

Comments on John 2

This chapter expounds upon the replacement theme introduced in the last verse of the previous chapter. Two examples from Jesus' early ministry are put forward illustrating this theme: the wedding feast of Cana (v. 1-11), and the purging of the Temple (v. 13-22). Both examples employed by John address two of the major Messianic themes: the Wedding Feast, and the Messianic Temple. The chapter then closes with a segue setting the stage for the next chapter (v. 23-25).

¹And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: ²And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. ³And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. ⁴Jesus saith unto her, woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. ⁵His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. ⁶And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. ⁷Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. ⁹When 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, ¹⁰And 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. ¹¹This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

v1-11. John weaves a mosaic of Messianic symbols together in this account. John recognizes the symbolic aspects of the events and carefully presents them to the exclusion of extraneous material.

The story employs classic Johannine irony. Those attending the feast and the governor of the feast are ignorant of the source of the better final wine, while the servants are witting.

v1-2 The stage is set with the events surrounding a wedding. In the Hebrew Bible, weddings are repeatedly used as a messianic symbol, cp. Isa. 54:4-8, Isa. 62:4-5, Ezekiel 16, Hosea 1-4, as well as Matt. 22:13, Matt. 24:14, Rev. 19:9. John uses this to establish the backdrop to the symbolism at work.

v3-7 The lack of wine at the marriage is fortuitous as the abundant providence of wine is a messianic attribute, cp. Amos 9:13-14, Hosea 14:7, Jer. 31:12, Isa. 25:6, Isa. 55:1-3.

According to the Anchor Bible (AB) the tradition at that time was guests were to provide the wine. That Mary asked Jesus to have wine was probably no big deal as he was a guest.

v3 The lack of wine among the Jews could easily be interpreted as them being a barren vine, cp. Isa. 5:1-7, John 15:1-8.

v4 The IV/JST emends this verse to:

Jesus said unto her, Woman, what wilt thou have me to do for thee? that will I do; for mine hour is not yet come.

This softens a potentially harsh reading of Jesus' response to his mother's request.

v5 The servants are present and witness the miracle, the guests and the headwaiter of the feast are not involved and do not witness the miracle. John's intent is to present this as symbolic of the people in general.

v6 The purifying after the manner of the Jews is identified and shown to be superseded by the messianic wine. The Law of Moses purification rituals are set aside in favor of the messianic gospel.

Six water pots of stone at two or three firkins apiece yields approximately 120 gallons of wine.

v8 The servant's obedience results in their witnessing the miracle and recognizing the true source of the wine.

v9-10 The ruler of the feast is ignorant of the source of this superior wine and calls the bridegroom, who did not produce the wine at all. The ruler is symbolic of the Pharisees and the failure to recognize and identify the true source of the wine is indicative of their ignorance of the gospel, their misidentification of the true "bridegroom".

v9 This verse necessarily excludes Jesus as the bridegroom at this wedding. Some speculate this was Jesus' wedding as a

result of Mary's prominent place at the wedding. But, the fact that the ruler of the feast addresses the bridegroom, who is not Jesus, shows that this speculation is incorrect.

v10 Introduces a first-last, last-first theme with the wine, and it also shows Jesus' willingness to diverge from man's uninspired traditions.

¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

v12 Note how little text John dedicates to matter of fact issues. Indicative of his austerity in presenting these facts that are irrelevant in favor of presenting gospel topics. This informs the reader that those details given are deliberately included and have meaning attached to them.

¹³ And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: ¹⁵ And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; ¹⁶ And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. ¹⁷ And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. ¹⁸ Then answered the Jews and said unto him, what sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? ¹⁹ Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. ²⁰ Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? ²¹ But he spake of the temple of his body. ²² When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

v13-22 The literal temple, the messianic temple (1:51, Ezek. 40-47), and the perfected temple (i.e. the resurrection) are all presented. The Passover theme is presented as symbolic of Jesus purging the leaven (their merchandise) of the Pharisees from his house (the literal temple).

v15 The temple guard would not allow sticks or weapons into the temple precinct (per AB), hence the use of a scourge of cords which was possibly even smuggled in as a belt or under robes.

v16 As Jesus is the Lord of the Hebrew Bible, this is his temple, yet he defers to His Father.

v17 "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up", a quotation of Ps. 69:9, intended to invoke the general meaning of that psalm.

v18 While the other gospel writers use specific titles of "chief priests" and "pharisees", John employs a more general term of "the Jews". It is likely his usage of this term is based on Isaiah's coinage and application of the term.

v19 Jesus challenges the Pharisees to destroy his temple. From v. 21-22 we know that Jesus was referring to the resurrection. But, here the Pharisees are favoring a literal interpretation. They are likely referring to the messianic temple spoken of by Ezekiel. Jesus references a miraculous temple built in three days, and the Jews recognized that Jesus had been making a lot of authority claims. The Jews also badger Jesus over this claim repeatedly later on as proof that he is not the Messiah (cf. Mark 14:58-61, Matt. 26:61, Matt. 27:41, Acts 6:14). Simply mocking Jesus on this point would have no staying power, but connecting it with the Ezekiel prophecy would be fuel for them against Jesus' claim to be the Messiah, and it would be an observable one that provided physical evidence against him. That Jesus cited "three days" need not be taken literally by the Pharisees as that was a common Semitism for "a short time", cf. Hosea 6:2, Luke 13:32.

v20 The Pharisees are obviously favoring a physical literal interpretation.

v21-22 John presents the correct interpretation of what Jesus says, but this does not preclude the Pharisees' misinterpretation of Jesus referring to Ezekiel's messianic temple.

²³ Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, ²⁵ And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

v23-25 presents a segue into the next chapter. Jesus cultivates followers as a result of miracles, but he refuses to commit himself to them because he knows they are only transiently

impressed by miracles. Notice the chapter closes with "he knew what was in man" and the next chapter starts with a reference to Nicodemus that says "There was a man...". John draws a connection between the men referred to in v. 23-25 and Nicodemus.

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