

WEDDING PICTURES

John 2:1-11

Turn to John 2...

I want you to picture a glass of wine. – Got it? – Now, what is the next thought that comes into your mind? – I know in this room there will be a wide variety of thoughts & opinions, ranging all the way from ‘Yum!’ to ‘Yuck!’ ☺...

But here’s a far more important question: When God sees a glass of wine, what does He think? – To answer that, we have to turn to His Word...

The first time wine is mentioned in the Bible, it’s when Noah gets drunk and shames himself. – And just a few chps later, we see Lot’s daughters getting him drunk to seduce him. – Yet wine is also used in Genesis for Melchizedek to bless Abram, and Isaac to bless Jacob. – This same liquid, serving as both a symbol of shame and of blessing.

And so begins this love-hate relationship in the Bible with wine, which was the main intoxicating drink at the time. – Thus you find that the three great monotheistic religions diverge on this matter – with Judaism tending to favour wine (calling it “the king of the beverages”), Islam forbidding it, and Christianity split down the middle (esp. when it comes to what you serve at Communion), with tee-totallers vs. users.

In Exodus 29 (v. 40), wine is accepted by God as a drink offering on the altar. – Yet in Lev. 10, it appears that the strange fire offered by Nadab & Abihu, which caused God to burn them alive, was linked to their drunkenness. – Because right after it happens, God instructs all priests to abstain from any alcohol while conducting worship. – Similiar to the Nazirite during his vow, Num. 6.

Proverbs also depicts the Bible’s love-hate relationship with wine: giving strong warnings & graphic descriptions of the abuses of wine (Prov. 20:1; 23:21,29; 31:4-5), yet also wine as a symbol of blessing and an anaesthetic (3:10; 9:5; 31:6-7; cf. Eccl. 10:19, etc.).

Coming to the NT, we see this same tension between the blessing and curse of wine. – John the Baptist is called to abstain from all alcohol, Lk. 1:15. – But Jesus’ first miracle is to turn water into wine!, as we’re about to see. –

Jesus’ uses new wineskins to illustrate the new kingdom and new joy He alone could supply, compared to the ‘old bags’, the old wineskins, of the Pharisees with their dead religion and empty rituals.

And Jesus’ eating with sinners earns Him the accusation, “a glutton and a drunkard” (Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34).

While it’s true that any good, God-given thing can be abused, Paul specifically mentions wine as a danger for men in the church. – Thus an elder (as example for the entire flock) must not be “addicted to wine” (1 Tim. 3:3).

Remember also that wine in biblical times was much more diluted than today, and was more common & necessary b/c clean water was hard to come by. – Undiluted wine is called “strong drink” in the Bible, and is especially warned against.

NB, back then they didn't have the distillation processes used today for highly alcoholic drinks. – So it took more wine to get drunk; yet of course, it still happened.

Having said all this, coming to John chp 2 confronts us with the perennial question: *Why would Jesus create wine for His very first miracle?* – Why? – Doesn't this seem odd, risky, unlikely?...

One writer called this a “profane” start to His ministry. – But who are we to advise Jesus on how to start His ministry?!

Another critic says it is “crude” to think Jesus literally filled up 6 huge stone waterpots of some 600 litres of wine for the wedding. But that's exactly what the text says He did!

Clearly Jesus is not ashamed of the positive significance of wine:

Ps. 104, a sign of our Creator's blessing upon the earth, is that He supplies “wine which makes man's heart glad, so that he may make his face glisten with oil”. –

~ The rabbis would say, “Without wine, there is no joy.”

In Isa. 55, wine depicts the free offer of God's grace & salvation (the gospel): “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters. ...come, buy wine & milk, without money and without cost...!”

Jesus would've been especially aware of how the OT prophets spoke of the wine Messiah would bring in His future, coming kingdom:

Isa. 25:6, “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.”

Jer. 31:12, “They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, and they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD, over the grain and the new wine and the oil....” – Similarly in Hos. 14.

Likewise, in Amos 9:13, “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; when the mountains will drip with sweet wine and all the hills will be dissolved. Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit....”

Think this might give us a clue as to why Jesus chose wine for His first miracle?...

Elsewhere in the Gospels, Jesus speaks about wine as part of the joy of His future kingdom: At the Last Supper, He said, “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until?...when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”

So we may have differing views today on whether or not it is wise & best to drink alcohol. – But on that day, in Jesus' future kingdom, with glorified bodies free from all sin, temptation & abuse, we will all be wine drinkers. – Together, we will take that cup from Christ's own hand, as a symbol of His lavish grace.

With this vital background in mind, let's listen now to John's eyewitness account of Jesus' first miracle:

Stand, Read & Pray: 1:14,16; 20:31...

Give title...

Here in Jesus' 1st miracle we find...

***SIX PORTRAITS of Christ's glory that we might see & believe & rejoice:**

1. vv. 1-2, Jesus the Guest – Honouring marriage with His presence

v. 1a – Probably the 3rd day after the last-mentioned day, 1:43-51, Jesus and Nathanael. (Not clear what day of the week would've been.)

v. 1b – It appears that Mary was widowed by now, with Joseph not in the picture. – If so, this would explain all the more why she depended heavily on her firstborn son, Jesus.

v. 2 – Probably a relative or close friend of Jesus' family getting married. – Mary is obviously very involved in the arrangements. – Jesus was there with at least His first 5 converts, those we met last week: John, Peter & Andrew, Philip & Nathanael.

+ Realise, Jewish weddings were a far cry from the short afternoon or evening ceremonies of our Western world today (express, take-away weddings). – Africans and other non-Western cultures can relate far easier to the biblical context here. – Jewish weddings could last a week or longer (cf. Judges 14:13, Samson's wedding).

It all began about a year earlier usually, when the couple was betrothed (legally engaged & bound). – Then the groom spent the next year preparing a place for his bride, proving that he would provide for her and take care of her. – When that was done, the invites went out for the big party/wedding.

As we know from Jesus' parables and other biblical imagery & references, there was the great torchlight procession where the groom & all his friends would fetch his bride from her home. – He would then take her to his place, along the lamp light (longest) paths of the village. –

Then they would be welcomed by the guests at the home of the groom where the party was held. – The couple would be decked out royally, seated under a canopy, presiding as king & queen over this great wedding feast. (And instead of a honeymoon, they had open house for a week!)

☒ We're back to 1:14, "the Word made flesh", the significance of the Incarnation for all of life. – The God-man, Jesus, was not ashamed to attend a wedding, and choose it for His very 1st of all His miracles. (And He brought a very generous gift to the new couple also 600 litres of the best wine!)

From the moment He arrived at this celebration, His presence preaches volumes to us about God's high regard for marriage. – By attending this wedding, Christ hallows & sanctifies marriage.

HOW crucial this is today, when marriage is under such attack. Daily, esp in States & in Europe, we read of further attacks on true marriage and further advances for gay pseudo-marriage.

~ MacArthur writes: *The fact that our Lord did His first miracle at a wedding emphasizes the sanctity of that covenant. Weddings matter. Public covenants matters. The ceremony matters; it always has, it always [will]. People are not married who just live together. People are married who make public covenant before God and [witnesses].*

Marriage is a condition of life designed by God, ordained by God, and authenticated in an open, public covenant. It is the highest and noblest and best of all human relationships. No other human relationship is as wonderful as marriage.

+ We must realize: Societies that honour marriage flourish; those that don't perish. – Study history, look at the rise & fall of civilizations, every time you will see this. –

We ignore it at our own peril. – How can society today be so blind?!

No wonder SA is in the trouble it is in, when marriage has been disregarded for so long, migrant work shattering marriages, divorce, cohabitation, pornography, etc., now gay marriage, etc.

As goes our view of marriage, so goes our nation, and so goes our church. – Jesus, though single, had the highest possible view of marriage. – He created & invented it. – And He blessed it.

+ How tragic that the only time most people today have heard the classic Book of Common Prayer cited at a wedding is when it is being mocked in some movie or show (led by some effeminate pastor). –

But listen to the rich, biblical & profound content of this traditional solemnising of marriage:

DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony;

which is an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church;

which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee; and is commended of Saint Paul to be honourable among all men:

and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding;

but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God; duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.... [and then it gives the clear, biblical purposes for marriage, which most today have long forgotten.]

☒ Young people, singles: You dare not have a wedding or a marriage where Christ could not be the guest & give His blessing. – How dreadful, and how disastrous, that would be! – *Any wedding that has no place for Jesus & His followers is a marriage that God will not bless.*

2. vv. 3-4, Jesus the Son – *On His Father's timetable*

v. 3 – Crisis #1 of many to come in Jesus' 3 years of earthly ministry. – The wine was...finished. – The ultimate faux pas! – The whole wedding was about to come crashing down in a colossal embarrassment! (And no shops nearby to run grab more!)

Soon they'd hear about it all the way up in Jerusalem, 'That fool in Cana who ran out of wine at his wedding?! What an idiot! How will this groom ever provide for his bride, he can't even plan for enough wine at their wedding?!"

+ NB, in Jewish culture at the time, the groom's family were responsible. – If they did not provide adequately for the festivities, the bride's family had grounds for a lawsuit! – They must've been outraged, fuming! (Wonder if the bride thought of calling it off or an annulment?!)

Mary finds out first about the shortage, probably b/c in a Jewish home, the women's quarters were usually nearest where the wine was stored. –

Her eyes go straight to her son, thinking He can rescue this debacle: (cf. Lk 1-2, her hopes, understanding of Him as Messiah, etc., 30 yrs earlier; was she also anxious for vindication, after living for 30 yrs under a cloud of suspicion over this so-called 'illegit' child?; and she had raised Him & seen His perfection, He'd never had a bad idea in His life, was always helpful, perfectly helpful!)

v. 4a – This is a normal, polite way of addressing women. – We'll see it four more times from Jesus just here in John. – Would be like 'M'am', or 'Madame' today.

BUT: This would not be normal for a son to address his mother this way. – E.g., 'Good morning, Madame. Madame, where's Dad? Ma'am, can I help with the dishes, etc.? – No. –

That's how you'd talk to your teacher or headmistress; not your Mom!

WHY then does Jesus speak this way?...

Answer: The next phrase is a clue. – It has to do with Jesus' divine mission, his God-given identity & unique calling. – He had just survived His Temptation in the wilderness, been baptised with divine approval voiced from Heaven, and called His first disciples. – I.e, He had embarked on His public ministry.

That would have to mean a change in His relationship with Mom. – His main identity was no longer, 'Mary's Son'. – Rather, it was 'Son of Man', and all the other 15 or so titles & roles we saw in chp. 1.

Jesus' gaze was now fixed on one thing: not to do His mother's will, but His Father's will. – All else would have to be subordinated to that sole mission. – The days of running errands for Mom were over. (Cf. Jn. 5:17-19; 8:28, etc.)

NIV & ESV are helpful here: "Why do you involve Me, what does this have to do with Me?"

+ This same phrase used 5 other times in NT, always of demons speaking to Jesus before He exorcises & casts them out. – I.e., 'Don't tell me what to do'.

So here with Jesus to His mother: 'Don't tell Me what to do in My earthly ministry.'

If Jesus was to perform a miracle, it would not come in response to Mom's requests. – It would come in obedience to His Father's plan. (Jesus' had given His parents a preview of this when He was 12 and was left in the temple, saying, "I must be about My Father's business."); also cf. Mk. 3, who is His mother & brothers?; cf. Luke 11:27, Jesus was speaking and one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed." He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it." He completely distances Himself from Mary. ; i.e., now it's faith over family & followers over family, grace over genes....)

v. 4c, My hour has not yet come = Jesus introduces for us here a concept we'll see often in John. – Jesus did not live by an earthly timetable, nor by any human agenda (whether that of parents, boss, rulers, etc.). – He operated only by a *heavenly timetable* – one that was all headed for & aimed at one climax: His cross & resurrection (cf. Jn. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23,27; 13:1; 17:1).

Then, at that time, He would manifest His glory for all to see. – But now was not yet the time for that kind of unveiling. (Cf. 7:6, Jesus' similar response to his brothers re: trip to Jerusalem)

I.e., 'It's not yet time for Me to act so publicly, or reveal Myself as Messiah so openly. I'm on God's timetable & schedule now, not yours, dear Mother.' (contra the more veiled, quiet miracle He's about to do, as we'll see).

But NB also: Jesus' words, "My hour is not yet come" may have stung, but they were also sweet. – They gave her hope: 'Well, then it *will* come!'

3. v. 5, Jesus the Lord – Responding to Mary's faith

Mary doesn't say to the servants, 'Fat chance, He's in a bad mood today. Good luck, guys.'

v. 5 – A woman of real pluck & chutzpah, undeterred & undiscouraged!

Unlike us: I know I give up so easily if my prayers are not answered!...

+ Reminds you of the Canaanite woman in Mk 7 who is rebuffed by Jesus, but she replies by saying that 'even the dogs' get the crumbs. – Or the four friends who leap over every hurdle and make a hole in the roof to get the paralytic to Jesus. –

Or the bleeding woman who fights through the crowds just to get a touch of Christ's garment. – Or Jacob wrestling a blessing from God's angel at Peniel by the river. – Or Moses pleading for God's presence before they go any further.

What do all these stories have in common? – God answered every one of these persistent believers.

☒ God loves to respond to such a determined faith. – ‘Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock & the door shall be opened.’ (Matt. 7, incl. v. 11, “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”; cf. Jam. 1:17)...

☒ NB also, in contrast to Roman Catholic teaching: Mary doesn't point us to herself. – She points us away from herself, to Christ.

NB, when Mary came to Jesus as family, He refused. – When she came as a believer, He listened. – When she came appealing to natural ties, He resisted. – When she came by faith, He responded.

When she came to Jesus as her son, He said ‘no’. – When she came to Him as her Lord, He said ‘yes’.

☒ Are you, like Mary, perfectly content to leave the matter in Jesus' hands? – Are you, like Mary, eagerly expectant & confident of what your Lord can do?! (Php. 4:19!)...

☒ Speaking of Jesus as “Lord”, jump down to v. 7: We must also learn from these anonymous, no-name servants at this wedding:

This is how we respond if Jesus is our Lord! – These servants are great examples for us of Christian obedience. – Imagine how they must've wondered, ‘What in the world is He thinking?!’ – Yet they obeyed.

Duty is ours; outcomes are His. – Our part is to obey; God's part is to work the miracle....

4. v. 6, Jesus the Purifier – *Bringing true cleansing & joy*

We'll also see this purification theme again next week, as Jesus cleanses the temple...

v. 6 – I love these little eyewitness details that only John could've provided: Not 5, not 7; exactly 6 stone waterpots.

BUT what kind of purification were these big pots for? – At an event like this, it seems most likely that these would provide water for the ritual hand-washings. – This is how much water it would take to get 150 or so people's hands ceremonially clean. – Remember, this was a BIG deal to the Jews at this time!

This was what would later get Jesus in ‘hot water’ with the Pharisees: Mark 7, ALL b/c Jesus & His disciples didn't follow all the Pharisees' manmade traditions & laws that had been piled up on top of Scripture:

Mark 7:3-4, “For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.”

YET there was NO biblical basis for this. – It came only from the Pharisees’ zeal for legalism and self-righteousness.

+ Some said that the quickest way to recognise a Jew in public was by their hand-washing rituals. – Rabbinic law said that to neglect ceremonial hand-washing would lead to either excommunication or poverty. – The bread eaten by unclean hands was believed to become filth in a person’s mouth.

One story is told about a rabbi imprisoned under the Romans who nearly died because he used up his ration of drinking water for his ritual washings.

Well, Christ is about to show us what He thinks about such legalistic, manmade traditions that weighed people down & burdened them and stole their joy. –

He’s about to ‘defile’ these ceremonial pots with wine for the party – not kosher at all! – But Jesus’ mission is more important than any man-made rituals!

The pots were for external washings; Christ brings internal cleaning & lasting joy. – Christ brings fullness for emptiness, joy for disappointment, reality for ritual!

Even the OT Law itself, Jesus came to fulfil it and to bring in a whole new era & age.

As we learned back in chp. 1: 1:16, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realised through Jesus Christ.” (cf. Heb. 9:12; 10:10, ultimate cleansing, lasting purity!; cf. 1 Jn. 1:7,9, etc.; no ritual any more for cleansing; only way to be clean before God, Rev. 7:14, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Don’t turn to ritual, turn to Jesus!...)

☒ Are you washed in the Blood? (as we’ll celebrate tonight at Lord’s Table)...

[☒ Do you see how Christ’s presence transforms everything! – from water of Judaism to wine of Christianity, from water of Christlessness to wine of richness & fullness of eternal life in Christ, from water of the law into the wine of the gospel...]

5. vv. 7-10, Jesus the Groom – *Providing & satisfying His people*

+ When Jesus wanted to depict for us the joy of knowing & following Him, did He refer to a funeral, or a wedding? – Mark 2, ‘Are you an old bag, or a new wineskin?’ – Unlike John the Baptist & His disciples, preparing for the Bridegroom, austere & severe... But now, the Bridegroom had come, let the celebration begin!

Back to our story: Jesus now takes over. – Perhaps quietly, and still behind the scenes. – But nonetheless, He’s doing what the groom would normally do, providing for the occasion.

v. 7 – NB the detail, “up to the brim”. – God never does anything halfway. –

And this would remove all doubt about the upcoming miracle. – No room was left in those jars to add anything else. – It was 110% water! –

+ Reminds me of when Jesus fed the 5,000, and there were 12 baskets leftover (or w/the 4,000, 7 baskets leftover)....

+ What a picture this was about to be of 1:16 in action, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace” upon grace upon grace! – Eph. 3:20, “Above & beyond all we could ask or think, according to His power....”

v. 8 – The servants must’ve noticed already that something very strange was going on in those pots – as they took the first glass to the headwaiter.

v. 9 – Mr. “Headwaiter” = Chief caterer, venue host or manager. – Imagine how distressed he was about this train-wreck of a wedding!

v. 10 – Did the groom ever even know what happened? – Doesn’t look like it. – Oblivious to a crisis back in the kitchen. – Oblivious to the glory of God’s Son who solved it.

NB, you do realise, don’t you, that the headwaiter’s words to the groom here are simply not true?!: v. 10d, “you have kept the good wine until now”. –

‘No, sir, you haven’t. You let it run out. You fell short. You are a mere creature, you will disappoint people, you cannot satisfy them forever. Jesus did this, not you.’

‘Only Jesus supplies perfectly, and satisfies forever. Only Jesus makes no mistakes, never runs short, and never disappoints. Jesus “kept the good wine until now”, saving the best for last.’

☒ I.e., Jesus is the perfect Groom. – All others will fail. – Sound familiar? – Is this not the theme of the whole Bible, and the theme of marriage: “This mystery is great, but I am speaking of Christ and the church. ...Husbands, love your wives as?...Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her.” – Jesus is the perfect Groom.

He alone can meet our every need. – He alone can satisfy. – He was Husband to Israel in the OT. – He is Husband to His Church today. – He clothes us with His own righteousness (Isa. 61:10), in exchange for our filthy wrags of sin.

And when He returns one day, Rev. 19 tells us we will have a wedding feast like never before – “the marriage supper of the Lamb”!...

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready.”

Have YOU made yourself ready? – Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

☒ I need to inform you of something unpleasant about Jesus 1st miracle and that beautiful wedding scene in Cana: That new wine Jesus made eventually ran out. – That marriage supper eventually came to an end, and everybody had to go home, and back to work, and somebody had to clean up the huge mess after the party....

But one day in Heaven, the celebration will be unending. – Joy unceasing. – “Pleasures forevermore” at His right hand (Ps. 16). – Unlimited supply of Jesus’ new wine in His presence, in perfect holiness.

☒Lesson, again from v. 10d: Christ loves to save the best for last. (Contra the world, which wants the best things first, instant gratification, not delayed gratification, worships youth, dreads old age, etc.; world’s ‘diminishing returns’ vs. Jesus’ increasing returns!); God’s whole design for history, “in the fullness of time”, the “last days”, etc.:

First the cross, then the crown. – First the groaning, then the glory...

At Christ’s 2nd Coming, then more than ever, we will say, ‘Lord, indeed, You have truly saved the best for last!’

And in Heaven, we’ll say the same! (and, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard....’)

~ Michael Card, ‘The Wedding Song’
John 2:1-11 & John 3:28-29

Chorus
Lord of light, oh, come to this wedding
Take the doubt and darkness away
Turn the water of lifeless living
To the wine of gladness we pray

Mother Mary's gently requesting
That you might do whatever you can
Though she may be impatient she loves
you
And so she asks what she can't

understand

Chorus

So amidst the laughter and feasting
There sits Jesus full with the fun
He has made them wine because He is
longing
For a wedding that's yet to come

6. v. 11, Jesus is God

This miracle is so understated! – Do you realise what it takes to make wine?!...

+ I recall in 1998, preparing to move here, reading James Michener’s *The Covenant*. – All that it took to cultivate the great vineyards of the Cape – all the effort, the generations, the failed crops, etc.!...

NB, it was 4 years from when van Riebeck received the first shipment of vine cuttings from Holland before he had wine to drink.

Yet even then it was poor quality, el-cheapo, until van der Stel arrived 30 yrs. later!

But for Jesus, no problem! – No soil, no water, no sunlight needed. No seeds, no vine, no grapes! – No crushing, straining, aging, etc.!

Water went in, wine came out – bingo, like that!

NB, for this miracle, NOT even a touch or word from Jesus. – No command, no clay, no spit, no speaking at all.

Purely a wish, a thought, a mere act of His will, and it happened! (No other prophet or apostle in Bible ever worked a miracle in this way!)

Please understand: There is no human way to explain Jesus. He had to be God. – HOW did He create wine out of thin air, or plain water? – Answer: John 1:1-4a, 14, 18...

~ “The all-creating Word cannot be held ransom by the constraints of His own creation. ‘The modest water saw its God and blushed.’ [turned red, into wine!]”

...the boundless energy of the Father is available to the Son, not for arbitrary demonstrations of power, but for ‘signs’ which reveal the Son’s true glory.” (Milne)

And so we read:

v. 11a, “the beginning, the first” – Proving that those apocryphal stories are false, about baby Jesus’ doing miracles (turning clay pigeons into living birds, etc.).

For 30 years, Jesus had waited. – Imagine, what self-restraint, what self-emptying, what humility (Php. 2). – Not once grabbing on to His deity and sorting things out with a miracle. – Always hiding His glory, veiled, waiting, until this day, this moment.

At “Cana of Galilee”, of all places. – Out of the way, off the beaten path, another Bethlehem, another Nazareth, another shockingly ordinary, common, unimpressive spot.

~ Jesus’ glory “was not revealed at the imperial palace in Rome. Or at Herod’s temple in Jerusalem. Or at the colonnaded Acropolis in Athens. But *here*, in an impoverished village of Cana, nestled away in an obscure corner of Galilee.”

v. 11a, “signs” – NB, John never uses the favourite word in the other Gospels, “miracles”, ‘mighty deeds, wonders, great works’, etc. – Nope, not for John. – Every miracle of Jesus is a “sign” – that’s John greatest concern. – Not the miracle itself, but the reality behind it, the greater truth to which it points.

For John, these miraculous signs answer one great question, “Who is Jesus?” – They illustrate one or more of His titles seen in chp. 1 (esp. vv. 1-18; nb here, ‘manifested His OWN glory’)!...

~ “As the first ray of the morning reveals the glorious light which is soon to flood heaven and earth, so the first miracle of Jesus revealed the glory of Him who had come to subdue all things unto Himself.” (G. T. Purves.)

v. 11c – NB, does NOT say that “the servants” (vv. 5ff) believed in Him. – NB!!¹, it was not the miracle that manifest Jesus’ glory. – The servants saw the sign, but not the glory. – They saw the signboard, but never reached the destination to which it was pointing. –

ONLY “the disciples” saw what the sign was showing – Jesus’ glory, “the glory as of the Only Begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). – Only the eyes of faith benefit from a miracle. – It’s value is lost on all others.

☒ NB, the disciples had believed already, but here their faith grows & vision improves of Christ – e.g., 1:50, Nathanael “believes”; yet further here, 2:11, fixes his faith firmer on Christ – so it is for us all, “from faith to faith”....

☒ Have you seen it, His glory? If not, what do you do with this Jesus? (liar, lunatic, etc.)....

+ Dr. & Mrs. Mack’s testimonies last night – when Christ went from a name in history, to a living “reality” for them – that’s conversion – that’s v. 11!...

+ Drunken coal miner got saved & became vocal witness for Christ. One of his friends tried to trap him by asking, ‘Do you believe that Jesus turned water into wine?’ – He answered, ‘I certainly do! In my home, He has turned wine into furniture, decent clothes, and food for my children!’....

CONCL. – Restate 6 portraits & their purpose...

PRAY

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. How should the Christian approach drinking wine or any other grey area that Scripture does not explicitly forbid? Look at 1 Cor. 10:23-11:1 and work through these four key questions we must always ask with any grey area (the ‘four Es’):
 - a. Will this EDIFY others?
 - b. Can I ENJOY this as God’s creation (thankfully with a good conscience)?
 - c. Will this EVANGELISE the lost?
 - d. Will this EXALT God?
2. Which of these 6 pictures of Jesus most impacted you?
3. How does Christ’s presence at a wedding sanctify and sober us in our view of marriage (and weddings)?
4. Explain v. 4, Jesus reaction to Mary? Explain v. 5, how can we learn from Mary’s persistent faith?
5. (v. 6) How is it that Jesus and the New Covenant purify and wash us internally in ways that the Old Covenant (and all legalism & externalism) can never do?
6. What does it mean to your daily walk to know Christ as your perfect Groom, Husband, Provider & Satisfier?
7. Why does John call this miracle a “sign”? What is this sign pointing to? Do you see it, do you see Him, do you believe? Even as a believer, how is your faith strengthened by this first miracle of Jesus? And how can you use this story evangelistically with the lost?