

The Marriage Feast of Joy

Encountering Jesus--part 7

March 23, 2014

DAY 1

1. We've studied a variety of Jesus encounters with different kinds of people with different needs. These encounters give us "previews" of how He might encounter us! This week we see Jesus at the very beginning of his public ministry.

2. The setting is a wedding feast. In the Jewish culture this could last a week! It was a festival of food, wine, dancing and celebration. Everyone in the community was a part.

John 2:1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

3. Underline everyone John records who were included in the celebration.

John 2:3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

4. This was a "crisis" in Jewish culture. Jesus will turn water into wine.

5. The meaning of this encounter is found in the last verse:

John 2:11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

6. "Sign" is a symbol, an attention-grabber that highlights something important. Turning the water into wine is a sign, but what does John say is the purpose of this sign?

7. Why didn't John record that Jesus revealed his "power," or "strength?"

8. His "glory" is His identity, the wonder and totality of Who He is. Power to do the miraculous is what is most evident here, but this is just the "first" of many signs that will point people to God the Son, God incarnate, leaving heaven to come to earth for our benefit.

9. What is perplexing is that He would choose His first sign of identifying His glory at a simple wedding feast! Why not start with the feeding of the 5,000 or raising Lazarus from the dead? What do you make of starting with a wedding feast?

DAY 2

John 2:1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

1. Why would Jesus choose a wedding feast to begin to reveal Who He is and what He came to do?

2. Let's look at the rest of the story.

John 2:3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

John 2:4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

⁵ *His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

⁶ *Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*

⁷ *Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.*

⁸ *Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,*

⁹ *and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside*

¹⁰ *and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."*

3. What is the man in charge of this wedding banquet called? (v. 8)

4. It is his job to make sure all that is needed is provided, that the feast is a joyous celebration for all the guests.

5. Do you suspect that Jesus saw a picture of what He would one day do for His people? If He did, how would that make this event the perfect place to begin to reveal His real nature?

6. When we normally think of the gospel, our mind goes to sin and forgiveness. These are important items, yes, but not the "final" items. The book of Revelation paints some vivid portraits of "coming attractions" in heaven. Here's one:

Revelation 19:9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

7. What things strike you about this "final" picture?

DAY 3

1. I believe Jesus saw the wedding feast in Cana as a foreshadowing of another wedding feast, where He Himself would be the Groom and His people would be the bride! Perhaps this passage from Isaiah ran through His mind...

Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine-- the best of meats and the finest of wines.

⁷ *On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;*

⁸ *he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.*

2. What different joys and delights will He provide for His people?

3. What will He do with the times of suffering we endured during our lives on Earth?

4. Why are both of these important, the joys provided and sufferings wiped away and removed?

5. Fyodor Dostoevsky was a Russian Christian, and one of the great writers of literature. In his book, The Brothers Karamazov, Ivan Karamazov is discussing how he thinks God will redeem our suffering. Here is a quote from this passage:

"I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage,.... that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, of all the blood that they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened."

Revelation 21:5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6. What thoughts strike you about God's amazing plan of redemption?

DAY 4

1. We've looked at the metaphor of wedding feast as the final purpose of Jesus' incarnation. We will celebrate one day as Groom and bride, a feast of joy and celebration. But that day won't just "happen." What is required to make it happen?

John 2:3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

John 2:4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

⁵ *His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

⁶ *Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.*

⁷ *Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.*

⁸ *Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so,*

⁹ *and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside*

¹⁰ *and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."*

2. What did Jesus do to fix the problem created by the bride and groom, and the master of the banquet?

3. Notice carefully. What *kind* of jars did Jesus have the servants fill with water? (v. 6)

4. **Ceremonial** water was used in the Jewish faith as a symbol of purifying. What would be signified by Jesus having the men fill *ceremonial* jars with water, to be turned into wine?

5. Mankind tries to do its own "purifying." It uses denial, a stubborn resistance to admitting to doing anything wrong that would make us look bad. Denial is *seen* in behaviors like "posturing," creating an image of having it all together. Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame with fig leaves. Today, we use designer clothes or baggy pants. We drive cars we can't afford, houses and furniture to create images of looking good, and hiding our darker side. We brag about our kids or our sports exploits or business successes. In actuality, we're intuitively trying to "purify" ourselves from what we sense is wrong with us, and what others might sense is wrong with us. That can last a lifetime.

6. Instead, Jesus wants to do a one-time cleansing. We don't need ceremonial water or ceremonial washing. Instead we need His cleansing blood. Instead of merely "hiding" our sins He forgives them and dismisses them, as far as they can be sent!

7. Take time to thank Jesus for purifying of what is wrong in us.

DAY 5

1. One of the stranger parts of this story is the interchange between Jesus and Mary, His mother.

John 2:3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

John 2:4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

John 2:5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

2. Why did Mary tell Jesus the wedding feast was out of wine?

3. What first strikes you about Jesus' response in John 2:4?

4. There appears a big disconnect between His question and His statement. Let's look at each:

a. What do you think He means by, "Dear woman, why do you involve me?"

b. What do you think He means by, "My time has not yet come"?

5. Jesus "hour" refers to the time of His coming death. When He is asked to do something about the wine, I wonder if His mind jumped far ahead to what we call "the Lord's Supper," where wine represents His blood, shed for the forgiveness and remission of sins.

6. This is the very beginning of His public ministry. He knows that every time He reveals His glory through a miracle, or here with a "sign" the target on His back grows. It's as if He's saying to her, "Mother, you won't really know this, but I am able to do far more than just provide over a hundred gallons of wine in a second. I want to keep the wedding feast going, to provide more joy than people can imagine. I want to take away their guilt and purify them from their shame. But all that will come at a terrible price--My death."

7. What thoughts are striking you about Jesus' response to Mary?

8. Think about what it will take for Jesus to give us all He wants to give us:

a. Giving us joy will cost Him His immediate joy.

b. To purify us from sin, He will have to take upon Himself *the stains of our sins*.

c. We will never love Him as our Bridegroom until we see Him hanging on a cross.

d. To create us as a festive community will require intense loneliness and being ostracized.

e. To get us into heaven meant He had to leave heaven.

9. Thank Him for His amazing love, and for the above specifics for which you are grateful.