

## Gospel of John Chapter 2 - John Karmelich

I seem to have developed a habit of opening these lessons pondering theological questions. I'll keep it going in this lesson: When we need to make a big decision, do we just make it and see what happens or should we wait for God to intervene? Part of my daily routine is to pray for wisdom and then make the best decision with the information at hand. I view "God as God." He can jump in my life whenever or however He wants. I don't wait for miracles. If He chooses to work in a spectacular way, again it's His business. I bring this up because we'll see two obvious ways God worked through Jesus in this chapter. One is obvious as it's stated as a miracle and the other is logical if one thinks about what happens in the second story here. I kept pondering, "These are nice stories and I already believe Jesus is God, so what has this got to do with my life now?" In other words, how do I apply it? It comes back to my question of how much "space" we should give God to work in a situation before we take action! As most of us know, most situations in life require trial and error. God often does His best work when we run out of options. That's so God alone gets all the credit. Right now, I'm dealing with a situation like that. All I can do is work my options and, again, if God wants to step in, it's His business and not mine.

That leads back to these stories. We get two stories of Jesus working in ways (miracles) that none of us could do without God's intervening. Yes, they teach us about His power and who Jesus is. Yes we get lessons on understanding why Jesus came to earth in these stories. The personal application is learning about when God "jumps in the picture" and why. Obviously, I don't see Jesus as a genie whose job is to grant my every wish! Our job is to glorify God, and not vice versa! Yet, there are a few things we can learn from these stories that apply to how and why God intervenes in our lives! That's the crux of what I want to get to in this study. With that said, let's begin:

The chapter opens with the famous story of Jesus changing water to wine. Many people who aren't that familiar with the Bible like this story because they see Jesus as someone who kept the party going! For those of us who take the Bible seriously there's far more to this story. The first thing to realize is in that culture water and wine were mixed for a number of reasons. The water had elements that can make one sick, and mixing it with wine takes away the risk. In that Jewish culture to drink wine was a part of the culture but it's not "biblical" to be drunk. Wedding parties were the main social event in that culture as it was common to have a three-day (or more) wedding feast. The groom was in charge of the food and supplies. To run out of wine could ruin a person's reputation especially if one was part of a small-town culture, like the guests in this wedding.

It opens by saying it was the "third day". John the Gospel writer was one of the wedding guests, so I'm sure he had recall of this event. The "third day" ties to the previous chapter where Jesus dealt with John the Baptist, and some of John's disciples became Jesus' disciples, including John the author. The place where those disciples met Jesus was in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee and the town of Cana. This is a small-town affair, so everyone there was invited. Neither the bride nor the groom are mentioned here in the story, I know people who read their Bible "mystically," and see a connection between the joy of a wedding party and Jesus turning water into wine on the "third day"! I have no idea if that was John's intent, and we'll have to ask him one day! Among the guests were Jesus, his half-brothers and sisters. I should mention that after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph went on to have six more children. Joseph isn't mentioned, and most scholars argue that he had died by this point in Jesus' life. Apparently, Mary had some role in the wedding preparation, and the first person she turned to for help was Jesus! A clue as to how God wants us to go through life!

I thought about Jesus growing up. You have to figure every time there was a problem, Mary would be turning to Jesus to ask what to do! After all Mary knew from birth Jesus is the Messiah or "The Christ" as we say today. Anyway, when Mary asked Jesus, He gave a mild rebuke as to imply it was not time for Him to die for our sins, so He can't give them peace just yet. So if Jesus can't do that yet, why did He do this miracle of having six water pots filled to the brim with water and then they instantly became wine without so much as a comment from Jesus about it? It goes back to my point that God is God, so He can step in whenever and wherever He wants. I'm sure word spread that this miracle occurred, and John even said this was Jesus' first public miracle. So why here and now? Jesus wanted to show proof to his servants (disciples) of who He was. It doesn't mean if we're at a party, pray for more alcohol if it runs out! Miracles are about glorying God, not us. I'll talk a little more about Jesus "stepping in" after the next story.

Note for the second story is that Jerusalem is a small city that swells in growth for major holidays. The religious leaders take advantage of this and sell "officially approved lambs" to tourists. History tells us that the top priests at that time were corrupt. Anyway, Jesus got there and said in effect, "Why are you ripping everyone off? This makes serving God look bad, so this has to stop now!" Jesus makes a whip out of the wire used to hold the sheep in a pen and drove away the "sellers". I consider that a miracle as we don't read of anyone getting killed, seriously hurt, or even Jesus arrested or held down by a big guy until the police showed up! It's a miracle in that God worked how He wanted to work to get the results He wanted.

When Jesus was asked why He destroyed the "official lamb" business, He said, "Destroy My body and God will resurrect it." The Jewish leaders thought He was referring to the Temple structure, but, as we know, Jesus was referring to Himself. Why did Jesus refer to His body as a temple? It's because Jesus will always be fully human and fully God. Therefore, to destroy His body is also destroying what He's representing: The fact that Jesus is fully human and fully God!

Gee John, this is all neat stuff, and most of us know these stories well. How does this affect how we're to make decisions as a believer? First, remember that our goal is to glorify God and not vice versa. To ask for water to become wine glorifies the party, not Jesus. Charging "Disneyland Prices" for people to honor God doesn't exactly honor Him. (Couldn't resist sneaking that reference here!) When I am in a situation where help is needed, hopefully our first thought is "What can we do to honor God," or "What can be done as a group to honor Him"? Do I have a problem just talking about stuff with friends? Of course not. All I am saying is I'd never do anything to dishonor God no matter the situation. Do I mess up? Of course! Still, I realize God created me to honor Him and not vice-versa. Again if He chooses to intervene that's His business. Every morning I pray for wisdom and go through my day making the best decisions I can knowing that God is part of my life. If He chooses to interfere, He will!

John wrote this Gospel to prove Jesus is God. The fact that He took command in both situations is His way to show He's in charge, deal with it! The same idea applies to our lives as well. Jesus has the right to step in in any situation at any time He wants to. He created it and He can change a situation any time He feels like it. In that sense we are always watching for God to work while we use our lives to honor Him with it! Hope that makes sense.

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John