

COMMENTARY ON JOHN

LESSON NUMBER 22

“ John 2:9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, ¹⁰ And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. ¹¹ This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.”

.....John 2:9-11)

HE MANIFESTED FORTH HIS GLORY

INTRODUCTION

The time had arrived for Jesus' ministry to begin. He had been revealed in His baptism, and by the words of John who identified Him as the Lamb of God, and as The Son of God. An attestation also came from heaven in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, and the voice of God Himself who identified Jesus as His own *“Beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased”* (Matt 3:17). Now, for the sake of His disciples, there will be another confirmation. This will come when Jesus does something that no one else can do – a miracle. You see the lengths to which God went to confirm that Jesus Nazareth was His Son – the One declared by Moses and the Prophets, and now by John the Baptist. Today, this confirmation comes through the Gospel, which is *“the record God has given of His Son”* (1 John 5:10-11). God will not allow the needs and preferences of men to define His Christ – a practice that is altogether too common in our time. Let it be clear that Jesus is the answer to the dilemma **as defined by God Almighty**. That quandary has to do with alienation from God (Eph 4:18; Col 1:21), enmity against Him (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21), being *“dead in trespasses and sins”* (Eph 2:1), and being the vassals of Satan (Eph 2:2). He is also the only means to meeting the two things to which all men are appointed – death, and *“the judgment”* (Heb 9:27). A person can be accepted by God and be poor (James 2:5), sick (Phil 2:26-27), and at variance with his own family (Matt 10:36). But no one can be accepted by God who refuses the deliverance that Jesus brings from the guilt and power of sin, servitude to the devil, and being worldly. In our time there has been too little effort put into identifying Jesus Christ, what He has accomplished, what He is doing, and what He will yet do. *“Another Jesus”* has, for the most part, been set before the people (2 Cor 11:4) – a Jesus that is tolerant of sin, loves people unconditionally, allows for primary help from another source, and is powerless. But God will not honor such a Jesus!

THOSE WHO KNEW AND THOSE WHO DID NOT KNOW

“JOHN 2:9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew) . . .”

Jesus had told the servants who filled up the water pots, to draw a sample of the contents out and give it to the governor of the feast. **A real work can stand up to a real**

test. He does not say to deliver samples to the guests – not even to the bride and the groom. Someone who would be able to detect the quality of what Jesus produced will be used.

WHEN THE RULER OF THE FEAST HAD TASTED. Other versions read, *“the master of the feast,”* ^{NKJV} *“the headwaiter,”* ^{NASB} *“the master of the banquet,”* ^{NIV} *“the steward,”* ^{NRSV} *“The man in charge,”* ^{CJB} *“chief servant,”* ^{CSB} *“the governor of the feast,”* ^{GENEVA} *“the president,”* ^{NJB} *“master of ceremonies,”* ^{NLT} and *“director of the apartment.”* ^{YLT}

This was the one who had charge of the dining room, its arrangement, and what was being served. ^{THAYER} He would be aware of what was available, and of its quality, as well as being a connoisseur of both food and drink. He *“tasted”* what was brought to him, probably to determine if it was suitable to be served to the guests.

THE WATER THAT WAS MADE WINE. Notice with what care the Spirit reports this event. He does not say the governor of the feast tasted the wine, but that he tasted *“the water that was made wine.”* He will know whether it just looks like wine, or if it really is wine. Here was something that not only was not natural, it was against all of the laws of nature. There was no vine, no branches, no clusters of grapes, no gathering of grapes, no crushing of the grapes. It is not grapes that are turned into wine, but water – and water that was used for purification, or washing. Jesus of Nazareth was also the Creator, and all of the power of the Creator was resident in a man. The power of Deity was in the Man like the power of the grape was transferred to the water.

This is what happens in regeneration, or when a person is born again. He becomes a *“partaker of Christ”* (Heb 3:14), and the ordinary is turned into that extraordinary. Religious men are fond of trying to cause people to be different by a routine, instead of by Divine power. That is like dropping a concentrated grape flavored pill into a vat of water. You may get the faint taste of grape juice, but the trained palate is able to tell the difference.

HE KNEW NOT WHENCE IT WAS. Other versions read *“he did not realize where it came from.”* ^{NIV} He did not know the source of this sample. This work was so unique that it could only come from one Source, and we will find it was not for him to know. The thing he will be required to do is confirm the reality and superiority of the product.

There are still works done by Jesus that are recognized as legitimate by the world, yet they do not know the Source of them. Paul referred to those who do such things as being *“acceptable to God, and approved of men”* (Rom 14:18). He said there is such a thing as *“commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.”* (2 Cor 4:2), and *“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”* (2 Cor 8:21).

The reality and legitimacy of what Jesus has done in us is not to be questioned. Salvation does make us better people, and the effect of the remission of sins is a sure deliverance from the power of sin as well as from its guilt. Many professing Christians live lives that are morally flawed – even in the eyes of the world. They remain enslaved to sin while they are identified with a church. They are pots with plain water in them, and even the world recognizes they are no different from them.

Wicked men have taught the church that morally weak Christians are a kind of standard that still exists, and that the church is here to help them conquer their godless habits. That is like the master of the feast being brought a cup of water, and told that it was really wine. Where is there a person of sound mind that would believe such nonsense?

BUT THE SERVANTS KNEW. The servants who drew the water *“knew”* what had

happened. They knew that what they had drawn out for the ruler of the feast had come from those six water pots, which they had personally filled to the brim. If the text means, as some conjecture, that the servants did not know what was in the cup they drew for the ruler of the feast, then this text would mean they knew where the water came from that was used to fill the pots. Some commentators say the servants did not know they were bringing wine to the *"ruler of the feast."* The word translated *"knew"* means "TO PERCEIVE (WITH THE EYES); TO SEE, I. E. TO TURN THE EYES, THE MIND, THE ATTENTION TO ANYTHING; A. TO PAY ATTENTION, OBSERVE." ^{THAYER} That is, they knew by perceiving that what they had drawn from the vessels was wine, not water. They were fully aware of what they had poured into the pots, and what they had drawn out of them.

The parallel to spiritual life must not be ignored. When the wine of newness of life is possessed, those who have it know that it did not come from any natural process or methodology. Passing from death to life, and from old to new cannot be achieved by natural means or human wisdom. Those who have truly *"tasted that the Lord is gracious"* know! (1 Pet 2:3).

THE BEST WAS LAST

"⁹ . . . the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. ¹⁰ And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

HE CALLED THE BRIDEGROOM, AND SAITH UNTO HIM. The governor of the feast knew this was extraordinary, and therefore called the bridegroom, who had apparently supplied the wine and made arrangements for how it was to be served. He was not accustomed to this kind of experience, which seemed to contradict all known protocol.

AT THE BEGINNING. *"Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine."* This is the manner of the world. Because they seek to make impressions, and because of the presence of pride, they put the best forth first. This way they will make an instant impression, and be able to serve less of the best from that point on. This is how the world thinks. That is why there are such things as guarantees, because all men know this is the manner of the world.

THEN THAT WHICH IS WORSE. Then, after the people have *"well drunk,"* or *"drunk freely,"* ^{NASB} or *"have had too much to drink,"* ^{NIV} then they serve the *"worse,"* or *"inferior,"* ^{NKJV} or *"poorer,"* ^{NASB} or *"cheaper wine."* ^{NIV} That is because the people are no longer able to make sound judgments. Isaiah said the priests of old *"erred through wine"* (Isa 28:7). Under the Law a stern warning concerning wine was issued to the priests: *"Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean"* (Lev 10:9-10). Not only, therefore, does wine and strong drink tend to dull the senses, they make it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the holy and the unholy, the unclean and the clean. Solomon said it was not for kings to drink wine *"Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted"* (Prov 31:5). **This is why the best wine was served first, so they could switch to the inferior wine later.**

BUT THOU HAST KEPT THE GOOD WINE UNTIL NOW. This was contrary to the ordinary practice. It also means that when Jesus turned the water into wine, it was wine of the highest quality, being like newly produced fruit of the vine, more tasty and

satisfying. Of course, from the world's vantage point, this would mean less of the "good wine" would probably be served.

THE PRACTICE OF RELIGIOUS HYPE. The current trend of catering to the fickle preferences of carnal people, is, from their point, serving the best first. Religious opportunists look at this as appealing to "seeker-friendly" people. What actually happens is that this religious hype, usually presented in a musical format, actually dulls any spiritual senses that may exist. If some effort is put forward to teach such people, they will be discovered to have been spiritually inebriated by what they have been served, and thus unable to distinguish the truth of God from Satanic delusion. This is precisely why strange and distorted doctrines are embraced by such people, who are among the least informed people in the world concerning the things of God.

THE MANNER OF THE LORD. As illustrated in this first miracle of the Lord Jesus, the inferior is served first, and the superior is served last. Of course, there is a reason for this. At the first, when a person is "babe" in Christ, they are not able to ingest the "strong meat" of the Word (Heb 5:12).

But for those who "grow up into Christ in all things" (Eph 4:15), the "best" is served to them on a regular basis. I am referring to "the riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7), the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8), and the "riches of the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). There are "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3), "life more abundantly" (John 10:10), and knowing of "the exceeding greatness of the power to us-ward who believe" (Eph 1:19). There is "exceeding joy" (1 Pet 4:13), and "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Pet 1:4). There is that marvelous spiritual aptitude, described as being "able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph 3:18-19).

None of these can be experienced by the novice in the measures available to the saved. They are like precious wine kept for the last. They expand vision and understanding, rather than shrinking it. This is the manner of the Kingdom, depicted in this miracle of turning the water into wine – the ordinary into the extraordinary. For the spiritually mature, the Word of God reads differently than when they first believed. It is not "differently" in the sense of being of a different order that obviates one's initial experience. It is different in scope, and in perspective. It is different because more is seen, or comprehended. What was first viewed as a book of common size, is now seen as a rich treasure house of diverse spiritual gems. Who has not experienced some measure of growth and seen this – that the best was **not** experienced at the first. That means that the most important thing was not simply getting in, like drinking the first serving of wine at the wedding feast of Cana.

THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES

"¹¹ This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him."

BEGINNING OF MIRACLES. Other versions read, "beginning of signs," ^{NKJV} "first of His miraculous signs," ^{NIV} "first of His signs," ^{NRSV} "first miraculous sign," ^{CEB} "Jesus began to perform miracles," ^{GWN} "Jesus' first public demonstration of His heaven-sent power," ^{LIVING} "His wonder-works," ^{WILLIAMS} and "first of the signs of His mission." ^{GOODSPEED}

What is a miracle? Lexically, the word translated "miracles" means, "UNIVERSALLY, THAT BY WHICH A PERSON OR A THING IS DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHERS AND KNOWN; A SIGN, PRODIGY, PORTENT, I. E. AN UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE, TRANSCENDING THE COMMON COURSE OF NATURE," ^{THAYER} "WHAT SERVES AS A POINTER TO AID PERCEPTION OR INSIGHT SIGN, MARK,

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTIC,"^{FRIBERG} "THE SIGN OR (DISTINGUISHING) MARK BY WHICH SOMETHING IS KNOWN, TOKEN, INDICATION; MIRACLE OF DIVINE ORIGIN."^{GINGRICH}

A miracle is more than something supernatural. Satan can work supernaturally. The same word used here, is used to describe things Satan works: (Rev 13:14; 16:14; 19:20). His "signs" speak of His character and intent, just as those miracles wrought by Jesus were signs that spoke of His character and intent.

This "beginning or miracles" presented the ministry of Jesus as having to do with making people different: introducing newness of life, differing characteristics, freshness, perception, and abundance. Just as the wine that He made tasted different than the first wine the people drank, so Jesus produces a life that is different than our original condition. There is a marked contrast between what we were, and what we are in Christ. We were enemies (Rom 5:9-10), alienated (Eph 4:18; Col 1:21), dead (Eph 2:1), servants of sin (Rom 6:17,20), and blind (John 3:3). Now we are reconciled (Rom 5:10; Col 1:21), one with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), alive unto God (Rom 6:11, servants of righteousness (Rom 6;18), and able to see (Acts 26:18).

Those effects are the "signs" that Jesus is who God has declared Him to be! They are as sure as the first miracle in Cana of Galilee when real water was turned into real wine.

HE MANIFESTED FORTH HIS GLORY. Other versions read, "revealed His glory,"^{NIV} "let His glory be seen openly,"^{BBE} "displayed His glory,"^{CSB} "showed forth His glory,"^{GENEVA} "He made His glory public there,"^{GWN} "displayed His glorious power,"^{WEYMOUTH} "showed forth his glow,"^{MONTGOMERY} and "He displayed His greatness and His power openly]."^{AMPLIFIED}

It is not made clear in the text how extensively Christ's glory was made known. It appears as though only the servants and the disciples knew what really happened. If it is true that the "ruler of the feast" did not know, and the bridegroom also did not know, then I do not know how anyone else could have known, unless the servants declared it.

"His glory" consisted of an overt demonstration of the power that was His. No one could have concluded by beholding Him that He possessed this kind of power, or ability. Thus, who He really was, was confirmed by what He did, turning water into wine. In our case, while the Gospel declares who Jesus is, the experience and effects of newness of life confirm the truth of the Gospel to us. That is, His "glory" is seen in our own change "from glory unto glory" (2 Cor 3:18). We are living in a time when profession is sufficient for the nominal "Christian." However, it is really not enough.

HIS DISCIPLES BELIEVED ON HIM. Other versions read, "believed in Him,"^{NKJV} "put their faith in Him,"^{NIV} "came to trust in Him,"^{CJB} "began to believe in Him,"^{NAB} "believed that He really was the Messiah,"^{LIVING} "believed on Him there,"^{MONTGOMERY} "His disciples believed in Him [adhered to, trusted in, and relied on Him]."^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the first time John states that someone believed on Christ. Prior to this He said of John's ministry, "that all men through him might believe" (John 1:7). He also wrote that God would give the power to become the sons of God, "even to them believe on His name" (John 1:12). None of the other Gospel writers report anyone believing on Christ at this point of His ministry. John writes later of some who "believed on Him" (John 4:39; 7:31,48; 8:30; 10:42; 11:45; 12:42).

I do not believe the prophets ever made a point of Messiah working miracles. They did say He would come "with a strong hand" (Isa 40:10), and that He would travel in "the greatness of His strength" (Isa 63:1). Further, John the Baptist, in His introduction of Jesus, made no reference to Him doing miracles, and the fact that John himself "did no miracle" (John 10:41) would seem

to further discourage thinking of Jesus in this manner. However, the matter of “*signs*” was introduced by Moses (Ex 4:8-9).

It is clear from the record that God did not want the people to think of the Messiah primarily as a wonder-worker. Also, there are varying degrees of faith ranging from weak (Rom 14:1) to strong (Rom 4:20). I gather that at this point, Jesus’ disciples (the five who were with Him) came to believe in the sense of trusting Him, and seeing Him more fully as the Son of God. After Jesus had risen, His disciples are said to have “*believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said*” (John 2:22). In this, as in our text, I gather that their faith expanded and became more firm. It does not mean they were unbelievers.