

John 2:12-25 and 3:1-13

Proverbs 20:1 **"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."**

Last week, we witnessed Jesus' first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.

And I like all of His miracles. This one testified to the fact that He was the Son of God, and Israel's Messiah.

But more specifically, this one "----
manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."

However, and again like all of His other miracles, this one met a need.

In this case, Jesus intervened on behalf of a young bridegroom, who would have faced embarrassment or even social disgrace.

Certainly, Jesus had stepped in to supply his need.

But He did much more than that.

Like His Heavenly Father **"Who daily loadeth us with benefits,"** Jesus' provision could be only described as exceedingly abundant.

And we also should expect great things from our God, for He **"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."**

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However, the question naturally arises, Was this intoxicating wine? And the answer is a decided no.

Jesus would have never provided that kind of wine, and considering the verse that we read at the beginning of this lesson, neither would the bridegroom.

First of all, let's consider the effects of this beverage that the bridegroom had supplied.

In spite of the fact that it had not been sufficient, it definitely wasn't skimpy.

It was simply a case of the wine running out before his ample food supply had been consumed.

In fact, by the time that Jesus stepped in to save this young man's reputation, his guests had already consumed a great deal of wine, as the ruler of the feast freely admitted.

And no doubt the ruler had consumed his fair share of the bridegroom's supply also. So, keeping all this in mind, let's consider his words and demeanour.

John 2:9 **"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."**

His words were orderly, very complimentary, and well thought out, and they were delivered to guests who were quite capable of appreciating what he had said.

Surely, at this point in the feast, if there had been any question of alcoholic content, there would have been evident signs of intoxication.

No, this wasn't a drunken assembly, or anything like it.

Everything was being done decently and in order.

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So what about the water that had been turned
into wine?

What kind of wine had Jesus provided, in
order to save this young man's
reputation?

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Well, we began this lesson by quoting Prov.
20:1 **"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is
raging: and whosoever is deceived
thereby is not wise."**

And again in Eph. 5:18, the Apostle Paul
commands Christians to **"--- be not
drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but
be filled with the Spirit."**

Would the Son of God have had any part in
creating a wine that violated the
strict dictates of the Word of God?

Obviously, He would not!

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Before we leave this wedding, there's
another question we should consider.

Why did Jesus use the available water, and
for that matter the waterpots, to
perform this miracle?

Certainly, as the Son of God, the Creator of
all things, He could have simply spoken
the word and created the wine from
nothing.

And along that same line of thinking, why
would Jesus use a little boy's lunch to
feed thousands?

Or for that matter, why does He take weak
men and women, like you and me, and
command them to **"Go ye into all the
world, and preach the gospel to every
creature --."**

As the hymn writer has suggested, He could
have proclaimed His message from sky to
sky.

I don't really know; but that's the way He
works, and it is our privilege to work
with Him.

Yes, Jesus delights to take the ordinary and
accomplish a miracle!

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So the wedding was over, and they had gotten
on their way.

John 2:12-13 **"After this he went down to
Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his
brethren, and his disciples: and they
continued there not many days.
13: And the Jews' passover was at hand,
and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."**

In contrast to Cana, Capernaum, which was about a day's journey away, was a large city.

This time it would be a short visit because Jesus must arrive at Jerusalem in time for the Passover.

However, He would be back.

In fact, it would be Capernaum, not Jerusalem, which would become the central point of His future ministry.

And there was a good reason for that.

Capernaum was the main centre for that area, and a good place for the news of His teachings and miracles to be spread abroad.

But for now, He must hurry on.

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Jesus would attend four Passovers during His public ministry, and as we will soon see, this one was very important.

However, did you notice that V 13 calls this celebration the "**Jews' Passover?**"

Shouldn't it have been God's Passover?

On that special night long ago, God had protected their firstborn from the Death Angel by putting them under the blood of the lamb.

And as we all know, there was much more to it than that.

The Passover lamb looked *forward* to a very special time, which, by now, was only about three years away.

Yes, this feast was very significant, even though it had degenerated into a religious observance called, the "**Jews' passover.**"

However, it was still in force, and as a good Jew, Jesus continued to observe it as He had done every year since He was 12 years old.

And He would continue to do so until He became its fulfillment.

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V 13-14 **"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:"**

It had been 400 long years since God had spoken to Israel through His prophet Malachi.

Let's look at His final revelation.

Mal. 3:1 **"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me:---"**

And after 400 years of silence, John the Baptist had arrived to prepare Israel for their Messiah.

The people had been obedient, but their religious leaders had not.

They had not repented of their sins, nor had they been baptized.

But there's more to Malachi 3:1, so let's read on.

"--- and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts."

On that very day when Jesus entered the holy city, that prophecy was fulfilled.

Their Messiah had come, and He found them (like boys with their hands in the

cookie jar), profaning the house of God.

Yes, Jesus found **"in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:"**

And what does the next verse say He would do about it?

Malachi 3:2-3 **"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:**

3: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

Yes, as a refiner, He skimmed off the slag, cleansing His Father's house.

John 2:15-16 "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."

Yes, He had come at Passover, and purged out the old leaven of sin from His Father's house.

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But what was it that provoked this reaction? No doubt the animals were being sold to those who had traveled long distances, and would have found it difficult to bring their sacrifices with them.

Also, the doves, according to Leviticus 5:7, were the appropriate sacrifice for the poor.

And the moneychangers were also necessary to exchange different currencies into the one that was proper for the temple offering.

So what was the problem?

Well, properly carried out, and in some other place, everything would have been fine, but not in the temple.

No, none of these activities should have taken place in God's house.

So that's why Jesus said, **"Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."**

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Then why was this business being carried on in the temple?

I think the answer is quite obvious.

There was money to be made, and not only by the vendors.

No doubt the chief priests had willingly rented these spaces to them.

After all, they could hardly have set up shop without their permission.

And perhaps the chief priests were even charging them a fee to inspect their animals.

Oh yes, these religious leaders were guilty, and I don't think the vendors were completely innocent either.

In fact, the second time that Jesus cleansed the temple, for He did it both at the beginning and the end of His ministry, He called them **"a den of thieves."**

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I'm quite sure Jesus' disciples would have been shocked when He swung into action. After all, John had described Him as the **"Lamb of God,"** not **"the Lion of the tribe of Juda."**

However, it wasn't long before the light dawned.

V 17 **"And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."**

Isn't it amazing that these simple fishermen knew Scripture so well?

They considered these unusual circumstances, and immediately connected them to David's words in Psalm 69:9 **"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me."**

However, His zeal wasn't an uncontrolled fit
of anger.

No, it was a slow and deliberate expression
of righteous anger.

Seeing what He must do, He carefully made a
scourge to assist Him in getting the
job done.

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V 18 **"Then answered the Jews and said unto
him, What sign shewest thou unto us,
seeing that thou doest these things?"**

Don't you find it interesting that the Jews
never defended their activities?

No, they knew they were wrong.

Instead, they asked Him for a sign to back
up His authority.

His response was most unusual.

V 19 **"Jesus answered and said unto them,
Destroy this temple, and in three days
I will raise it up."**

Contrary to what they were expecting, Jesus didn't perform a miracle, although He certainly could have.

Instead, He gave them the sign of His death and resurrection.

Yes, His resurrection would prove, once and for all, that not only did He have authority to cleanse the temple, but He had absolute authority.

As He would tell His disciples --- **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

19: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

But the Jews would never understand that
sign.

In fact, they would misquote it at His
trial.

Matthew 26:60-61 **"At the last came two false
witnesses,**

**61: And said, This fellow said, I am
able to destroy the temple of God, and
to build it in three days."**

No, they would never understand Him, or even
wish to understand Him.

They were the defilers of the first temple,
and they would make every effort to be
the destroyers of the Second Temple,
which was His body.

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I'm sure His own disciples didn't understand
Him either, but they would later on.

In fact, V 22 says **"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."**

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V 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."**

Now that's encouraging!

Jesus had only recently arrived, and already there were many who believed in His name.

And since that was the real purpose of His miracles, you would have thought Jesus would have been quite encouraged.

But He didn't see it that way.

Notice V 24-25 **"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."**

It says they believed, and they probably looked like they believed, but not to Jesus.

The problem was, He could see their hearts, and He didn't like what He saw.

No doubt many of them were only interested in a Messiah who could overthrow the Roman government, and as He said later, His **"kingdom"** was **"not of this world."**

Still others would have been like the seed that was sown on stony ground.

They were all for Him now, but would quickly forsake Him when the cost became too great.

And maybe there were other things, but the fact is, "**Jesus did not commit himself unto them.**"

Jerusalem would be the home of His mortal enemies and His weak friends, and He already knew it.

In fact, most of Jesus' time would be spent in Galilee.

And as it turned out, He would have more disciples that He could trust among the Galileans than He would ever have in Jerusalem.

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Fulfilling Malachi's prophecy, He had come "**suddenly**" -- "**to his temple**", and He

found defilement, treachery, and weakness.

Well, that was kind of a sad note to end this chapter on, wasn't it, but it was not all doom and gloom.

In spite of all the opposition and shallow belief, there were some in that city that were beginning to see the light, and surprisingly, one of them was a Pharisee.

John 3: 1-2 **"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:**

2: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

We are told in the book of Corinthians,
**"that not many wise men after the
flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,
are called,"** but here was a man who was
both wise and well versed in the
Scriptures, and he was very impressed
with Jesus.

Yes, he was **"a ruler of the Jews,"** a member
of the Sanhedrin, and even a scholar
himself, but just like those two humble
disciples he was quite willing to call
Jesus **"Rabbi,"** or teacher.

But why did he come at night?

John's two disciples had visited this
Teacher at 10:00 in the morning.

Well, I'm sure Jesus' recent activities in
the temple hadn't won him a lot of
friends among the Pharisees, and
Nicodemus was one of them.

So he was being cautious, and wanted to question Jesus privately before making any open commitment.

And to give him credit, the day would come when he would stand up and be counted, even among his colleagues --- as we find in John 7:50-51 **"Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)**

51: Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"

And not only that, but he willingly helped Joseph to prepare Jesus' body for the tomb, and even provided the spices.

John 19:39 **"And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight."**

But for now he was being cautious.

There is also the distinct possibility that he had chosen the evening hours when Jesus would be more available.

I'm sure you realized that, during the day, Jesus would be completely taken up with the large crowds that had gathered for Passover.

At night, there would be a much better chance of getting His undivided attention.

And I think he got a little more undivided attention than he was comfortable with.

V 3 **"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

Nicodemus had never heard anything like this before.

The whole idea was completely foreign to His religious training.

Mustn't we gradually improve ourselves, in order to attain the "**kingdom of God?**"

Don't we have to do something, pass some sort of test, in order to gain heaven?

No, Nicodemus, "**Ye must be born again.**"

It's a new life that's required.

Not a renovation of the old life, but something entirely new.

Of course Nicodemus never said as much out loud, but Jesus knew what he was thinking.

But he did say this, in V 4 "--- **How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?**"

No, it didn't make any sense to him.

He couldn't start life all over again He
was an old man.

And besides that, his first birth wasn't
really that bad.

He was a Jew, a member of God's chosen
people, and a Pharisee.

But Jesus wasn't talking about a physical
birth.

V 5 **"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say
unto thee, Except a man be born of
water and of the Spirit, he cannot
enter into the kingdom of God."**

No, He wasn't talking about a physical
birth. He was describing a *spiritual*
birth.

And He wasn't talking about a way to heaven;
He was talking about the *only* way to
heaven.

But Nicodemus still wasn't getting it, so
Jesus explained further.

V 6-8 **"That which is born of the flesh is
flesh; and that which is born of the
Spirit is spirit.**

**7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye
must be born again.**

**8: The wind bloweth where it listeth,
and thou hearest the sound thereof, but
canst not tell whence it cometh, and
whither it goeth: so is every one that
is born of the Spirit."**

Did you notice the example that Jesus used?

It was an excellent one, wasn't it?

We can't see the wind, but we all know it's
there.

It can pull trees out by their roots, and
drive great ships around the world.

So, in spite of the fact that we can't see it, it is very real, and it is very powerful --- **"so is every one that is born of the Spirit."**

V 9 **"Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?"**

At this point, Jesus couldn't help chastening him just a little.

V 10 **"Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"**

No, he didn't know **"these things,"** and he didn't know who he was talking to either.

Oh, he knew he was **"a teacher come from God,"** but he had no idea that He was actually God in the flesh.

So, gradually, Jesus began to open his eyes.

V 11-13 "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12: If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13: And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."

----- "he that came down from heaven."

I'm sure Nicodemus didn't get it, at least not right away, but we know what Jesus was talking about, don't we?

If we are saved, we will definitely be going to heaven, but we didn't come from there.

No, we weren't little angels or anything
else before we were born.

Just like Adam, we were created right down
here on this earth.

But Jesus didn't start out His life in a
little manger in Bethlehem.

No, He is God, and as such, He **"came down
from heaven."**

So Nicodemus would have been well advised to
believe Him, and so would we.

Jesus **"came down from heaven,"** and He knows
what He is talking about.

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And not only did He come from heaven, but He
continued to maintain a presence there.

Did you notice Jesus' last words in V 13?

**"And no man hath ascended up to heaven,
but he that came down from heaven, even
the Son of man which is in heaven."**

Now how could Jesus be in heaven at the same time that He was there talking to Nicodemus?

Well, only if He was omni-present, which by the way, is one of God's attributes.

Of course this brings up a lot of questions that I am not qualified to answer, but the point is, He is always *in contact* with His Heavenly Father.

However, there was one time, and only one time, when Jesus lost contact with heaven.

That was when He cried out in agony --- **"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"**

That was when God **"--- made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."**

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So Nicodemus, you better listen.

Jesus is God, and Jesus is telling you that

-- **"Ye must be born again."**

And even if you're a deeply religious

person, like Nicodemus was, **"Ye must be
born again."**

Yes, this is God's official word from heaven

--- **"Except a man be born again, he
cannot see the kingdom of God."**

No, there's no *landed immigrants* in heaven,
just natural born citizens.