

Transcript

The Jesus Story - The Wedding at Cana

What I would like to do today is to look at Just what happened when Jesus was invited to a wedding. We find this in John chapter two, the whole story is covered in just eleven verses. This is what we read in the first two verses:

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

After thirty years of living a normal private life, the time has come for Jesus to begin his public ministry. Jesus had received both a visible and audible testimony from heaven. John the Baptist had already pointed Jesus out as: “The Lamb of God, that should take away the sin of the world.”

Now, we read that Jesus and His disciples are invited to a wedding. This is the first of many stories suggesting that Jesus was always welcome among those having a good time. Jesus never not spoiled the good times of anyone, and in the Jewish culture of that day, a wedding was one of the best times to be experienced.

In a life where there was much poverty and constant hard work, this week of celebration and joy was one of the supreme occasions for the Jews. The fact that Jesus was invited to this wedding has several implications.

The invitation of Jesus to this wedding says something about the kind of man that He was. Jesus went to a wedding where there would be eating, drinking, and merriment, and we as followers of him, we are free to do the same.

There is one golden rule that we need to apply in all our decisions. Where Jesus would not go. We do not go. Anything that Jesus would not do. We do not do. But, when we do decide that there is some feast or party, that we are prepared to go too, then we must go in the same spirit and attitude that Jesus would go in.

Jesus did not go to the marriage feast for any other reason than giving something to it and we can add something to where ever we go. Like Jesus, we have to be prepared to promote innocent joy and gladness, and let our presence and conversation be one that demonstrates the fact that the Christian’s life does not lack any good thing.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, seems to be involved in the wedding. Her role seems to be more than that of a guest, because in verses 3 and 4, when a problem arises, this is what we read:

3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.”

4 Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.”

Well into the festivities, Jesus’ mother becomes aware of a most embarrassing situation the wine has run out, and there appears to be no solution. Either no more

wine was available or there is no money to buy more wine, and if something is not done, this will become very embarrassing.

Now for a Jewish feast, wine was essential. The Rabbis used to say: "Without wine there was no joy". It was not that they would get drunk, because to the Jew drunkenness was a disgrace. The problem here was simply that the provisions had run out. For this to happen at any time was bad enough because to the Jew hospitality was a duty, but for provision to run out at a wedding feast, this would have been a terrible humiliation for bride and groom.

Mary comes to Jesus and tells him what the problem is. "They have no wine." I believe Mary tells Jesus, perhaps with the hope that He might do something about the situation. Of all those present at the wedding, Mary the mother of Jesus knows the real situation.

She knew better than anyone who Jesus really was. She knew of the miraculous events surrounding His birth. She knows what John the Baptist, had to say when he identified Jesus as the promised Messiah. Perhaps she thinks it is time for Jesus to present Himself to the world as the Messiah.

John the Baptist has already designated Him as Messiah, and Jesus already has a following of His own disciples. Mary is very careful not to tell Jesus what to do, but it seems clear that she hopes He will do something.

Jesus knows that His mother expects a response of some kind, and He gives her a response, though it is hardly what she expects. But, this was not an unkind response. The relationship of Mary the Mother and Jesus the Son is ended. A new relationship of Mary the sinner and Jesus the Saviour is now their new relationship.

4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

The expression 'Woman' is not used in any way to belittle Mary. 'Woman' - this is the same term Jesus would use when He speaks to Mary from the cross (John 19:26). Jesus neither abruptly nor unreasonably turns His mother down. He simply reminds her of the change in their roles and relationship. Jesus honoured His mother and lived in submission to her authority.

But, it is now time for Jesus to indicate to His mother that there will be a change. Not only is He a grown man about to set out on His own, He is the Messiah who will someday establish His kingdom on the earth.

Mary is certainly not offended, nor is she put off by the words of Jesus. She simply turns to the servants and instructs them, "Whatever He tells you, do it." Mary leaves her request in His hands to deal with as He sees fit. Jesus may not tell the servants to do anything, but, if He does tell them to do something - anything - they should do it.

5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

She instructs the servants to do whatever Jesus tells them to do, and they appear willing to take her instructions. In a moment Jesus had made his decision.

A week earlier, Jesus had refused to turn stones into bread to relieve His own hunger,

but now, He would turn water into wine to save the feelings of His friends.

In verse six we see the solution to the problem:

6 Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.

7 Jesus said to them, “Fill the water pots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And He said to them, “Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.” And they took it.

Can you just imagine what it must have been like for those servants when they finished filling the stone water pots and they returned to Jesus for further instructions. Not one of them could have ever imagined what Jesus would say next: “Now draw some out and take it to the head steward.”

No one could even remotely imagine what was about to happen. Jesus never touched the water or the pots. He does not even tell the servants that the water has become wine. As far as they know, Jesus is instructing them to serve water to the head steward no less!

When you think about it, the servants doing what Jesus told them to do was quite amazing. The thing is, that they did what Jesus said without argument which put them out on a limb because they could have lost their jobs or been punished for offering people water instead of wine.

These servants did not perform this miracle. Their efforts alone were completely useless but because of their obedience to Jesus, they shared in the joy of the miracle. The servants were especially blessed because they obeyed without question and to the fullest (they filled the pots up to the brim). This means that the miracle would be fulfilled in the greatest measure possible. If they had been lazy and only half filled the water pots, there would have only been half as much wine.

Now it was at this marriage feast that Jesus begins in a reserved and discreet way to perform the first of His miracles, and with this miracle, He demonstrates who he is by manifesting forth his glory. Verse nine tells us:

9 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom.

10 And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!”

The story finishes in verse eleven, by telling us:

11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

The presence of Jesus at that marriage feast at Cana saved the bride and groom from being embarrassed, gave opportunity for the Lord to manifest forth his glory, and caused the disciples to believe on him.

There is so much that we can learn from this miracle, but to do this we must look closely at just what really happened. There is nothing inconsistent with the character of Jesus in His replenishing the supply of wine. This miracle was not a “necessity”, but really it was more of a “luxury”.

Just, think about this for a moment. This miracle is not like any of the other miracles Jesus performed, where an individual has suffered for years, or a child’s life hangs in the balance. This is not an emergency situation which demands immediate and dramatic action from Jesus. This was definitely not a crisis situation.

There is a lesson to be learned from this miracle. Jesus is even concerned with our “non-critical” problems. Water to wine.

This has caused problems in Christian circles for years. What we need to do is to try and get a balanced view on this. Those who maintain that the wine created by this miracle was unfermented, and therefore, non-intoxicating, ought to know that there is no such thing as unfermented wine.

It is not inconsistent with Christ’s character to create wine, but, as with many other gifts from God, they are open to abuse. Some would tell us that Jesus did not change water into real wine, that all he did was change it into very good grape juice!

If that had been the case, then I would expect the bible to say that this miracle that Jesus performed was to turn water into grape juice. Wine was a commonplace drink, one that believers partook of along with everyone else in that culture and climate. Jesus certainly did change water into real, true, genuine wine.

Actually, the very force of this miracle depended upon the fact that it was good wine. This is confirmed by the amazement of the steward of the feast when he drank the wine. Look again at what the ruler of the feast has to say: “You have kept the good wine until now”. He did not know where this wine had come from (only the servants knew).

The head steward found that it was better wine than he had tasted before. This wine wasn’t just ordinary wine. Jesus can make better wine out of water than men can out of grapes.

Another good question is: Why did Jesus produce so much wine? One hundred and twenty to one hundred and eighty gallons. The amount of wine was to emphasize the size of the gift. He is the one who bestows his gifts lavishly, without stint. The Lord is not stingy in his giving. This miracle has no equal in scripture, it is absolutely unique. This miracle was performed simply by an act of the will of Jesus.

He did not touch the water pots. He did not command the water to become wine. He did not pray to his father in heaven. He simply willed the change, and it took place. Nowhere in the bible, Old or New Testament, do we read of any one performing a miracle like this. This was the son of God manifesting forth his glory.

So, just what are the lessons that we can learn from the miracle that Jesus performed, when He turned water into wine? First of all, there are pitfalls that we as Christians need to be aware of. No one can really doubt what happened at the Wedding in Cana. Jesus really did turn water to wine.

We need to be very careful that when trying to prove some point, we twist scripture to fit our ideas of what we think is right or wrong. We detract from what Jesus did if we try to weaken what really happened. Jesus turned water into wine, not just to ordinary wine, but to 'Very Good Wine'.

Now, the bible has a lot to say regarding wine, its use and its misuse, and, we really need to have a balanced view on this. The Bible is very clear when it comes to the issue of wine. Wine, like all alcohol, must be treated carefully. It should be seen as a blessing and received with thanksgiving among those who drink it. But, it must never be abused.

What should the Christian's attitude be towards wine? It's important for Christians to understand the whole picture. Wine can be seen as a blessing from God, but wine can also be a possible means by which people bring destruction upon themselves.

Christians should exercise caution with wine and strong drink, practicing moderation and self-control; and towards one another it is important that we allow for liberty without passing judgement for either drinking or abstaining.

This debate concerning Christians drinking wine will never have an answer that will satisfy everyone, but we can find clear direction by looking into what the bible has to say. John chapter two records Jesus performing a miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

Throughout the passage, the Greek word translated 'wine' is 'oinos', which was the common Greek word for normal wine - wine that was fermented and so it would be alcoholic. The Greek word for the wine Jesus created is the same word for the wine the wedding feast ran out of.

The Greek word for the wine Jesus created is also the same word that is used by Paul when writing to the Ephesians 5v18:

18 And do not be drunk with wine.

The use of the word (oinos) can only be described as to refer to real wine.

Some Scriptures discuss alcohol in positive terms. What we really need to do is to look at both sides of the argument and then, find out where we stand.

What the bible tells us concerning wine will not change. The only thing that changes is: 'how men see wine'. We could spend years discussing this subject and achieve nothing. What we can do here is to look at a few texts and then decide just what we believe, and what our response should be.

Let me quote just a few verses concerning wine - there are some for drinking wine and some warning against drinking wine.

In Ecclesiastes 9:7 we read:

7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart;

In Psalms 104:14, it tells us that God gives us wine:

14 That He may bring forth food from the earth

15 And wine that makes glad the heart of man.

Amos 9:14 discusses drinking wine from your own vineyard as a sign of God's blessing:

14 They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

Isaiah 55:1 encourages:

1 And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

From these and other Scriptures, it is clear that alcohol itself is not in actual fact sinful. Wine is a gift from God, a good gift. But what we do with that gift will determine if it will be a blessing or a curse. It is the abuse of alcohol, drunkenness or addiction, that is sinful. We see this in many other texts.

Ephesians 5:18 tells us:

18 And do not be drunk with wine.

In Isaiah 28:7, this is what we read:

7 But they also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink.

Again in Isaiah 5:11:

11 Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may follow intoxicating drink, who continue until night, till wine inflames them!

Jesus Himself warns against it in Luke 12:45:

45 "But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk.

There is a choice that we all need to make. Christians who want to keep a biblical view of drinking wine should either drink in moderation, never to drunkenness, or abstain totally.

There are some very interesting views expressed by Paul, when telling Timothy what to look for when choosing leaders. Pastors and deacons were not to be given to wine or much wine. Again, this is in no way a prohibition against all drinking, even for pastors and deacons. They are to avoid being given to wine, that is, they are not to be drinking excessively or often.

Pastors should not be given to wine. Deacons with less restriction are not to be given to much wine. Other members could drink as much as they desired short of drunkenness. Shall we just read what Paul said when he wrote to Timothy, 1 Timothy 3v2:

2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.

But, there is something that we must ever be mindful of. We may have freedom to drink a beer - nothing wrong with drinking a beer or drinking a glass of wine, but to do that in the presence of another Christian who comes from a background that entailed alcohol abuse, a person who was addicted to alcohol before becoming a Christian, to drink alcohol in that person's presence could be presenting them with a temptation to sin that could be very destructive to that person's faith.

And so, in a case like that, your concern for that person will overrule our liberty or the freedom that you have when you think about just alcohol in and of itself.

So, love will overrule liberty. We should always put the other person ahead of ourselves when we think about our freedoms, the things that God has given us. There is simply no good biblical reason to understand that the miracle at the wedding in Cana was anything other than Jesus performing an amazing miracle by turning water into real wine.

Is drunkenness sinful? Absolutely! Is addiction sinful? Definitely. Would Jesus turning the water into alcoholic wine in any way violate God's standards regarding the consumption of alcohol? Absolutely not!

What it does prove is that Jesus doesn't condemn drinking wine any more than He condemns eating bread. Sinful people abuse what is not really sinful. Bread and wine are not sinful, but gluttony and drunkenness are.

In Luke 7:33–34, Jesus said, and this is really interesting;

33 "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'

34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber'.

There is a good reason for any Christian to abstain from drinking alcohol and that is when you are drinking alcohol it is the cause of a weaker brother being stumbled.

Scripture also forbids a Christian from doing anything that might offend other Christians or encourage them to sin against their conscience. 1 Corinthians 8:9 tells us very clearly:

9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

Christians who want to keep a biblical view of drinking wine should either drink in moderation, never to drunkenness, or abstain totally.

There will be times where there is something that God will allow a Christian to do, but there will be times when it would be wrong because it could lead another believer into sin. We perhaps need to heed the example of Paul. Paul said something to the saints at Corinth, 1 Corinthians 6:12:

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

There may be times when something that in itself may be alright, would certainly in other circumstances be very wrong. The choice is a very personal matter for each believer.

I have tried to show the different opinions from what the bible has to say about wine. But the decision as to “is it right for you as a Christian to drink wine”, this is a decision that only you can make.

We know from what the bible teaches, that drink to excess (drunkenness) is definitely wrong. To drink any alcohol in the presence of a weaker Christian - someone who has had, or does have any form of weakness in this area - this also is very wrong.

I would like to finish by giving you something to think about. This is what Paul had to say when writing to the Christian's in Rome. Romans 14v13-19:

13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.

21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.