

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 5]

John 2:1-11 [NIV] *“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’ ‘Dear woman, why do you involve me?’ Jesus replied. ‘My time has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realise where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.”*

This story of a wedding feast, a celebration that could last a whole week tells us certain things about Jesus.

The account indicates that Mary, Jesus’ mother had something to do with the arrangements for she was worried that the wine was running out and had enough authority to order the servants to do whatever Jesus told them.

There is an early set of prefaces to the books of the New Testament called Monarchian Prefaces which tell us that the bridegroom was no other than John himself. That his mother was Salome the sister of Mary.

We do not know whether the extra details are true, but the story of the wedding is so vividly told that it is clearly an eye-witness account.

Mary is mentioned alone here because by this time Joseph was dead, so she was accustomed to asking her firstborn for help.

Hospitality in the East is a sacred duty and for the provisions to fail would bring terrible shame on the family.

Jesus’ response was **not** as discourteous as it sounds, Jesus was addressing his mother in the equivalent English of calling her respected lady, a title of respect.

Jesus used the same word when on the cross. He left Mary to the care of John. [**John 19:26**]

Jesus was on a mission to save the world, the greatest mission in the history of humanity. Yet Jesus took time off to attend a wedding.

Jesus valued such social occasions because they involved people, and Jesus came to be with people.

Mary did not know how Jesus would solve the problem but was confident that He would. This is the way we should approach Jesus with our problems, confident that He would know what is the best way for us.

Something that Jesus said in reply to His mother is very important, *“My time has not yet come.”*

All through the gospel story Jesus talks about His *“time”* or *“hour.”*

In **John 7:6-8** it is the time of Jesus' emergence as the Messiah.

In **John 12:23; John 17:1; Matthew 26:18** and **Mark 14:41** it was the hour of His crucifixion and His death.

All through His life Jesus went steadily towards that hour, for which He knew He had come into the world.

We also must think, not of our own wishes and our own desires, but of the purpose for which God has sent us into the world.

John wants us to see that whenever Jesus comes into our lives there comes a new quality to our lives. Just like turning water into wine!

Remember that John is writing this record of Jesus' life some 70 years after the crucifixion.

John had this period in his life to meditate on the words and actions of Jesus Christ and could then see the meanings and significances that he had not seen at the time Jesus was on earth.

Really John's gospel is the gospel of the Holy Spirit for it was the Holy Spirit that brought the true meaning of Jesus' words and actions again to the mind and human spirit within John. [**John 14:26**]

John 2:12-17 [NIV] *"After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!' His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'*

In the other three gospel accounts Jesus is depicted as going to Jerusalem only once but in John's account Jesus made frequent visits during His ministry.

John tells of three Passover visits, this one also **John 6:4, John 11:55**, an unnamed feast **John 5:1**, Feast of Tabernacles in **John 7:2, 10**, Feast of Dedication **John 10:22**.

According to John's account in John 10:22 the Feast of Dedication, which is in December, and the Passover which is in mid-April, so the story seems to indicate that Jesus' last stay in Jerusalem was not a few days but for some months.

In the other three gospel accounts the main ministry of Jesus is in Galilee, but in John's account only for brief periods [**John 2:1-12; John 4:43 – John 5:1; John 6:1 – John 7:14**] and His main ministry is in Jerusalem.

There is no real contradiction here at all.

John and the other writers are telling the account from different points of view, they complement each other.

Matthew, Mark and Luke concentrate on the ministry of Jesus in Galilee, John concentrated on Jerusalem.

Why did Jesus act in the way He did in the Temple Courts?

The anger of Jesus is a terrifying thing.

What moved Jesus to this white-hot anger?

Malachi 3:1-5 [NIV] “*See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,*’ says the LORD Almighty. *But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. ‘So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud labourers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me,*’ says the LORD Almighty.”

John must have had this tremendous prophecy in mind as he wrote this account.

This cleansing of the Temple was the act of the promised Messiah.

“Against those who defraud labourers of their wages...”

In the temple outer court were money changers.

Jews came from all the then-known world to Jerusalem at least once in a lifetime to attend the Passover.

They brought with them coins of many different regions, but only Galilean shekels were accepted for the Temple Tax or any offering made in the Temple.

These money changers would charge a person up to two days’ pay to exchange these coins.

This was a rampant and shameless social injustice of poor working people and what made it worse, it was being done in the name of religion.

Beside the money changers were the sellers of oxen, sheep and doves.

Frequently a visit to the Temple meant giving a sacrifice as a thanks offering.

The law was that any animal offered in sacrifice must be perfect, flawless and unblemished.

The Temple authorities had appointed inspectors to examine any animal brought for a sacrificial offering.

A fee was made for inspection of any animal brought from outside the Temple, and mostly the animal was rejected.

This would not matter if the animal offered by the Temple authorities was similar to what it cost outside, but the price could be as much as twenty times more expensive.

Again this was bare-faced extortion at the expense of the poor and humble pilgrims, who were practically blackmailed into buying these over-priced animals if they wished to sacrifice at all.

Again it was glaring social injustice perpetrated in the name of religion.

It was this that moved Jesus to flaming anger.

There are at least three reasons behind this action of Jesus.

a) **God’s House was being desecrated.**

b) **It may well be that Jesus was showing that the whole paraphernalia of animal sacrifice was completely irrelevant. [Isaiah 1:11-17; Jeremiah 7:22; Hosea 5:6; Hosea 8:13; Psalms 51:16].**

Jesus was showing that **no** sacrifice of any animal can ever put a person right with God.

We are not totally free from this very tendency today.

True, no animal sacrifices, **but we can identify the service of God with installing stained glass windows, obtaining a more sonorous organ, the lavishing of vast amounts of money on stone, lime and carved wood, while real worship of God is far away from the hearts and minds of those lovely offerings.** [Romans 12:1-2; Psalms 51:15-17; Isaiah 57:13-15; Isaiah 66:1-4]

c) **Mark made an interesting addition to the words that Jesus cried out as He cleansed the Temple Court.**

Mark 11:17 [NIV] *“And as he taught them, he said, ‘Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers’.”*

The Temple consisted of a series of courts leading into Holy place.

The outermost first court was the court of the Gentiles; this is where this buying and selling was going on and the only place a Gentile could go. Access beyond this was barred by the Temple authorities.

The Jewish traders were making this court of the Gentiles into a place of uproar and a rabble where no person could meditate or pray.

Mark’s little phrase, *“all nations”* was very much in the mind of Jesus. [John 3:16-17; 1 John 2:1-2; 2 Peter 3:9]

No Christian fellowship should be a closed club, which keeps a stranger out.

Let us always remember the wrath of Jesus against those who made it difficult or even impossible for the seeking stranger to make contact with God.

John 2:17-22 [NIV] *“His disciples remembered that it is written: ‘Zeal for your house will consume me.’ Then the Jews demanded of him, ‘What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’ The Jews replied, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?’ But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”*

Two reactions from two different groups of people.

The disciples – remembered the words of **Psalms 69:9**.

This was a psalm that referred to the coming Messiah, and made His disciples even more sure that Jesus was that Messiah.

The Jews – wanted a sign from Jesus that He did have the authority to do what He had just done.

Jesus then introduced Himself as the New Temple of God.

We must remember that the last two verses of this passage are John’s interpretation written long after the event took place.

Jesus never said He would destroy the physical material temple, and then rebuild it.

Jesus was in fact looking to the end of the Temple. [John 4:21]

Mark 14:58 [NIV] *“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.’”*

Mark illuminates the words of Jesus.

Jesus clearly states that with His coming all the animal sacrifices and priestly ritual would come to an end.

In its place would be a direct approach to our Creator God, our human spirit, [Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11] uniting with God’s Holy Spirit.

What was the scripture that the disciples believed?

Psalms 16:10 [NIV] *“because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”*

Referring to the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter quoted this scripture at Pentecost. [**Acts 2:31**]

Paul quoted this scripture at Antioch. [**Acts 13:35**]

John refers to this same scripture.

It expressed the confidence of the Church in the power of the Creator God and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This presence of the risen Jesus Christ forever with us throughout all the world in every generation of humanity.

John 2:23-25 [NIV] *“Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man’s testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.”*

It is the great characteristic of Jesus Christ that He did not want followers unless they clearly knew and definitely accepted what was involved in following Him.

Jesus knew the fickleness and instability of human nature. [**Jeremiah 17:9**]

Jesus knew that the faith of some of His followers was superficial.

Some of those who claimed to have faith in Him would very soon be crying out “crucify Him.”

It is easy to believe when what is happening is exciting and everyone else believes the same way.

It is difficult to keep your faith firm when it is not popular to follow Jesus Christ.

John’s adding the word “*sign*” to the word miracle tells us something about the person who did the miracle.

To John the important thing about Jesus Christ’s miracles was what it tells us about the character of the Creator God.

The miracles that Jesus performed healed the sick, fed the hungry and comforted the sorrowing, that is dealing with the needs and pains of humans.

To John miracles were the signs of the love the God has for all humanity.

I will **not** be covering the passage of scripture **John 3:1-12** in this study as it is already covered in full in an article on this website – ‘*You Must Be Born From Above*’ under heading ‘*Born Again.*’

John 3:13 [NIV] “*No-one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of Man.*”

There is one difficulty in John’s gospel. At times we don’t know where Jesus’ words end and John’s comments begin. This last verse certainly is John’s comment on what we have just studied. It is as if someone asked “*All these sayings of Jesus may be true, but what right does He have to say them?*”

John’s answer is simple and profound.

The right Jesus has comes directly from God, whom Jesus was and is, the embodied mind of the Creator God.