

Messiah – The New Wine

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 2:1-11

Preached on: Sunday, November 10, 2013

Having been away for a number of weeks, it is certainly a great joy and privilege to come back together with my church family, especially to minister the word of God to you this morning. So, will you join me by taking your Bibles and turning once again to John's gospel, chapter 2. I've entitled my discourse to you "Messiah – The New Wine." You will understand more of why I chose that title as we proceed.

You will recall that John's gospel underscores the undeniable truth that Jesus was and is the Son of God. Both in Jesus' day as well as in our day today, we find people that scoff at such a notion. Roman Catholic authors Bill O'Reilly, anchor of the highest rated cable news show in the United States along with Martin Dugard, a prominent history author, have written a new book entitled "Killing Jesus." They boast that their account of the story of Jesus is "one that separates fact from myth" and as I read the book, it is obvious that they have no grasp of the word of God nor do they know the Savior nor do they have any understanding of the authority of Scripture, especially as being the final authority of the subject of the Lord Jesus Christ. At every turn, they betray a very anti-supernatural world view. For example: the raising of Lazarus is simply called a legend. No one will read their book and come away with the simple truth that the historical Jesus was exactly who he claimed to be, the Son of the living God, the Messiah, the divine Christ. No one will read that work and understand why Jesus voluntarily gave up his life on the cross. No one will understand that he was the perfect substitute for sinful men, that he was the satisfaction of the justice of God whereby man can be reconciled to a holy God through faith in him.

Yet, as we look at Scripture, this is made abundantly clear for all who have their ears attentive to wisdom and their hearts inclined to understanding. Hopefully you will recall that John has written his gospel to reveal the glorious truth of who Christ really is, the incarnate Word who left the majesty, the glory of heaven, to dwell among men. He did this in his prologue. From there, he began to reveal the account of John the Baptist, that austere forerunner of the Messiah, who preached a message of repentance. "Make straight," he said, "the way of the Lord." In other words, prepare your hearts to receive the Messiah who has arrived; recognize him for who he is and follow him. He then went on to describe the first five disciples that did just that, men who responded to the Savior, who came to seek, who came to save and now we come to chapter 2 where he will reveal to us the first of eight miracle signs that Jesus performed to prove his deity although he performed countless more than these eight.

His first supernatural act occurred at a wedding feast where he turned water into wine. This was the first miracle he performed to launch his public ministry and as we examine it this morning, we need to ask the question: what did this miracle really prove? Why did he do it at a wedding feast? What was the significance of turning water into wine? Why didn't he just create for them a beautiful new house? They're newlyweds, they need things, right? Why didn't he just create for them a beautiful vineyard? An olive grove? How about a great treasure chest full of gold and silver and jewels? Why water into

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wine? We must also ask: what difference should any of this make in our life today? And if you humble yourself to the truth, you will discover that what you are about to learn has eternal consequences that calls for a decisive, determined response.

My outline to you this morning is very simple: we're going to look at the setting, the significance and the summons of this text. Let me read it to you, John 2, beginning in verse 1,

“1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, ‘They have no wine.’ 4 And Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.’ 5 His mother said to the servants, ‘Whatever He says to you, do it.’ 6 Now there were six stone waterpots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each. 7 Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ So they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, ‘Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.’ So they took it to him. 9 When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom, 10 and said to him, ‘Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.’ 11 This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”

First let's think of the setting. Here the Spirit of God reveals to us that this happened three days after Nathanael decided to follow Jesus along with Andrew and his brother Simon Peter and Philip and, of course, John who is the eye witness of this account and the author of this gospel. Jesus now has five disciples and they're invited to a very large wedding in Cana of Galilee which, by the way, would have been about nine miles north of Nazareth. We know that this was a large wedding because of the size of the stone pots that were filled for the purpose of ritual cleansing. As we look at the text, we see that the mother of Jesus was there. This indicates that she was either part of the family or close friends of the ones being married and she was helping as a caterer or as a server as many of you women will do in weddings that we have here in our church family. Joseph is not mentioned; he is probably dead by now. Mary is now very dependent upon her son, Jesus, also knowing full well who he is, that he is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Now, you must understand that Jewish weddings were, in that day and they even are today, a huge social event and they typically last about one week. Also, we know that the groom, not the bride, but the groom was responsible for all of the hospitality so this would have been a huge expense. He would have to supply food and drinks and lodging and entertainment and all of those things for a large group of people for about a week so you can imagine the type of planning and expense that would go into this kind of a

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wedding. But as we see here, there is a big problem: they have run out of wine. Now we don't know why, perhaps they had already drunk it all, perhaps it was poor planning. Many times in weddings and I know this first hand, we think that somebody else was supposed to have gotten the wine or whatever but we don't know why this happened but it happened. You must understand that this is utterly humiliating for a groom and for his family. This is a faux pas that could permanently tarnish the groom's reputation and bring reproach upon his family. In fact, we know from some of the ancient Jewish historical writings that this is so serious that a bride's family could literally bring suit against the groom's family for such a terrible thing.

So, this is a crisis in a shame-based culture, one that we don't fully understand. Where do you turn in the midst of a crisis? You turn to God. Mary, somehow, is a part of all of this and so naturally she turns to Jesus knowing that he is God. We read in verse 3, "When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'" By implication here, she is saying, "Jesus, do something." Well, certainly, she was concerned about the reputation of the groom but I would imagine and we will see this from Jesus' response, that she also wanted the glory of her son to finally be revealed, he who is the Messiah. Don't you know she was bursting with joy and anticipation.

A similar attitude prevailed even among some of his skeptical family members, certainly later on amongst his disciples. In fact, in John 7 we learn that the Jews were seeking to kill him and his brothers wanted him to leave Galilee and go into Judea, even go into Jerusalem, and we read in verse 3 of John 7 the reason why, "That your disciples also may behold your works which you are doing for no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." Then John adds, "For not even his brothers were believing in him. Jesus therefore said to them, 'My time is not yet at hand, but your time is always opportune.'" In other words, Jesus is saying, "I don't operate according to man's schedule nor am I motivated to perform miracles simply because of people's unbelief."

So, we see this same kind of thinking in Jesus' response to his mother. Notice what he says in verse 4, and Jesus said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you?" Please understand when he says "woman" this is not an unkind or impersonal insult like it might seem to be in our English language. In fact, he also used this tender description of his mother in the context of the cross when he addressed her as "woman" in chapter 19, verse 26. So really, this is a way in Hebrew of saying "Madam" or "Ma'am," a very polite but not an intimate statement. "What do I have to do with you?" Literally, "What to me and to you." Now, we know that this was a common Semitic idiom or a colloquial expression of that day that would really distance two parties by asking a rhetorical question that basically says, "What have you to do with me?" Here Jesus, very courteously rebukes his mother at the onset of his ministry. He wants to make it clear to her that he does not operate according to a human agenda; he will not operate according to human manipulation. He operates solely on the basis of the will of his Father who sent him. So here we have a proper distancing occurring. She will no longer be allowed to enjoy, shall we say, the unique privileges of motherhood; she must see him not as her son but as her

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Messiah. And it's important for him to also establish right from the beginning that no one can come to him for any need assuming that they somehow have an inside advantage.

He then adds a statement he will make repeatedly to others in days to come. At the end of verse 4 he says "my hour has not yet come." Now, we know in other passages of John's gospel, this refers to his death and his subsequent exaltation and his resurrection and so forth but of course, Mary wouldn't have really understood all of that when he said this to her. After all, she merely wanted the wedding to proceed without embarrassment but she also wanted her son to be glorified so she probably interpreted it his response in light of the Old Testament prophets who characterized the coming Messianic age as a time when Messiah would reign in all of his glory, a time when literally wine would pour forth in great bounty so she might be thinking, "Well, okay, maybe not today but maybe tomorrow? Maybe the next day?" To that end, Jesus was quite right in saying "my hour has not yet come."

So Mary responds to him in humility, as a believer, and her Messiah honors her humble faith. Notice in verse 5, "His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever he says to you, do it.'" I find this interesting: she has no idea what he's going to do. She has no idea but she tells the other servants to do whatever he says. Here we see total submission to her Savior not her son.

Verse 6, "Now there were six stone water pots." Folks, here's where, as we would say, the plot begins to thicken. There were six stone water pots. Hmm, interesting. They were set there for the Jewish custom of purification containing 20 or 30 gallons each so we can say that there were roughly 150 gallons of water. That's a lot of water for purification. Now, we know that the Jews in that day would often use earthen vessels for most everything that they did but not for purification because they would use stone that would not have any contaminating particles of dirt in it. And we know that prior to entering into the realm of the wedding feast, every Jew would undergo a ritual of purification, washing at least their hands, perhaps their feet and we also know that the water would have been used for the cleaning of the utensils that they would use to eat with as well as all of the things that they would cook with. This is very important. I just got back from Israel and I saw this done even in some of the homes of the Jewish people that I was with and even in the restaurants you will see that.

But Jesus was about to use these stone water pots for something very different and as we will see, the stone water pots containing the water for ritual cleansing represented the old order of the Mosaic law. The old covenant of the law was about to be replaced with something glorious and new, something infinitely better. Verse 7, "Jesus said to them, 'Fill the water pots with water' and they filled them up to the brim. Then he said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.' And they took it to him and when the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine and did not know where it came from, but the servants who had drawn the water knew, the headwaiter called the bridegroom." Don't you know the guy was just kind of shaking, "I don't know what's going on here but this is incredible." He says to him, "Every man serves the good wine

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first and when men have drunk freely,” which, by the way, literally means to become drunk. That’s not to say that they were going to do that here, but that very often would happen and that was his point of reference. “When men have drunk freely then that which is poor,” then they serve the poorer wine. But he says here, “You have kept the good wine until now.” So what could have been a tragedy is a wonderful triumph. God is up to something here and we see this even more vividly in the symbolism of what Jesus did.

So we move from the setting to the significance. Now, folks, here’s where it gets exciting. Often we find both an immediate and a future significance to a passage of Scripture which I believe is the case here in Christ’s first miracle at this wedding feast in Cana. First we must ask the question: why a wedding? Well, my answer is: because Jesus likens the physical aspect of the coming kingdom to a wedding and the king has come, it is now being offered, God’s great celebration for his Son and his bridal church. Matthew 22:2, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.” So we see this type of comparison that Jesus uses throughout the New Testament. In fact, John will expand upon this connection and chapter 3:27-30, where Jesus is emphatically identified as the Messianic bridegroom. He alone will be able to supply the wine needed for the Messianic banquet but his hour of glorification has not yet come.

Beloved, here we have a prophetic foreshadowing of future glory when Christ will reign in all of his glory upon the earth over a new Israel. I want to digress for a moment with a footnote: Jesus was fully prepared to establish his earthly kingdom as the prophets predicted even at this point. It was first, you know, announced to Israel alone but, according to John 1:11, “He came to his own and those who were his own did not receive him.” And we learn later that the offer of the immediate establishment of the earthly kingdom on earth was withdrawn and Jesus began to focus his ministry more upon his death and his Second Coming. You see, because Israel rejected her Messiah, the mystery phase of the kingdom was ushered in as the church became the temporary replacement as the new custodians of truth. The body of Christ where Jews and Gentiles are described as heirs together, sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus and so forth, as we read in Ephesians 3. But I must remind you: Israel is never absorbed into the church; it remains distinct from the church as an ethnic people and as a nation they will have a prophetic future. So, the present church age must be seen as part of the ongoing fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy that will one day culminate in the Messianic kingdom so the church shares in the promises of Israel but not in her unique identity as a chosen nation.

Now, it’s fascinating as we see here: this wedding miracle happens on the third day after Jesus called and saved his first disciples. Then perhaps, and I don’t want to make a big issue of this but as I thought about it, perhaps the Spirit who is also reaching back into another Old Testament prophecy but speaks of a restored Israel in the Messianic age when Messiah returns and Israel repents. In Hosea 6:2 we read, “He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before him.” I find it interesting that at the time of the feast here, the wedding at Cana, Israel has been without a king for some 2,000 years which, according to 2 Peter 3:8, is only two days in God’s

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economy of time. But now he is standing right there in their midst. One day when Jesus returns in all of his glory and the remnant of Israel is finally reconciled unto their God and they believe in Yeshua as Messiah, we know that he will fulfill the rest of the promises associated with the New Covenant. Then the Lord will be married to Israel as we read in Isaiah 54 as well as Hosea 2.

But we must also ask: why water into wine? Well, the answer is: because Jesus is bringing in the kingdom and we find in Scripture that he used the metaphor of wine to describe the new order. For this reason, it was part of the Passover feast that illustrates both the redeeming and cleansing nature of the blood of Christ. You will recall in Matthew 26, beginning in verse 27, Matthew said, “Then he,” Jesus, “took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, ‘Drink from it all of you for this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’” Oh, child of God, don’t miss this: this first miracle points to not only Messiah as the one who can create all things physical but also the one that creates all things new spiritually. You see, this glorious miracle points to the new covenant of grace, to the new birth, to the new kingdom, to his work of redemption. This is what is being put on display here. The old economy of the Mosaic law with all of its rituals and all of its cleansings, all of its ceremonies, all of these things that they would do even for purification is no longer necessary. They were mere shadows of the final and perfect cleansing of Christ. So in a way, Jesus is saying, “It’s time to put away all of the stone pots filled with water because I am going to fill them with wine which not only gladdens the heart,” as we see in Scripture, but also, “I’m going to fill it with wine that symbolizes the cleansing redeeming power of my blood. I’m bringing in the new wine of the kingdom.”

This is pictured as well in Matthew 9, beginning in verse 14. “Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.’” In other words, he’s saying, “But now the Messiah is here and it’s time to celebrate. It’s time to rejoice.” And this is what wine often pictures in Scriptures. Psalm 104:15, “Wine makes glad the heart of man.” Ecclesiastes 10:19, “A feast is made for laughter and wine makes merry.”

Then we find something interesting that Jesus said in Matthew 9. He went on to explain that the old ceremonies, the ceremonial forms of the Mosaic system is now obsolete, it’s replaced with the new covenant. You remember he said this in verse 17 and here he’s illustrating how the new wine cannot be put into old wineskins. He says, “If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed.” You see, there is still a fermenting process going on so you can’t put new wine in an old wineskin that’s already been stretched to its max. It’s not going to work. He went on to say, “But new wine is put into fresh wineskins and so both are preserved.” So, what we must understand is pictured here in this glorious miracle is the fact that all of the Old Testament rituals and fastings and ceremonial cleansing have no part with the gospel of grace. Something new and

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glorious is being pictured here. Grace cannot be contained in the old wineskins of the law.

But also notice in verse 7, he says, “Fill the stone pots to the brim with fresh water.” Why do that? Well, I think it’s because he wants to picture here the overflowing abundance of his grace purchased by his blood, an act that infinitely and eternally exceeds any need for ceremonial purification for those who trust in him. You see, his love for us is not stingy, it is generous. Now, I couldn’t help it but I had to think, “Okay, you know, that’s a lot of wine here.” Roughly 150 gallons, so I did what you probably do at times, I Googled “wine” and I looked for the average price of the top wine and up came 50 of the top wines and I learned that the top wine of the most popular 50 best wines cost an average of \$15,000 per bottle. Alright? And a bottle is about 750 ml and I figured, therefore, that it takes about five bottles to make one gallon. So, that’s about \$75,000 per gallon times 150 gallons so what Jesus did there would be equivalent to 11million 250 thousand dollars worth of wine. Do you know what? I think that’s probably pretty cheap for wine that God called into existence.

Oh dear Christian, don’t miss this, this is so precious: how fitting that the redemptive work of our Savior is pictured here in his first sign, a sign that also pointed to the Messianic age that he was offering and how sad to see the Jews and even the Gentiles rejecting their Messiah. It was for this reason, again, that he postponed the blessings of the Messianic age and we wait for that now. For this reason, Jesus said to his disciples on that final Passover, meal before his death, “But I say to you I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” Beloved, that’s what we await and that is what is pictured here.

Joel prophesied concerning this as well. In chapter 2:19 we read, “Of that day when the Lord will answer and say to his people, Behold I will send you grain and new wine and oil and you will be satisfied by them. I will no longer make you a reproach among the nations.” And even in the Old Testament, wine illustrates the blessings of the gospel as being part of new covenant blessing. Isaiah 25:6 we read, “And in this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of well refined wines.” You see, all of this points to the glory of the kingdom age. Isaiah 55:1, “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. My grace is abundant. It is overflowing to you.”

Now, notice closely verse 8, “Then he said to them, ‘Draw some out now.’” In other words, he’s saying, “Now that the vessels, these vessels used for ceremonial purification, now that these vessels have been transformed into vessels completely filled with the wine of the new covenant, now draw some out.” Something has changed here. You see, this is a picture of the wine to be drawn for the wedding feast of the Messianic banquet. Obviously, neither Mary nor his disciples understood all of the symbolism at that time but I’m sure they did later. For example in Revelation 19, the Lord later revealed to John the marriage supper of the Lamb and in verse 6 of Revelation 19 we read, “Hallelujah!

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For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was granted her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and pure.” Beloved, again, what an amazing picture. Here at Cana, the real bridegroom is Christ but he does not receive gifts, he gives them and he gives them lavishly. You see, as the Son of God, he lacks nothing but rather, he creates all things new in unimaginable power and glory, even the new heart of those who place their faith in him. And he does this by the power of his shed blood symbolized by the wine.

But notice something else we see in this miracle: isn't it fascinating that God uses human agents to bring the joyful wine of the new birth to the hearts of men. Notice how Christ used the element of water to produce wine, right? And we know that water is the symbol of the cleansing power of the word of God. Ephesians 5:26, you know that great passage, Paul describes Christ's love for his bridal church and he says that he “gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her,” how? “Having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.” And here in Christ's miracle, notice what he does: he asks his servants to fill the empty water pots, a task that no doubt seemed foolish to them. It would've seemed foolish to me, it's like, “What? We need some wine.” “No, go fill the empty water pots.” “Okay.” So that's what they do, yet we see that their obedience to this command that they did not understand allowed them to participate in this miracle that God wrought.

Do we not often see the same thing in our service to Christ? As he uses us in ways that we cannot comprehend to dispense his saving grace. Is he not well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe? What a tremendous motivation, dear Christian, for each of us to be able to take the cleansing water of the word of God to those who need new life, who need eternal life, and then watch the Creator of life use that word to make them a new creature, to gladden their heart with his abundant grace.

I have to laugh. The headwaiter and I put myself in his position, he was absolutely clueless about what happened; he was dumbfounded. But isn't it interesting in parenthesis the Spirit of God says that “the servants who drew the water, they knew.” They knew what was going on. Haven't you seen that before? God gloriously saves someone and they are now this new person and other people are scratching their heads, “What happened?” Ah, but we know. We know what happened. God has caused him to be born-again. He's turned water into wine.

So, we've seen the setting and the significance. Let me close with the summons. In verse 11 we read, “This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He manifest his glory, and his disciples believed in him.” John will repeatedly refer to Jesus' miracles as signs, semeion in the original language, intimating that they pointed to Jesus, they had the purpose of authenticating Jesus' nature, Jesus' mission and ultimately pointed to the glory of the kingdom. So all of these things that Jesus will do in his miracles including this first one, points to him as Jesus the Son of God, the Messiah who came to bring new life to all who will place their trust in him.

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So, the first summon by implication is this, dear friends: you must place your faith in the only giver of eternal life. Jesus invites all who trust in him to be his bride, to dine at his table, to be nourished by the bread of life, to drink in the wine which is the symbol of his shed blood on your behalf. This glorious covenant of grace, but for those of us who know and love Christ, I would submit to you that this text summons us to at least three things and I will close with this, this morning: we need to listen up, lighten up and look up. Easy to remember: listen up, lighten up and look up. What do I mean by listen up? Think about it: what a powerful message; what a powerful sermon Mary preached in that simple line, “Whatever he says to you, do it.” Whatever he says to you, do it. Folks, we need to start filling the water pots. It might not make sense to you but start doing the things that the Lord has asked you to do knowing that his ways are different than ours. Then watch him do things beyond your ability to fathom.

You know, the Lord has already spoken to us but many times we’re just not listening and I would encourage you, even this week, to make a list of the commandments that he’s given you in his word and then mark those ones that you are disregarding, the ones that you don’t like. The ones that you make up excuses for. For example, he says, “Go and make disciples, teaching them to obey whatsoever I have commanded.” Are you doing that? “Well, no, no, that’s what other people do.” Wrong. Go fill the water pot. He will tell us things like, “Rejoice in all things. Pray without ceasing. Discipline yourself for the sake of godliness. Be a faithful steward of your money even in how you give to the church.” Boy, there’s one that a lot of people just blow off. “Flee from immorality. Present your body a living and a holy sacrifice acceptable to God.” And on and on it goes.

Folks, we need to listen up. Secondly, we need to lighten up. It’s so sad to look at Christians who walk around like Winnie the Pooh’s depressed little friend, Eeyore. You know, the head is down, just perpetually distressed about everything. The glass is always half empty, it’s never half full. You’re sour; you’re sullen, like an old sore-tailed cat. Everything from gray hair to Obamacare just depresses you. You just walk around wringing your hands, “Oh, what am I gonna do?” My goodness, people, rejoice. You are the bride of Christ! You are part of his bridal church. The bridegroom knows when you’re out of wine, alright? So, go fill the water pots in those areas in your life and watch what he will do.

Then also remember that he saves the very best for last. Isn’t that amazing? I mean, think about it: this side of the kingdom we live in a fallen world and the wine we drink is often just filled with the salt of our tears because of the sorrow, the things that we endure. Sometimes because of our own sin, often because of the sins of others. Sometimes it seems as though the wine just runs out completely. But think what awaits us in the kingdom when we finally drink in the fullness of our inheritance which includes God himself. You see, unbelievers are the ones that need to be the Eeyores, not the believer because they’re drinking their best wine now.

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Ah, but we are the bride of Christ and he has saved the very best for last. So friends, we need to lighten up and finally we need to look up. We need to look up because the bridegroom is coming for his bride. I want to close with something else that Jesus revealed to John in his book of Revelation, the end of the Bible. Revelation 21, John describes a new heaven and a new earth that the Lord is going to create and in verse 2 he says, “And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” Don’t you know his mind had to have gone back to Cana when the Spirit of God revealed this to him? According to verse 16, we know that this is a magnificent city that God has created, a 1,500 mile cube. In fact, the sacred record uses no less than 25 verses to describe the unimaginable splendor of this city. This is a literal city. It’s one we read that has been made ready, literally prepared by God. It’s going to come down of heaven from God. This is the city for which Abraham longed. In Hebrews 11:10 it says he was looking “for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God.”

If we go back to John’s gospel in John 14:2, Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you and if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there you may be also.” This is a reference to that heavenly Jerusalem, an actual place that currently exists in what must be considered a separate and holy universe. It is utterly removed from any of the toxicity of sin and corruption in our current realm of living. In fact, the writer of Hebrews spoke of this heavenly Jerusalem as well in Hebrews 12:22, he say, “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and the myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.”

Beloved, one day according to Scripture, there will be a new creation. It will be spoken into existence and then that New Jerusalem that has been prepared for us will descend and hover over the new earth and we will see this immense Holy of Holies that will contain the ineffable glory of the Shekinah, the presence of the living Christ, that ineffable light of the Shekinah that filled the temple. That will be, we know, the source of light even in the New Jerusalem and ultimately the new eternal temple will be the Lord God himself. But in Revelation 21:2 we read that God has made this ready as a bride adorned for her husband so the imagery here of the redeemed being a bride of the Lamb which is found in other passages is so important.

I want to close with this because this speaks of God’s deep, intimate, personal union between himself and those that he has chosen by his grace. We must understand all of this in the context of a Jewish betrothal and wedding. We know that the Jews would have a kiddushin, a betrothal engagement period, and it included a contract whereby two young people would be considered legally married. And as his bride, we are the ones that were betrothed to the Lord Jesus in eternity past by his uninfluenced, sovereign choice. Secondly, there would be a presentation and this would happen at the close of the betrothal period where the groom would go to his bride, often unannounced, and take her to his father’s house and then present her to his family and friends over a period of time

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Messiah – The New Wine

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 2:1-11

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that would typically take about a week, a time of festivities. Then, at the end of the presentation, the bride would return home briefly, gather her things and her bridesmaids and then the groom and his groomsmen would go to the bride's house and escort her and the bridesmaids to the actual ceremony. And we believe biblically that this presentation will occur at the rapture of the church when the Lord Jesus comes unannounced and takes us unto himself as his sanctified and pure virgin, the sanctified church. We will be presented to the heavenly host and then the final stage of the Hebrew wedding would be the ceremony. We know biblically that this began at the marriage supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7-9, but it's going to extend throughout the millennial kingdom with the final consummation occurring in the new heaven and the new earth with the descent of the New Jerusalem as it says "coming down out of the heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband." There in the new heavens and the new earth, the glorified bride which will include all of the redeemed from all of the ages, will live in perfect union with the bridegroom for eternity.

Beloved, we are likened even to this bride adorned for her husband. By his transforming grace, this is precisely what will happen to the redeemed. All of this was pictured in symbolic form at that wedding feast. Remember in Ephesians 5:25, we read that, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word that he might present to himself the church in all her glory, having not spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless."

Oh child of God, we are new creatures in Christ so we need to listen up, lighten up and look up. We are the bride of Christ and we await a glorious consummation when all things will become new. What else can I say?

Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these glorious truths. Cause us to meditate upon them, to chew them over and over and allow them to so motivate our hearts that people see Christ in us, they see the newness of what you have created, that you might be glorified as they, too, submit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. I ask this for his sake. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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