary acting out faith in Jesus. She had no way of knowing what Jesus was going to do. In addition to this, Mary certainly did not expect Him to perform a miracle to provide the

wine. Jesus had performed zero miracles up to this point in His life (as we'll see). Mary shakes off the mild rebuke and her statement was an act of faith in Jesus that He would do something to correct the current situation. If you look at Jesus' ministry, this isn't the only time He made it appear He wanted nothing to do with a situation but then later performed a miracle on behalf of the person who was initially rebuked. She is perfectly content to leave the matter in His hands.

[Matthew 15:21-28]

Q: What trait did the faith of this woman and Mary both possess? *(they had persevering faith, it acted against what was available to see at first)*

Both women approach Jesus as a believer and their faith is honored. Neither has any idea what Jesus will do but both believe that He will do something to meet their need.

Q: Why do you think God honors persevering faith? *(It shows reliance upon Him and His timing - thus His sovereignty, other answers possible)*

[John 2:6-12]

There were six pots which in total could hold about 150 gallons of water.

Q: What was the purpose of this water? Why was it at the wedding? *(v.6 - it was used for the Jewish custom of purification. This was the custom of washing certain things in a certain way so that it was ceremonially clean and would not ceremonially defile a person who used the item.)*

(Notice again that John is explaining the purpose of these stone pots to those who are not Jews native to the region of Palestine, just as he translated several words in chapter 1.)

Q: What happened to the water that was going to be used for ceremonial purification? *(v.9 - Jesus turned the water into wine)*

Notice that Jesus didn't leave any of the water as water. It all got turned to wine. He could have left one or two pots with water for the custom of purification but He didn't. By filling the pots to the brim, Jesus left no room for any human works but rather what would be done would be fully divine - God's work.

Q: What do you think Jesus was saying about ceremonial cleansing by this action? *(That they were being replaced by something better. The waterpots with water in them represented the old Jewish law and customs were giving way to something much better - the new covenant. Remember that the theme of these chapters is the old is gone and new has arrived. Now that Jesus is here, everything is new. The shadow has been replaced with the substance. External purification has been replaced by internal cleansing - a full cleansing of the heart.)*

So there is now 150 gallons of wine at the wedding that wasn't there before. Jesus fundamentally and miraculously changed the water into wine. This goes back to the notion of

creation at the beginning of this session. Jesus is the One who creates. He did what no other person could do, He took water and turned it into something completely different to meet the need of the wedding attendees - wine - and lots of it.

Q: What was the quality of the wine Jesus created? (*v.10 - it was good wine - the best of the wedding*)

Q: What do you think the sheer volume of the wine created and the fine quality of this wine teaches us about the new age Jesus is ushering in? (*The Messiah is bringing in a time of lavish provision in His new age. The fact that Jesus had the servants fill the waterpots to the brim showed that there was no room left for the old water/ old ways. Everything was going to be new and abundantly provided for by God.*)

Just as a side note, the word “drunk freely” indicated inebriation. The chief waiter knows that it is customary for the good wine to be brought out first before people get drunk. After they get drunk, they don’t care what they are drinking or care about its quality. The point of the quality of the wine shows that Jesus is superior to everything else, especially that of the old covenant.

Q: What does v.11 say about this miracle? (*This was Jesus’ first miracle. He hadn’t done any before this time.*)

The disciple John who wrote this book always uses the word “signs” to denote a miraculous event that Jesus performed. Jesus’ miracles were never naked displays of power nor were they conjuring tricks to impress the masses but signs. These signs were significant displays of power that point beyond themselves to the deeper realities that could only be perceived by the eyes of faith.

Think of this, to most of the people at the wedding, all they knew was that there was plenty of wine at this wedding. The servants saw that the water had been turned into wine but we aren’t told of it making any impact upon them, as they knew nothing of Jesus yet. However, this sign did impact Mary and Jesus’ disciples who were with Him because they coupled this miraculous event with faith in who they knew Jesus to be - even at the elementary level they understood Jesus as this point.

Q: What is glory? (*It is the visible manifestation of the invisible God*)

[John 1:14]

The servants saw the sign but the disciples and Mary saw the sign and the glory of God.

Q: What was the result of the disciples seeing this sign? (*v.11 - they believed in Jesus*)

This is the point that John is making to all his readers as well as us here in this session. Jesus proved Himself the Messiah and the Son of God by turning the water into wine. He created something new and that newness can lead people to new life. So while having the power to

transform water into wine is amazing, it isn't nearly as amazing as transforming a sinful heart into the heart of a saint.

After this the account ends and the time line ends with it as Jesus and those with Him go to Capernaum for a few days.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?