

John 2:1-11

The Glory of Christ

Introduction

There are several passages of New Testament teaching, which seek to point us towards a serious meditation of Christ. For example, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus..”* (Hebrews 12:2); *“...But we see Jesus,..”* (Hebrews 2:9), and, *““Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

In addition to being served, worship and honoured, Christ is to become a significant part of our thinking, our meditation, our serious contemplation and consideration. We are urged to think about Him.

With this in mind I want us to consider the teaching and meaning of this narrative in John 2. Now, the key to this passage lies in verse 11 where John gives us the meaning and purpose of event, *“ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory...”*. It is found in the last few words of this statement, *“He thus revealed His glory”*. So, the miracle in Cana, at the wedding, was a means for Jesus to portray His glory, principally to his disciples as the final result was, *“and his disciples put their faith in him”*.

I want to divide my material into two main sections. In the first place I wish to seek to establish the meaning, reason and significance of this miracle within the context of John’s Gospel. Secondly, I will make some practical observations that are relevant to us personally.

1. The meaning, significance and purpose of this miracles in Cana

It is not my view that passages of scripture such as this should be spiritualised. It is our place to find out what John is seeking to portray as he narrates this event. John’s Gospel only covers about twenty two days in the life of Jesus. He is very selective in his material and for this reason we must discover his purpose in choosing to insert this passage within his writing. None of the other Gospel writers record this event. This is very important to us as this miracle is the only one where Jesus seems to have used His powers to merely satisfy someone’s material needs. It is quite a strange miracle.

The situation here is that the organiser of the wedding did not do his or her job properly and under-estimated the amount of wine that would be needed. On the surface the miracle seems to be merely a face saving exercise. This was no raising of the dead, or healing of the blind, or the feeding of people about to faint. There was nothing desperate or needy about this situation. It appears to be merely Jesus rescuing the embarrassment of the wedding steward and the bridegroom. It was a miracle of convenience.

The Apocrypha is full of imaginary stories of Jesus performing such miracles. He is supposed to have made some birds from clay and caused them to fly away into to sky. That is clearly false. Jesus did not go around performing such miracles of exhibitionism. That is the stuff of TV shows. Yet, this miracle at the wedding, if it was merely for the sake of the guests so that they could continue to enjoy the party, leaves us with a problem, for it becomes typical of the Apocryphal stories.

However, I would suggest that this is not what Jesus had in mind and neither was it John's purpose in relating the event. Both had something much more important in mind. The key verse "*He thus revealed His glory*" clearly gives us a clue.

I suggest in the first place we take note of the term that John uses throughout his writings when referring to miracles. He calls them "*signs*". In other words, the miracles were not to be regarded as merely acts of power designed to aid this or that person. They were pointers, indicator, and signs.

This brings us to look at another statement made in John 20:31-32, "*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*". In other words, these "*signs*" were designed not as an end in themselves, but as pointers to the glory of Christ showing that He is the "*Son of God*" and that through this they are designed to lead people to the point where "*believing you may have life in his name*".

The purpose of John's Gospel, therefore, is two fold. In the first place it is to demonstrate the deity of Christ, to show that He is the "*Christ, the Son of God*", and in the second place to lead people to believing and thus having "*life in His Name*".

I suggest, therefore, that the miracle in Cana was for this purpose. It was not a face saving exercise. It was not to satisfy the needs of a party or prevent embarrassment. It was evangelistic; it was designed to lead to faith in His name. This, or course, is portrayed in that eleventh verse of chapter 2, "*He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him*". It is the same teaching as in 20:31-32. The two-fold purpose is portrayed here at the beginning of John's Gospel and then summarised again at the close of the Gospel in chapter 20.

But, let us ask the question why this particular miracle? What part of the glory of Christ is being portrayed here?

I suggest that most of the material in John's Gospel is nothing less than an expansion of his teaching in the Prologue. The Prologue is found in chapter 1:1-18. It is John's graphic introduction of the Gospel where, instead of narrative, we have solid doctrinal teaching. It is always important to read the Introduction to a book. Here the author often spells out the basis of the book giving pointers to its contents in a kind of summary form. John does this for us here. Then the remainder of the writing is a demonstration of the truths found in this section.

Now, this miracle is the very first of all of Jesus' actions. It seems appropriate, therefore, that we look for some teaching in the Prologue that comes at the beginning. John wants to display something about the nature of Jesus that needs to be dealt with initially.

This is how the Prologue begins, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life...."* (John 1:1-4a). If we compare the opening words of this passage with Genesis 1:1 we find some similarities, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"*. (Genesis 1:1). At the commencement of his prologue, John is pointing out that Christ is the Creator of the universe. Genesis states, *"In the beginning God created..."*, and John reads, *In the beginning was the Word... Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life...."*

Is it not significant, then, that in this first recorded miracle Jesus is portrayed as controlling and ordering the rules of nature? It is a creation type miracle. He takes water and then makes it into wine.

I suggest therefore, that the purpose of the miracle is to demonstrate that Jesus is this Creator God; that He was the One through whom all things were made. This is proved by the way in which Jesus takes one part of the created order and turns it into another. Here He is, the Master and Maker of all things, He is almost re-creating. It is a miracle of Jesus' power intervening into the laws of nature. It is a Creation type miracle.

Let me point out another similarity between this miracle and the account of creation in Genesis 1. You will recall how it is stated almost after every aspect of creation that the writer comments, *"and God saw that it was good"* (Gen 1:10), and then at the end of the process we read, *"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good"*. (Genesis 1:31).

Now compare this with the comment made by the master of the wedding feast, *"... and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize 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."* (John 2:9-10). This is the hallmark, as it were, showing the quality of God's handiwork, it is always *"very good"*.

So the purpose of the miracle therefore, has nothing to do directly with the needs of the wedding feast. Here is Jesus portraying His glory, the glory of the Creator God. It is important for John that His readers immediately learn how to associate this Jesus with the God of creation. Thus in the Prologue he has chosen words similar to Genesis as he points out that Jesus was the Creator God and then in the miracle he shows this in practice.

If we were to progress with the Gospel narrative in this fashion we would find that many more of Jesus' miracles demonstrate the teaching of the Prologue. For example, the statement, *"in Him was life..."* is shown in His raising the dead, i.e. Lazarus in chapter 11. Then the teaching *"the light shined in the darkness"* is demonstrated in the healing of the blind man, which leads Jesus to show that He is the *"Light of the world"*. And so on.....

But, of what significance is this teaching to us? Can this passage in John 2 teach us something within this context? Can we derive some personal meaning from John 2 without having to resort to spiritualising the passage?

2. Some Practical Observations

a) In the first place – observe the need to meditate on the glory of Christ.

Verse 11 states, *“He thus revealed his glory”*. The Greek word used by John is ἐφανερώσεν (phanetosēn) meaning, *“to display, to bring to light, to declare, disclose, present to view”*. For what reason did Jesus present and disclose His glory? So that His disciples might see it, that they might be given the opportunity to see something of the nature, wonder and glory of Christ. Jesus wanted to do something to show to His disciples that He was more than a man. The miracle for designed that people might look at Christ.

Returning to the Prologue, we can see how John, with this miracle in mind, makes this statement, *“We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

Isaac Watts wrote a hymn, *“When I survey the wondrous cross....”*. Sadly, we do very little of this *“surveying”*. We spend much time singing, preaching and perhaps reading, but very little time is spent in meditation, in contemplation. Our lives seem no longer capable of affording the time for this exercise of gazing and enjoying the view of the glory of Christ.

Yet, as I pointed out at the beginning of this sermon, the bible writers would have us engage in this activity of looking at Christ, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus..”* (Hebrews 12:2); *“...But we see Jesus,..”* (Hebrews 2:9), and *““Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

The apostle Paul said, *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things”*. (Philippians 4:8). Is this what is partly meant by being *“spiritually minded”*? (Romans 8:6 *“but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace”*; Greek has φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος which can either read as the NIV or the AV *“spiritually minded”*).

This act of meditation has to do with the mind. How often does the thought of Christ ever enter our minds, especially when we are away from Church, bible study or the prayer meeting? According to Paul, to be *“spiritually minded”* is *“life and peace”* (Romans 8:6). The writer to the Hebrews states, *“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart”* (Hebrews 12:3). For both writers there is a practical reason for this meditation, it becomes an answer to the struggles and battles of life. Think much on Christ.

Edward Griffin, a 19th century preacher of America stated, *“O remember Him...forget your father and mother, but O remember Him...remember Him with bursting love and praise; when you lie on your dying pillow, still remember Him”* (Life & Sermons of Edward Griffin Vol 2 page 251).

b) Secondly, observe Christ as the sovereign Creator

When we contemplate His glory we must see Him in the first place as the sovereign Creator, as He is in His splendour and magnificence. The glory of Christ is first seen in His state as God. *“In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God...”* (John 1:1). This is how John commences his writings. This is where we begin. Learn to see Him in His divine glory. We read much of the Gospels and see Jesus as the Man of Galilee and are apt to neglect the deity, the reality of Jesus as the God Man.

Through this miracles John is enabling us to behold Christ as the Creator of all things. The One through whom all things came into being, without whom anything was made that was made. Indeed, it is more than this. Jesus shows that He is still handling the creation; He is still intervening and controlling the creation. In the miracle Jesus shows that He is still in charge of what happens and creation still continues to obey Him.

Thus Hebrews 1:2-3 states, *“but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word”*. Here again is the same teaching. Christ is the author of the creation, the *“radiance of God's glory”*, and also the One *“sustaining all things by His powerful word”*. This, I suggest is the teaching of John 2, the miracles of turning water into wine. Jesus has demonstrated at the wedding that He is still in control of the universe, that He is sustaining it by His powerful Word.

All this gives us a lofty view of Christ. It shows us His magnificence, His power, His sovereignty and His majesty. We see His Godhood in this teaching, the glory of His deity. Christ is God.

How difficult this is for us as we see Him in the Gospel stories. We want to perceive of Jesus as the Man, the Man of Galilee. The danger is that we stop there and fail to recognise in Him His deity. This is why the account of the Transfiguration is so important to the Gospel narratives. It is like a kind of break in the history of Jesus letting the light of the glory of Christ shine through so that the disciples and we are given this reminder that He was more than a man.

On the mount the disciples witnessed a strange phenomena, they saw Him change and become radiant with glory and splendour, *“His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them”* (Mark 9:3). At the time the disciples were confused and did not quite understand what they were witnessing, but years later it became plain to them and Peter wrote, *“...we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased”. We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain”* (2 Peter 1:17-18).

Behold the glory of Christ. See Him constantly as the God Man.

c) Thirdly, Observe the glory of Christ as the humbled Saviour.

It is this display of Christ as the glorious Creator that portrays the birth and crucifixion of Christ in greater light. As we gaze down upon that child lying in the manger we must remind ourselves that this is the Creator Himself. And then again, as we look up at the cross we must tell ourselves in hushed tones that this is the Creator of the universe. The significance of the cross is seen in the nature of the One who hung there.

It is astonishing to realise the degree of humiliation that Christ took upon Himself in becoming man and living among us. He the Creator became as one of His own creation. He wore the clothes of humanity, took to Himself the fallen body of Adam, suffered all the pains and weaknesses of human flesh. This is how Paul puts it, "... *his own Son in the likeness of sinful man...*" (Romans 8:3). So close to sin and yet not born in sin, so close to sin and yet not a sinner. The body that the Creator took to Himself was not the pre-Fall body of Adam untainted with sin, but a body that was made in the "*likeness of sinful man*". This is the glory of Christ.

Then we must turn to Philippians and read again those most powerful statements, "*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself...*" (Philippians 2:6-8). Although He was the glorious Sovereign Creator He did not hesitate to humble Himself, He did not grasp hold of that outward splendour refusing to step down from the throne, but purposely made Himself "*nothing*", became a "*servant*" and took on the "*appearance as a man*". He was still God; He continued to be the Creator, for this is what the miracle of the wedding feast tells us. Yet being God the Creator, He became part of the Creation.

But there is more, for when we now stand up against the cross we see something even more astonishing than His birth. It is in His death that we stand amazed. As Charles Wesley wrote in one of his hymns, "*How can it be, the Immortal dies....*". Here is the Creator dying! This must be the greatest contradiction. How can the Creator die? This, of course was His reason for being born a man. He had to take on human form because only as a man could He die.

The glory of Christ then is seen in the cross. As you look at the cross what do you see? Do you just see a man dying, one of three men being executed? Or do you see something different about that middle person? Can you look at Him and tell yourself that this is the Creator, this is the very one who made and controls the creation. He is allowing Himself to be treated in this fashion by His own creation.

When we ask "*Why?*", "*Why did He do this?*". We have only one answer – because He loved us. This was the only way in which He could save us. His death as the God Man was the only means by which God could satisfy the demands of His own Holy Law. Man a sinner, condemned for eternity, could only be saved by Christ taking to Himself the wrath and judgement due to man.

It is only when we begin to see Christ on the cross as the glorious Creator that the awesome truth of what was happening up there really begins to take hold of us. We must dispel all those sentimental thoughts of a mere man dying unjustly and begin to see the doctrine and theology of Christ in His Person and His Work. This has to begin with us recognising His true nature, seeing Him as God, the Creator and the One who sustains all things.

Conclusion

Learn to see the glory of Christ. Let us begin to obey the scriptures, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus..”* (Hebrews 12:2); *“...But we see Jesus,..”* (Hebrews 2:9), and *““Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* (John 1:29). As Isaac Watts wrote, let us become *“lost in wonder love and praise”*.

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