

10. Wedding and cleansing

December 6, 2015

I've officiated many weddings. As nice as any wedding is, it can be very stressful at the same time. Because there is not one bride who doesn't hope that everything is "PERFECT" on her wedding day. But every single wedding ceremony and reception has one uninvited guest – the Murphy's Law – "Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong."

The wedding that was recorded in chapter 2 of the Book of John also had this uninvited guest – they ran out of wine for the guests which was absolutely "NO, NO," for that culture. This morning we are going to be a group of unseen guests of this joyful wedding that almost was going to be a total embarrassment to the bride and groom's families.

Then, we will fast-forward the scene to the Passover at the temple in Jerusalem where Jesus was attending with His disciples. We'll also get to see Jesus in a very rare mode – angry. He was cleansing the temple by shooing the merchants out of the Outer Court of the temple.

A. JESUS AT THE WEDDING

John 2:1-2 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.

This wedding probably was happening on Wednesday. I know, I know what you are thinking right now – "How do you know that for sure, preacher?" You see, the typical ancient Jewish wedding should be done on Wednesday according to their tradition.

Many unbelievers and even some believers think that to be a real Christian, you have to be a boring, stoic, no fun-loving individual with the facial expression that you would have right after you gulp down a gallon of spoiled lemon juice. No sirree! If Jesus was that way, they would not invite "Jesus-the-party-poopers" to their wedding. I am a firm believer that Jesus was just fun to be around, don't you think? Well, if you are a legalist, you wouldn't like Jesus. The Pharisees didn't like Him, either.

The first event after the creation of the Universe was a wedding ceremony for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden according to Genesis 2. The first miracle by our Lord Jesus when He started His public ministry on earth was at a wedding in Cana. The first event in heaven after the fall of the demonic kingdom, Babylon on earth will be the marriage supper of the Lamb according to Revelation 19. That is for the groom Jesus and the bride which is the church of Jesus Christ. Don't tell me these are coincidences. Not!

B. WHATEVER HE SAYS TO YOU, DO IT

John 2:3-5 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." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

Running out of wine would be a major disaster in a Jewish wedding. It would be considered a total social disgrace that would be talked about by the entire town for a long time. This would haunt the newly married couple all their lives. Yes, the Murphy's Law kicked in there, too, by the providential will of God.

Why did Mary come to Jesus to tell Him that they ran out of wine? Did she expect Him to jump on His 4 wheel drive chariot and run down to a Jewish WalMart to buy some more wine? I believe that she was expecting Him to do something spectacular since she knew that He was the Son of God.

Please note Jesus' answer in v4

John 2:4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

First of all, He called His earthly mom, "woman". Some of you ladies might think that it is not nice of Him to address her that way. It was not an insult. If we can translate this in a proper sense, it would be, "Ma'am." He called her "Ma'am" instead of 'mother.' What He tried here was to let her know that their 'mother and the Son' relationship had changed to 'a sinner and the Savior' relationship.

I asked you to note the word 'hour'. Jesus lived on a 'heavenly timetable,' marked out for Him by the Father. The entire earthly life of Jesus had one purpose and one purpose only – to save the eternally dying human race. In other words, everything He did was leading up to the cross.

I love Mary's reply. It shows her complete reliance to her Savior – "Whatever He says to you, do it." Isn't it the command we should remember in our Christian life? We should do whatever He says to us with complete obedience.

C. ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY

John 2:6-12 Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. 7 Jesus said to them, "Fill the waterpots 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. 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!" 11 This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

Our Lord's first miracle was not a spectacular event that everybody witnessed. Mary, the disciples, and the servants knew what had happened. But nobody else at the feast had any idea that a miracle had taken place.

I am not a wine expert by any means. But if I understand the fermenting procedure correctly, it takes several days to make wine. But this 120 to 180 gallons of water turned into the highest quality wine in Cana between the waterpots to the master of the feast as the servants were carrying it. It is a supernatural and it is a miracle of God.

Some Bible teachers would go to great lengths to show that what Jesus made here was really grape juice, because they think it is like promoting drinking alcohol. I won't do that. Good wine is good wine, not good grape juice. It is true that wine in that day, as commonly served, had a much lower content of alcohol than modern wine. But it was still wine.

Then, some Christians insist that the Bible encourages them to drink alcohol by using this Scripture. My reply for those people is, "If you use Jesus as your example for drinking, why don't you follow His example in everything else like Luke 22:18?"

Luke 22:18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

This is the first miracle Jesus did which means no miracles before. All four Gospels connect and support each other. They don't contradict. I am sure that many of you have heard the gospel of Peter and the gospel of Thomas. They are known as apocryphal books. They are not canonized as a part of the NT. They have some fanciful stories of Jesus before He started His public ministry. God didn't include them in the Bible, so I don't care to read them.

D. THE RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

John 2:12-17 After this He went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days. 13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. 15 When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. 16 And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" 17 Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."

Passover – the greatest of all Jewish feasts. By Jewish law, every male within fifteen miles of Jerusalem was required to make the journey to the sacred city for the celebration. And since every Jew dreamed of celebrating at least one Passover in Jerusalem, many more pilgrims came from outside that radius, swelling the city with as many as 2.5 million visitors each year.

Opportunistic Jewish religious leaders were hearing a 'Kaching' sound every time a worshiper walked through one of the gates of Jerusalem – for themselves, that is, not for the traveling worshipers of God. More people meant more dollars for their pockets, in this case it would be shekels.

The temple priests had established a lucrative business of exchanging foreign money for temple currency, and also selling the animals needed for the sacrifices. No doubt, this "religious market" began as a convenience for the Jews who came long distances to worship in the temple. But pretty soon the "convenience" became a serious business, not a ministry.

Let me explain this in a little more detail: The rest of the country of Israel was in the Roman currency. But if you were a worshiper who came from Capernaum, you could not use the Roman currency in the temple because they didn't accept it. So you had to exchange yours to temple shekels at exorbitant rates.

You also had to bring animals for your sacrifices. But taking an animal for a ninety mile journey was not exactly easy. Even if you brought your own animal, a priest would find some flaws that they couldn't accept it. What could you do? You couldn't go back to your home to bring another animal. They probably would reject that one also. While you were in this dilemma, the priest says, "I am gonna make an offer that you cannot refuse." He said that they had pre-screened animals for your con-

venience. When you asked for a price of a lamb, you just about had a heart attack. It was ten times more than a fair market value of a lamb.

Without a whole lot of choice, you had to buy that lamb and paid exorbitant rates to exchange money. All of sudden your joyful heart of the worship of God was crushed by these money-hungry, greedy temple priests who were nothing more than Mafia henchmen of Caiaphas, the high priest. It was no wonder why the Lord Jesus was angry enough to overturn the money exchangers' tables, drove them with their animals out of the temple.

You may say, "Ah, that was then. We don't have that kind of things in the churches of America." Are you kidding me? Watch some Christian TV programs. It seems that the majority of them are begging for money with their own gimmicks that they learned from each other. It is OK to let the viewers or congregation know about their financial situations. But it is a completely different story when their manipulations start.

Many of the Faith Movement teachers beg and cry for money from their viewers. They say, "If you become a partner in ministry with this much money, we will send you your own personal vial of anointing oil so that you can put it on the place where you hurt and you will be healed." If these so-called teachers have that much faith in God, why don't they just have faith in Him to provide instead of using this kind of con-artist' gimmicks? I believe that as much as the Lord was angry at those greedy temple priests, He also is angry at these people who fleece the sheep for their financial gain.

People tend to think that the OT shows the wrath of God and the NT shows the grace of God. If you think that the comment is 100% correct, you have to throw out the Book of Revelation. From chapter 1 to 3, you find God's strong rebukes to the churches that do not hold His precepts and principles of the Bible. From chapter 6, there is a series of the wrath of God pouring down from heaven to earth for those who reject Jesus as their Savior and Lord. For these people, there is no escape hatch to avoid them.

When it comes to religious hypocrisy, Jesus is not gentle at all. He called them on the carpet and named them: "Serpents, brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs." It is His righteous indignation. We also should be angry at the injustice and religious hypocrisy rather than supporting them.

E. THIS TEMPLE, NOT THAT ONE

John 2:18-25 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" 19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" 21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body. 22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said. 23 Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. 24 But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, 25 and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

The Jews realized that Jesus was correct in what He said. Since they couldn't challenge Him in that, they sidestepped by changing the subject and demanded a sign.

What they really needed was salvation. The issue was not what they wanted to see, rather it was what they needed to believe because they had a shallow faith which was nothing at all. Being so spiritually blind that the Truth of God, Jesus was standing in front of them, yet they couldn't see Him.

For the Jews, the symbol of God's presence was the temple. What Jesus is saying is "I am the presence of God among you in the flesh. I am Immanuel – God with Us."

The words 'believed' in v23 and 'commit' in v24 are the same Greek word "pisteuo". These people believed in Jesus, but He did not believe in them. It was one thing to respond to a miracle, but quite something else to commit oneself to Jesus Christ and continue in His Word.

You see, the same miracles that attracted Nicodemus to Jesus caused some of the other religious leaders to want to kill Him. They even asserted that His miracles were done in the power of satan. Our Lord's miracles were evidences of His divinity. But they were also tests, exposing the hearts of the people.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) We should do whatever the Lord Jesus says to us with complete obedience.

2) After we come to the Lord Christ, we need to be cleansed by Him inside and outside. We need to stop allowing garbage coming into our hearts and minds and flush out all the bad things we've accumulated in the past with the Word of God and living by His way.