

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Website: www.churchredeemeraz.org

Series: The Miracles of Jesus
Number: 2
Text: John 2:1 – 11
Date: October 24, 2010 (a.m.)

Pastor/Teacher
Gary L. W. Johnson

The First Ray of Glory

The Gospels, writes B. B. Warfield, “give us not only a miracle-working Jesus, but a Jesus whose miracle - working is an essential element in his manifestation, and yet whose miracle - working is of a sort peculiar in its restraint and fitness to himself.”¹ I am afraid that the word “miracle”, as used in our society, is somewhat overworked. It is applied to the most mundane occurrences. People are prone to interpret almost anything that is out of the ordinary as miraculous. Unfortunately, many Christians, especially Charismatics, contribute to the confusion. What are we to make of the many claims made by Charismatics? We do well to first examine the miracles set forth in Scripture, more particularly the miracles of Jesus as exhibited in the Gospels. What were the miracles of Jesus like? Why did Jesus do miracles? The first miracle attributed to Jesus is found in John 2:1 - 11.

I. THE TIME AND SCENE (vv. 1 - 2)

The marriage took place in Cana, the home of Nathanael (cf. 1:44 - 50). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was evidently a close friend of the family and was already at the house when Jesus and His disciples arrived. Note "In St. John alone, "writes B. F. Westcott, "the name of the 'mother of Jesus' is not mentioned, even when Joseph is named (6:42)."²

II. THE OCCASION (vv. 3 - 5)

A marriage feast could last more than one day. The bridegroom and his family were responsible for that affair - and it seems they were not that well-off, since they had not made sufficient provision. According to Jewish custom of the day this could result in more than social embarrassment. It could also involve heavy pecuniary liability. Legal action could be taken against the family for failing to provide the appropriate arrangements.³ This sheds some light on Mary's intercession. She knew the family, and she also knew something about the pain of being the subject of social embarrassment, being whispered about by people who drew their own conclusions about the birth of her first child.

A. Jesus' Response: Above the Will of His Mother. The English translation (KJV) gives the impression of a stern rebuke. The ESV also conveys this as well. The NIV, “Dear Woman,” is preferred. Jesus addressed His mother with the same word “Woman” from the cross (John 19:26). The thought is very much like that heard in the South, “Ma’am.”⁴ The point Jesus makes is this: Jesus has embarked on His ministry, and He is to be free from any kind of human advice, agenda, or manipulation, even His closest relation. As the Swiss commentator F. Godet has aptly said, “His motto henceforth is; My Father and I.”⁵

B. Jesus' Response: In the Will of His Father: My Hour. This expression always has reference to Christ's death (cf. John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). How does that thought fit in this context? There is a threefold possibility:

1. **SYMBOLISM.** “In studying the miracle at Cana one must,” writes Edmund Clowney, “be sensitive to the symbolism of water, wine, and the wedding feast. Moses' turning of the water into blood must be recalled. The connection of the ministry of John with the water of purification, and Jesus' presence as the bridegroom (John 3:25 - 30) helps us to understand the force of Jesus' statement to his mother that his hour was not yet come.”⁶
2. **ANTICIPATION.** All things in the Gospels move toward the cross, towards Jesus' glorification. The individual elements in the Gospel narratives *anticipated* the glorification of Jesus on the cross “in much the same way that Jesus' healing miracles in the Synoptic Gospels are said to anticipate the cross (Matthew 8:16 - 17).”⁷
3. **CONNECTION.** The miracle at Cana is not recorded in the other three gospels. It is

possible that John intends us to see a connection between 2:1 - 11 and 3:27 - 30, where Jesus is emphatically called the messianic bridegroom. If so, then when His hour comes, Jesus will supply for the last feast the best wine (Isaiah 25:6 - 8).

Ridderbos summarizes: "In that connection 'my hour has not yet come' is of special importance. The saying occurs over and over in John (cf. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; cf. 16:21; 17:1; cf. also 7:6, 8). As a rule the coming of this 'hour' refers to the beginning of Jesus' suffering, his going to the Father, his glorification, and many interpreters understand it thus here. Some think particularly of the hour of Jesus' death and regard the subsequent miracle as a sign of the forgiveness of sin through Jesus' blood. But Jesus' 'hour,' as a reference to the end of his earthly career, embraces the fullness of his glory, of which his death is only a part. Others, therefore, think that 'the hour' in 2:4 refers to all this future glory. This hour never came during the life of Jesus, and in vs. 11b there is said to be only prophetic mention of Jesus' glory. In this way the Evangelist is said to have warned his readers that the full significance of Jesus' glory must be sought not in his miracles but in his subsequent glorification by the Father. But all this pays too little attention to the setting here. It is hard to see what a reference to the hour of Jesus' departure could mean as a reply to Mary's appeal for help. After all, she did not in fact have to wait that long before Jesus acted. The reference here is not to the hour of Jesus' departure but to the hour of the beginning, of the breakthrough of the revelation of his glory on earth and in the flesh, and it is therefore arbitrary, in my opinion, to speak of vs. 11 as an anticipation of Jesus' future exaltation. All that is at issue here is that Jesus cannot seize this hour, that is, this beginning, beforehand—even if his own mother urges him to do so. This is not to say that for every deed Jesus had to wait, as it were, for a certain cue from God; rather, that he was conscious that the great moment at which the Father called him to this revelation of glory had not yet come. Hence what comes sharply to the fore here, precisely at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, is his awareness that his life was subject to a certain calling that he had to fulfill at God's direction (cf. 4:35), an awareness that one can describe in the entire framework of this Gospel as Jesus' messianic self-consciousness and his consciousness of his divine sonship. Meanwhile the 'not yet' also implies that what Mary asked of him was not something that in itself lay outside that order but was something for which she had to await the time."⁸

III. THE MANNER: HIS SOVEREIGN PROVISION

The manner of working the miracle is now described, but not the method nor even a statement on how the miracle occurred. As J. C. Ryle, has observed, "To Him who created the vine, and made it bear grapes at the first, the change was perfectly easy. He who could create matter out of nothing, could much more easily change one kind of matter into another."⁹

IV. THE RESULT: THE BEST FOR LAST

The master of the banquet (NIV and the ESV) could best be described as the master of ceremonies. He is not aware of what has happened - only that this wine is better than the other. Some have drawn the erroneous conclusion from his remarks that the guests were so drunk by now that they could not tell good wine from bad. That is not the meaning. "We may be quite sure," says R. C. Trench, "there was no such excess here; for to this the Lord would as little have given allowance by His presence, as He would have helped it forward by a special wonder - work of His own. 'The ruler of the feast' does not refer to a common practice, and at the same time notice the motive, namely, that the fineness of men's palates after a while is blunted, and their power of discerning between good and bad is abated; and thus an inferior wine passes with them then, such as would not have passed with them at an earlier hour."¹⁰

V. THE EFFECT: THE FIRST RAY OF THE LORD'S GLORY

There is a twofold effect of this miracle. First, the manifestation of Christ's glory to His disciples. The servants saw the miracle but not the glory. The glory was not visible to all. Second, as a result the disciples "believed in Him."¹¹

CONCLUSION: When we examine the miracles recorded in the N.T. we discover that while the Apostles healed the sick and even raised the dead, but they never turned water into wine. This miracle, declared to be Jesus' first miraculous sign, showed that Jesus was more than a prophet. It showed Him to be truly Divine, and none other than God manifested in the flesh. "St. John is most explicit in his assertion that the 'beginning of miracles' at Cana was intended to manifest the glory of the Word made flesh, Himself the revelation of the Father, full of grace and truth."¹²

ENDNOTES

¹ B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings*, ed. John E. Meeter, II (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), p. 187.

² B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (rpt. Baker, 1980), p.81.

³ Cf. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1977), p. 177.

-
- ⁴ This is how D. A. Carson understands the term, cf. *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 170. Westcott points out the word "woman" (GUNAÍ) stands last in the response. In John 19:26 it is not last. Here the contrast comes first, there the personality. Op. cit., p. 82.
- ⁵ F. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (rpt. Zondervan, 1959). P. 187.
- ⁶ E. P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), p. 116.
- ⁷ D. A. Carson, op. cit., p. 172.
- ⁸ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1997) p. 105.
- ⁹ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts On the Gospel, IV* (rpt. Zondervan, 1948), p. 100.
- ¹⁰ R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles and the Parables of Our Lord* (Revell. 1953). pp. 117 -118.
- ¹¹ This phrase (EPISTEUSAN EIS AUTON) is peculiarly characteristic of John. The idea which it conveys is that of absolute transference of trust from oneself to another. Cf. Westcott. op. cit., p. 87.
- ¹² John Laidlaw, *The Miracles of Our Lord: Expository and Homiletic* (rpt. Baker, 1953). p. 17.