**John 2 1 11**

The wedding at Kana in Galilee

Last item of the three events celebrated at Epiphany. First the visiting of the Magi, then the baptism of Jesus and now the turning of water into wine.

I won’t be surprised if this one of the most used of the Bible for a sermon at weddings. But, it’s also one which has been under much debate with theologians, sometimes with remarkable conclusions.

Just to give an example. In :4 Jesus says to Mary; O woman what have you to do with me? So, it reads in my Bible which is probably from a Protestant or Reformed Bible translation. Take the same text from a RC scholar and it says: What has a shortage of wine to do with both you and Me? Both translations from the Greek are possible.

For a reformed point of view, the text signals the break between Jesus and Mary, where Mary has nothing to do with Jesus’ ministry. Jesus even doesn’t call Mary His mother. Mary’s time as mother of Jesus has now transformed and her role diminished. It signals that she now needs Jesus for her salvation as anybody else.

A RC scholarly view on the other hand sees here the influence and relationship between Mary and Jesus, because no longer she is called His mother, but she also knows what Jesus is going to do. RC scholars see this a relationship between Mary and Jesus now moving on into the next level in the salvation history as a kind of partnership.

So, two opposing conclusions from the same few words in Greek, with a large impact on a big theological and ecclesiological religious framework.

It just shows how the sign of the wedding at Galilee kept scholars occupied. Above the reading in my Bible it says; the first miracle. But, it’s not a miracle for John. In :11 John wrote; *This, the first of His signs , Jesus did at Cana in Galilee*. Because it is a sign, the water into wine transformation is on a different level than the other healing miracles Jesus performed.

John is not so much interested in miracles, but much more so in the signs Jesus did to prove Himself to be the One whom He said He was. Signs to manifest His glory and, as it says in :11, His disciples believed in Him.

But that begs the question; what did they believe and why was making water into wine such an important sign to them?

It sounds daft to start believing in Jesus as a Messiah warrior, to defeat the Romans, only because He has been able to change water into wine.

John’s gospel is full of hints and hidden meanings, which are easily overlooked, so this sign of water into wine has an important meaning for John. One of the observations is that it says in :11 that it was the 3rd day. But, when one counts the days mentioned preceding this event, it is the 5th day, not the 3rd. John is not wrong, because the 3rd days refers to the wedding day itself, which following Jewish tradition in his time happened on the 3rd day. The 3rd day refers to the 3rd day of creation when God created plants and trees. It was the day of fertility.

Another observation is the jars of water. 6 empty jars of water for cleansing. 6 to 700 liters or 200+ gallons of water, all empty, but who would ever need such a large amount of water for ritual cleansing?

All of such details in the text could have a deeper meaning, but what was it that made the disciples believe in Jesus after He made water into wine?

The answer is in the OT, in Isaiah 55 for example.

Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Wine from someone’s own vineyard was a symbol of God’s blessing on all who kept the law of God. Wine was the symbol of wellbeing en was part of the blessings of the promised land. As it says in Deuteronomy 7:13 - *He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.*

Wine had been from ancient times a symbol of the blessings of God. When Isaac blessed Jacob in Genesis 27 (28+37) he blesses Jacob with plenty of grain and of wine. In Ezechiel 19 the vineyard is a symbol of Israel planted as a beautiful vinestock bringing forth beautiful fruit, but it has become wild and unruly. A similar complaint is in Psalm 80.

So, when the Israelites were living under control of the Romans they founds themselves as a barren winestock which produces no wine. Hence, wine for the Israelite in exile became a symbol of the expected reign of the Messiah. When Jesus came to His people they were like in exile under the control of the Romans and expectations were high for a renewed Kingdom. A kingdom of Israel, which would be the Kingdom of God’s rulership over the entire world.

Wine had an eschatological meaning in the time of Jesus, but even more so a symbol of God’s blessing.

Instead of empty vessels used to ritually clean the many guests, they now produce wine as a forebode of the new wine in the new Kingdom of God.

In the sign of the water turning into wine at Cana lies the centre of the completeness of Jesus’ ministry. People don’t have to wait on salvation in the eschatological expectations of a coming Kingdom, but it is hear and now through Jesus Christ. That’s the message John wants to give to us in the sign of the water turning into wine. Jesus is not for later, He is here and now to bring God’s Kingdom into reality into each one of our lives.

Isaiah 55:6 and 8; *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near....return to the Lord that He may have mercy and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon*.

For the modern Jew, wine is an expression of the fulness of joy. Devout Jews will not drink wine on the day, or even 9 days before, when they remember the destruction of the 1st and 2nd temple (Tisha BeAv). The temple destroyed in 70AD, a generation after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Synptics speak about the Kingdom of God inaugurated through Christ

John speaks about the Kingdom of God as eternal future through Christ

Then the story of the Wedding of Cana begins with 'and on the third day'. So this third day is not the third day since the testimony of John the Baptist, for that would be the 'fifth day'. It is possibly the third day of the week, because according to Jewish tradition this day would be a perfect day for a wedding ceremony. For on the third day of Creation, YHWH made seed‑bearing plants and trees. The third day of the week was therefore dedicated to fertility. Some exegetes point out that 'the third day' can also refer to the Resurrection. In the Synoptics, Jesus predicts that the Son of Man will be crucified and will rise on the third day; this formulation is included in the Credo: et resurrexit tertia ('and He rose on the third day'). In this case, the story of the Wedding of Cana could be understood as an Easter story. However, John does not explicitly speak of the Day of Resurrection as 'the third day'.

The Wedding at Cana is one of the three moments of salvation celebrated on the Solemnity of the Epiphany. The others are the Adoration of the Magi and the Baptism of the Lord.

The relationship between Yahweh and His people will then be restored. Israel will call Him: ‘my Husband’, and no longer: ‘my Baal’ (i.e. lord, or master). Then He will give her vineyards again, and make the valley of Achor a door of hope. He will take her as a bride for eternity, and heaven will hear the earth and it will hear His people (see Hos. 2:13‑22). Thus He will be the true Host and Bridegroom of His people on the great day that comes, when He will reveal His glory. That is the prophetic meaning of the first sign that Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed His glory and His disciples believed in Him (John 2:11). That also applies to us. Soon, faith will be exchanged for sight, on the day that He will manifest His glory for good. Every eye will see Him, every knee will bow before Him, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. It will be the day of the joy of His heart (cf. Song of Solomon 3:11). Blessings will flow abundantly, joy will be complete.

6 big jars for cleansing is a huge amount of water; much cleansing from sin is needed......