

John 2

Written by K B Napier
Tuesday, 06 January 2015 13:13

We come to the very first miracle performed by Jesus. Though it might seem too simple to be a miracle, its components are remarkable, making it an unmistakably divine activity that could never have been brought about by any other means.

The miracles of Jesus, and subsequently of the Apostles, are essential to our faith in these days, for without them there would be no real foundation for our trust in God. It is a fact that our faith is in things not seen – but faith itself has to have a real-life basis. Put it this way - if there had been no miracles, Christians would not really be able to proclaim the one true God with absolute confidence. This is because we must have rock-solid reasons to say that we believe in the Lord and that His Saviour is the only way to salvation. And it starts with the absolute miracle of Creation.

This is why Jesus performed miracles and why He gave various gifts to the twelve. These amazing miraculous incidents proved the divine source of salvation and of God's power. Without them our claims would be called simply another philosophy. It is the direct power of God that separates genuine faith from the humanistic 'faith' found in fake religions and cults. Many Christians misunderstand this concrete foundation for our faith, and rely on mere words (which have no power).

Verses 1&2

1.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2.

And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

... 'the third day' after what? It was the third day after Jesus gained His first disciples. He, His mother Mary, and the disciples (bearing in mind there were only a few at this time), were invited to a marriage in Cana ('place of reeds': From the Hebrew, Qanah), which was about five miles from Nazareth.

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The word 'mother' in this context is interesting, because it can be applied to someone who takes the place of a mother. What was the true relationship of Mary to Jesus? He spoke of her as His mother, but her role and title were limited. This is because, in the strict sense, she only carried Jesus in the womb. Her DNA etc., did not contribute to His person, and neither did Joseph's. Thus, Mary was a chosen vessel and not the natural mother (because nothing happened between Mary and Joseph until they married). Yet, she received proper respect from Jesus for her God-given role.

Verses 3-5

1.

And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

2.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

3.

His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

As a child do you remember those embarrassing moments when your mother boasted to visitors of your various talents? 'Go on, play the piano' or 'show them your drawings', and so on. Of course, you rarely obliged, but mothers like to push their children forward! Was this idea behind Mary's seemingly cavalier attitude in this text? She might have been Jesus' earthly mother, but should she have put Him forward like this? Many Christians see Jesus' speech as a rebuke. But, was it?

The wedding party ran out of wine. Usually (even today) the best wine was given first and, as those who attended became rather intoxicated, cheaper wine followed! Mary openly implied that Jesus could provide a miracle, when Jesus Himself was not ready to begin His ministry at that precise time.

Note: The wine, *oinos* (a general word for wine), spoken of was alcoholic. This is why wine skins burst (due to fermentation. e.g. Matthew 9:17). There can be several meanings for 'wine',

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but in this text it is obviously referring to alcoholic wine as a usual wedding feast beverage. Some might think Jesus would have had nothing to do with the wine. But, that would be an error, for Jesus never rebuked use of wine, only the abuse of it (drunkenness). We need not doubt that He drank alcoholic wine with meals, or at Passover. The ban on wine in many Christian circles is more to do with fear of sinning than with proper biblical exegesis.

Did Jesus admonish His mother for implying He would help the situation? There are times when we must be firm with those who wish us to take a path we do not want to take. How many Christians do what they do just to please others, or to appear to be compliant, whilst secretly hating their choice of action or words? When Mary told Him the wine was finished, it was obvious what she wanted Him to do.

Jesus replied “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” Woman, *gynē*, seems to be an odd word to use by a son. Why not call her “mother”? Jesus spoke to her almost in the second person, ‘woman’ being a word that can be used of any female of any age. Any concern is misplaced, however, for the word is used in a loving way. The phrase used by Jesus was normal. It was not a rebuke at all. In its strictest sense the query put forward by Jesus was “What to Me and to thee?” this is an old way of saying (I give a loose paraphrase!) that neither Mary nor Jesus had an obligation to perform a miracle, but love would fill the need (Thayer).

If anything, Jesus was pleased to see Mary’s faith. Yet, the next part of His statement is almost mysterious in relation to the wedding itself: “mine hour is not yet come”. His ‘hour’ is obvious to us today – He referred to the time for Him to begin His ministry. If Jesus had indeed rebuked His mother, she would not have said what she said next – she told the servants attending to the feast to do whatever Jesus told them to do. And, Jesus would never have performed the miracle if it was not part of His will.

Verses 6-8

1.

And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

2.

Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

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3.

And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

There were six waterpots or jars, made of stone. In Roman times such a large container was called an amphora (they can now be viewed in museums). Each contained just less than nine gallons, or about 40 litres, each (as the word *metrētēs* implies). In other words each amphora was large (about 3 feet - just over a metre - or more tall), probably pointed at its bottom end and on a metal stand to keep it upright. These pots were not themselves containers for wine, but were used for washing hands etc., according to Jewish cleansing and hygiene demands.

Jesus commanded the servants to make sure each pot was filled with water. They did so, right up to the top. Now perhaps you have never noticed the speed with which the miracle occurred? As soon as the servants had filled the pots, Jesus told them to draw a sample of the contents out, and to take it to the "governor of the feast" (toastmaster: he would have been one of the guests chosen by lot to control the drinking of the wine, and the set-up of the tables, the order of food courses, etc. He also had the job of tasting both wine and food before anything was served). The servants obeyed Jesus and took the wine sample to the governor, for his approval.

Some unintelligent critics have said that it was all a trick; that Jesus must have 'planted' something in the pots that would have reacted to the water and changed it into wine. What nonsense! There were no such substances available in that century! (See my book on miracles for a more detailed rebuttal). The miracle was instant... the water was poured in, and Jesus IMMEDIATELY commanded that a sample be drawn out; the sample was wine! This seemingly minor miracle had all the hallmarks of amazing divine intervention that ignored the laws of nature, so it was just as incredible as any other miracle from God.

Verses 9&10

1.

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,

2.

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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.

If this miracle was a magic trick, then I am sure that every vineyard owner in the world would love to know the secret! Just fill containers with water and throw in a secret ingredient – a recipe for making a fortune! But, no, it was a genuine miracle... an impossibility except to God!

The governor of the feast did not know where the wine came from but he was extremely pleased and a little perplexed. He called to the bridegroom and queried why he had kept the best wine until last, when it was customary to give the best wine first, and to give cheaper wine as the day progressed, when the “men have well drunk” (too inebriated to notice the difference!). So, Jesus produced the best wine the governor had tasted. This should not surprise us, because God does not offer us second-rate goods for our lives!

Verses 11&12

1.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

2.

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

This was the “beginning of miracles” done by Jesus. What a magnificent phrase! The miracles began and did not stop, until Jesus’ time on this earth was completed. The Cana miracle caused His new disciples to believe. They believed before, but this open miracle was so obviously divine, their hearts fused with His mind, and their future was sealed.

The miracles made clear His power and glory, *phaneroō*. It was a phenomenal proof of His divinity and glory, His *doxa*, which can

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here be interpreted as His splendour, magnificence, preeminence and majesty. The disciples were truly convinced that Jesus was the greatest human being that ever lived, the Messiah. But, as we read in other New Testament texts, it seems that all the disciples lacked the immovable knowledge that He was God. Powerful, yes. Miracle-making? Yes.

From Cana He walked to Capernaum ('village of comfort'), a city on the shores of western Galilee close to where the Jordan enters the Sea. Mary and the few disciples accompanied Him there, but they only stayed a few days, no doubt because Jesus had to begin what were to be the most frenetic three years of His life.

Verses 13-17

1.

And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem,

2.

And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:

3.

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;

4.

And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise.

5.

And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

Would you allow local thieves, robbers and thugs to enter your home and stay? No, you would

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call police or throw them out. And this is what happened next! Jesus walked to Jerusalem. This was no mean feat. The distance by modern roads is 195 kms. The time taken by Jesus would have been gruelling, either along the crests of the mountains or along the shores of Galilee.

When He entered the Temple compounds He was furious. Merchants were buying and selling, and there were money-changers' tables – not the most worthy of merchants, for they regularly cheated on their gold and silver coins. Jesus quickly made a whip of cords and drove out the merchants and animals, before overthrowing the money tables, scattering the ill-gotten gains everywhere. He told the merchants not to use His Father's house like a shop. Is this exactly what our modern churches are like? Do they not hold a variety of money-making schemes such as Christmas Fayres, Easter parades, and other things?

Though they were only with Him a short time, the Holy Spirit revealed to the disciples the truth of the Old Testament scripture, that zeal and love for God's house burned fiercely in Jesus' heart. Have you ever been eaten-up by such zeal for the things of God? Before you reply, 'Yes', remember that this kind of zeal will have a public face and cannot be hidden. Very few Christians today show any kind of zeal. They are more like damp cloths hanging on a line, being moved by any wind of change that comes their way. No enthusiasm. No conviction. No true heart. No honed mind.

(Note: Here we have a clue as to when Jesus started His ministry – just before the Jewish Passover. It is interesting that it began and ended at a Passover. Also note that the false 'peace and love' of so many Christians is not the only response to evil! Those who constantly speak of their peace and love, very often, harbour evil, hate or anger in their hearts. Jesus' response, however, was pure and holy).

Verses 18-22

1.

Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

2.

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

3.

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Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

4.

But he spake of the temple of his body.

5.

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.

When the Jews demanded an explanation – bearing in mind that the rulers allowed what they did – they were saying ‘What right do you have to throw us out? What proof or authority do you have that you can do so?’

Jesus’ answer mystified them for He told them that if they destroyed the Temple He would raise it up again in three days. This was probably the briefest parable He ever uttered, for He spoke of the time when He would be killed and raised from the dead. (Remember that He used parables not to give clear explanations but to hide the truth from unbelievers: see our relevant article). Of course, the Jews mocked Him by saying it had taken thousands of workers forty six years to erect the Temple, so what on earth was He talking about! It was not until Jesus was killed and resurrected that the disciples understood what He said that day.

Verses 23-25

1.

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.

2.

But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,

3.

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And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

During the Passover it is evident that Jesus performed countless miracles, causing many to believe in Him. But, Jesus was not affected by their praise, for He “knew all men”. In the simplest way this means He did not trust their reactions, so could not embrace their praise. Anyone who has a public ministry (and I had to learn this the hard way) will not allow praise and openly conveyed ecstasy to stick to their minds and hearts, for the very same people who praise you will just as easily turn on you with anger and hate. Is this not what happened to Jesus in His last few days?

Thus, Jesus took the praise and wonder at face value. He did not need their praise or any other human words, to validate His Person or ministry, for His authority was in Himself. He was and is God, and this is sufficient authority and testimony. Man bases his reactions on inner sin and faulty reasoning. God’s reasoning is always perfect and pure.

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